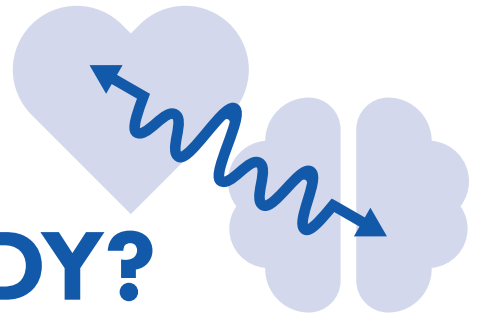


The Mind-Body Connection

HOW DO FEELINGS SHOW UP IN THE BODY?



TWEENS AND TEENS

Tweens and teens experience a strong connection between their emotions and their bodies. Just as their bodies signal hunger or fatigue, they also react physically to stress, worry, sadness and other big feelings.

Physical symptoms can be a tween or teen's way of expressing emotions they may not yet have the words to describe.

MIND-BODY CONNECTION EXAMPLES

When feeling stressed or overwhelmed, your tween or teen might:



Headache



Feel sweaty or shaky



Fast heartbeat



Stomachache



Trouble Sleeping

When feeling sad or discouraged, they might:

- Have headaches or stomachaches
- Eat much more or much less than usual
- Feel very tired or have low energy
- Say "I don't feel good" without a clear reason

WATCH FOR SIGNS

Talk about the mind-body connection if your tween or teen:

- Complains of headaches/stomachaches without a medical cause
- Has difficulty naming or explaining their feelings
- Struggles to calm down once upset

FAQ

Q: Is it a problem when feelings show up in the body?

A: It is normal for feelings to affect the body. If symptoms are very strong, last a long time or make daily life harder, it may be time to get extra support.

Q: Are body symptoms from feelings still real?

A: Yes. Body symptoms caused by stress or emotions are real and can feel very uncomfortable, even when there is no illness.

TRUST YOUR GUT. You know your child best.

over
1-in-4
PARENTS

think their child's physical symptoms may sometimes be connected to worry or other big feelings, not a medical problem.



Source: Mott Children's Hospital Mott Poll Report, 2023

► **If you notice these or other signs, take them seriously. Check with a health or mental healthcare provider if you're concerned.**

Frequently Asked Questions

How do feelings show up in the body?

Tweens/Teens



PAY ATTENTION TO SIGNALS

Listen when your tween or teen talks about physical symptoms. Some symptoms may have medical explanations. **For example:**

- Headaches may be related to illness, lack of sleep, dehydration, caffeine changes or vision problems
- Trouble breathing could be asthma
- Stomach pain could be illness or constipation

If symptoms are frequent, severe or unclear, check with your child's healthcare provider to rule out medical concerns.



BE UNDERSTANDING

Even when you suspect stress may be involved, start with empathy. The goal is not to fix everything.

Do:

- Say, **"It makes sense you feel that way"**
- Let them know big feelings are normal
- Pause and listen before offering solutions

Don't:

- Dismiss their symptoms
- Don't say, **"It's not a big deal"**
- Jump immediately into problem-solving



TEACH FEELING WORDS

Tweens and teens often feel emotions deeply, but may not always have the words to describe them. Here is a list of feeling words you can help them learn:

- Proud
- Confident
- Excited
- Embarrassed
- Disappointed
- Lonely



BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

Let your tween or teen see how you notice and calm your own body when you have uncomfortable feelings.



SUPPORT HEALTHY COPING

Encourage your tween or teen to try calming strategies, such as:

- Take slow, deep breaths
- Nap or rest
- Listen to music
- Do something active

Not every strategy works for every tween or teen. It may take time to find what helps them feel calm and steady.

Learn More



- [Children's Nebraska | Feelings Check-In](#) (available in Spanish and English)



- Watch a short video of middle-schoolers learning to recognize feelings in their body.



- Watch a short video of high-schoolers learning to recognize feelings in their body.

**LET'S
TALK**

Start a conversation about how feelings show up in the body. Ask questions like:

- How does your body feel when you're stressed or overwhelmed?
- When something upsetting happens, what changes do you notice in your body?
- What actually helps your body calm down when you're having a tough day?

WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CHILD AND NEED HELP RIGHT AWAY?

You can call or text 988 for support or walk in anytime to the Children's Nebraska Behavioral Health & Wellness Center, which is open 24/7: 8550 Indian Hills Drive, Omaha, NE 68114 | 402-955-4700. **In case of a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.**

Medically reviewed by: Sarah Klein, PMHNP-BC, Shannon Soderberg, PMHNP-BC Date reviewed: July 2026

About this project: This resource was developed by Children's Nebraska, in collaboration with Nebraska Partnership for Mental Healthcare Access in Pediatrics (NEP-MAP) and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Public Health. This resource and others in the series provide practical information and tips specifically designed for Nebraska parents and caregivers. This information is not intended as medical advice.

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