

PARENT GUIDE

Season 5, Episode 5 – *The Power of Teen Leaders in a Substance-Free Movement*

(For Parents & Caregivers)

WHAT THIS EPISODE COVERS (Key Takeaways)

From the expert conversation and episode content, parents learn:

- Many kids choose not to use substances, and that choice is normal
- Kids can help peers make safer choices by standing together
- Calm refusals and offering a “better plan” are effective skills
- Walking away together and telling a trusted adult keeps everyone safer
- Leadership can look like kindness, inclusion, and speaking up
- Parents can reinforce these skills through practice and modeling

AGES 6–9 (WITH THE EXPLAINER VIDEO)

Before Watching

Say something simple:

“This video shows how kids can help friends make safe choices.”

Ask:

- “What makes someone a good friend?”
- “Who helps you when something feels confusing?”

Optionally name a few trusted adults together.

During Watching

Let the video lead. Pause briefly to notice:

- When the kids **stand together**
- When they say **no** and offer a **better plan**



- When they **walk away and tell** an adult

You can ask:

- “What did they do to help their friend?”

After Watching

Review the three helper moves together:

1. **Stand together**
2. **Say no + offer a better plan**
3. **Walk away & tell a trusted adult**

Reinforce one clear message:

“Helping a friend stay safe is part of being a leader.”

Optional activities:

- Role-play a quick scene where a friend needs help
- Make a simple poster: “*I say YES to* _____ (*sports, art, music, friends*)”

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

Before the Conversation

Frame it as skill-building:

“This is about how friends look out for each other.”

Ask:

- “What do you think makes someone a leader at your school?”
- “What would you do if a friend felt pressured?”

During the Conversation

Discuss:

- Why most kids choose not to use substances
- How pressure can show up socially or in group chats
- Ways to support a friend without lecturing

Practice simple language:

- “No thanks — not my thing.”
- “Let’s do something else.”
- “Let’s go together.”

After the Conversation

Agree on:

- Who the trusted adults are at school, sports, or activities
- A simple plan for leaving situations that feel unsafe

Reassure:

“You won’t get in trouble for asking for help.”

AGES 13+ (TEENS)

Acknowledge independence:

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

Conversation focus:

- Clear personal boundaries around substances
- Helping peers without taking on responsibility for their choices
- When and how to involve adults

Emphasize:

“Safety matters more than keeping secrets.”

Encourage leadership through example, not pressure.



PARENT-ONLY CONTEXT (FROM THE EPISODE)

(Do not share verbatim with kids)

From the episode discussion and materials:

- Peer influence can work in positive ways
- Most kids choose not to use, even if it doesn't always feel that way
- Practicing language ahead of time builds confidence
- Walking away together lowers risk and isolation
- Trusted adults play an important role when kids speak up

Staying calm and supportive makes it easier for kids to come to you.

PRACTICAL TOOLS YOU CAN USE

1. Practice the Words

Role-play short, calm responses kids can use with friends.

2. Name the Helpers

Write down 3–5 trusted adults your child could go to if needed.

3. Create a Family Code Word

Choose a word or phrase that means “I need help — no questions asked.”

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.

Neither the producers of *Awkward Conversations*, nor the participating organizations, hosts, or guests assume responsibility for decisions made based on this material.

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

