

Chapter 8

Peer Relationships

1. Safe and Healthy Friendships
2. Peer Pressure and Refusal Skills
3. Practicing Abstinence

#OnedayIwokeup #Doppitup

Lesson 1 — Safe and Healthy Friendships

Types of Friendships

Your **peers** — people your age who share similar interests — have a powerful influence on your health and development. All strong friendships share: similar values, open and honest communication, mutual respect, concern for each other's safety, and sharing of joys and disappointments.

■ Casual	Based on shared interests but without deep emotional bonds — people you enjoy but don't necessarily confide in
■ Close	Deep emotional ties where you feel comfortable sharing thoughts, feelings, and struggles without judgment
■ Platonic	A friendship with someone of a different gender with genuine affection but no romantic involvement — helps you understand and connect across gender lines

Online Friendships — Stay Safe

Online connections can be genuinely meaningful, but they come with real risks. People online may not be who they say they are.

- ■ Never share your full name, address, phone number, or school

- Don't send photos to people you haven't met in person
- Never meet an online contact alone — always tell a trusted adult first
- If someone online makes you uncomfortable, tell an adult immediately
- Be cautious on gaming platforms, social media DMs, and apps that connect you with strangers

Cliques can offer a sense of belonging, but they often come with pressure to conform and exclude others. Healthy friendships should expand your world, not shrink it.

Lesson 2 — Peer Pressure and Refusal Skills

What Is Peer Pressure?

Peer pressure is the influence that people your age have on your actions, decisions, and behaviors. It can be direct or subtle. Not all peer pressure is bad — positive peer pressure can motivate you to try new activities, volunteer, avoid harmful behaviors, and work harder.

Negative Peer Pressure and How to Resist It

Negative peer pressure can take the form of **harassment** (persistent targeting) or **manipulation** (indirect, dishonest control through threats, guilt trips, flattery, or bribery). The key tool for resisting it: **refusal skills**.

- 1 **State Your Position**
Say no clearly and firmly. Back it up with an honest reason: 'It goes against my values' or 'I'm not comfortable with that.' Combine words with confident body language.
- 2 **Suggest Alternatives**
Offer another option: 'No, let's go to the movies instead' — stay connected with your friend without compromising your values.
- 3 **Stand Your Ground**
If pressure continues, make it clear you won't budge. Walk away if needed. Removing yourself from the situation is always an option.

Practice assertive refusals before you're in a high-pressure situation — it makes it much easier to hold your ground when the moment comes.

Lesson 3 — Practicing Abstinence

Dating and Setting Limits

Dating can be a positive experience when both people respect each other. The most important limit you can set is to practice **abstinence** — a deliberate decision to avoid high-risk behaviors, including sexual activity and the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Why Abstinence Matters

■ Unplanned pregnancy	Teen birth rates are at a record low (12.7 per 1,000 girls ages 15–19 in 2024, down 78% since 1991), but unplanned pregnancy still changes the course of thousands of young lives each year.
■ STIs/STDs	Young people ages 15–24 make up just 13% of the population but account for nearly half of all reported STI cases annually. Abstinence is the only 100% effective protection.
■ Emotional risks	Teens are generally not emotionally prepared for the demands of a sexual relationship. Common consequences include hurt, guilt, loss of self-respect, and regret.
■ Media pressure	Social media and streaming glamorize sexual activity without showing real consequences. Being a critical media consumer means recognizing these messages are entertainment, not reality.

Handling Pressure Lines

"Everybody does it."	"No. Not everybody is doing it."
"I thought you were cool."	"I am cool — and the answer's still no."
"No one will know."	"I'll know, and I'm the one who matters."
"If you loved me, you'd do it."	"If you loved me, you'd respect my decision."

If you've been sexually active in the past, you can always choose abstinence going forward. Recommitting to abstinence is always an option — and it's a positive choice that protects your health and well-being.

Chapter Vocabulary

Lesson 1

Platonic friendship	A friendship with someone of a different gender involving genuine affection, but without romantic involvement
Clique	A small circle of friends who exclude people viewed as outsiders

Lesson 2

Peer pressure	The influence that people your age may have on your actions and behaviors
Harassment	Persistently annoying or targeting others through hurtful behaviors like name-calling, teasing, or bullying
Manipulation	An indirect, dishonest way to control or influence other people

Lesson 3

Priorities	The goals, tasks, values, and activities you judge to be most important
Intimacy	A closeness between two people that develops over time through genuine connection and trust
Infatuation	Exaggerated feelings of intense passion that can feel overwhelming but are often short-lived
Self-control	The ability to use responsibility and values to override emotions in the moment
Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) / STDs	Infectious diseases spread from person to person through sexual contact