

PARENT GUIDE

Season 5, Episode 3 – *Sleep, Nutrition & Mental Health*

(For Parents & Caregivers)

WHAT THIS EPISODE COVERS (Key Takeaways)

From the expert conversation, parents learn:

- Sleep and nutrition directly affect mood, focus, and emotional balance
- Skipping meals or losing sleep makes it harder for kids to regulate emotions
- Small, consistent changes matter more than perfection
- Food and sleep are tools that support brain health, not rewards or punishments
- Modeling healthy habits has more impact than lecturing
- Supporting routines helps kids feel steadier during the day

AGES 6–9 (WITH THE EXPLAINER VIDEO)

Before Watching

Say something simple and concrete:

“This video shows how food and sleep help your brain feel strong.”

Optional prompt:

- “How do you feel when you’re really tired?”
- “How does your body feel after you eat?”

Keep it casual and curious.

During Watching

Let the video lead. If helpful, gently ask:

- “What happened on the tired day?”
- “What helped make the day better?”

During the “swap” moments:

- “Which one could we try at home?”

Avoid correcting — focus on noticing.

After Watching

Ask:

- “What did you notice about the different days?”
- “What helped the brain feel better?”

Reinforce one simple idea:

“Sleep and food help our brains do their job.”

Optional activities:

- Draw a **family ‘Mood Meter’** and check in before bedtime
- Pick **one small swap** to try this week (earlier bedtime, water instead of soda, adding a fruit or veggie)

Celebrate effort, not perfection.

AGES 10–13 (USING THE IDEAS WITHOUT THE VIDEO)

Before the Conversation

Frame it as support, not rules:

“This is about how your body and brain work — not about being perfect.”

Ask:

- “Do you notice a difference on days you don’t sleep much?”
- “How does food affect your energy at school or practice?”

During the Conversation

Discuss:

- How sleep affects attention and mood
- Why skipping meals can lead to irritability or low energy
- How routines help even when schedules are busy

Introduce a practical lens:

“Food and sleep are tools — they help your brain handle the day.”

After the Conversation

Agree on:

- One realistic change to try together
- A check-in time that feels supportive, not controlling

Reassure:

“We’re figuring this out together.”

AGES 13+ (TEENS)

Acknowledge independence:

“You’re making more of your own choices now.”

Conversation focus:

- How sleep loss affects stress and emotional reactions
- Why fueling the body matters for school, sports, and mental health
- The difference between short-term energy and long-term balance

Invite collaboration:

“What would actually help you feel better during the week?”

Avoid power struggles — focus on outcomes they care about.



PARENT-ONLY CONTEXT (FROM THE EPISODE)

(Do not share verbatim with kids)

From the expert discussion:

- Sleep and nutrition strongly influence emotional regulation
- Kids often feel the effects before they can name them
- Consistent routines provide stability during stressful periods
- Small, repeatable changes are more sustainable than big overhauls
- Parents modeling healthy habits sets the tone

You don't need to make this a lecture.

Daily habits quietly shape how kids feel and cope.

PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE

1. The “One-Swap” Rule

Pick one manageable change at a time and stick with it for a week.

2. Visual Check-Ins

Use a mood scale (1–5) at dinner or bedtime to notice patterns.

3. Model the Behavior

Let kids see you:

- Go to bed on time
- Drink water
- Eat regular meals

This speaks louder than reminders.



CORE LINE (CONSISTENT ACROSS EPISODES)

“We don’t have to know everything — we just have to stay connected.”

Important Note for Parents and Caregivers

This parent guide is provided for **educational and informational purposes only**. It is not intended to replace medical, psychological, legal, or substance use treatment advice.

Every child and family situation is different. The strategies and suggestions shared here are meant to support thoughtful conversation and prevention-focused parenting, but they may not apply to all circumstances. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to use their own judgment and to consult qualified professionals when appropriate.

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If you believe a child or family member may be at risk of harm, please seek immediate professional support or contact local emergency services

