

THE POWER OF CHOICE

TEACHING GUIDE

For Use With
Program 12

RAISING YOUR PARENTS

Discussion Questions

Group Activities

Writing Assignments

Program Background

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including
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Throughout the many group discussions videotaped for this television series, no subject came up more often than parents. Teenagers connected their parents (for better or for worse) with everything that happens in their lives. As young people come of age and assume more responsibility and in-dependence, their relationships with their parents are largely what determine how easily or painfully that metamorphosis will occur.

In this program, host Michael Pritchard and high school students in Washington, D.C.; San Rafael, California; Columbia, South Carolina; and Atlanta, Georgia take on the age old question of *how to make their relationship with their parents work better*. By defining what they want in their relationship with their parents, and examining how their own actions affect that relationship, these teenagers uncover some of the keys to getting what they want in the teen/parent alliance.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

_ Stimulate young people to think critically about their relationships with their parents.

_ Help them see themselves as having the power to improve their relationships by making the right choices.

_ Encourage them to take the initiative in improving their relationships with their parents by looking at what they can do differently to cause the change.

HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO

Use in classrooms, libraries, youth service agencies, youth groups, or show it to your kids at home. Ideal for parents, too.

THE POWER OF CHOICE[®] is an entertaining and thought provoking video series designed to help you empower your young people to make good choices in their lives. You can greatly enhance the effectiveness of this video by following it up with group discussions, writing assignments, and learning activities. This guide is intended to help you in your efforts.

We recommend that, before showing the video, you ask a few questions to start the kids thinking about the issues treated in the program. You'll find some useful questions on page 6. Also, you should expect that your students will have a lot to talk about after viewing the video, so it's a good idea to allow ample time.

While this discussion guide may appear to be written for classroom teachers, any group leader or parent will find it a useful tool for getting the most out of this video program.

PROGRAM CONTENT

COMEDY: Being a parent is all about learning to let go.

INTRODUCTION: Pritchard tells us that his kids are doing a good job of raising him.

What is the ideal relationship with your parents, Pritchard asks. "To have a parent when you need a parent and a friend when you need a friend," a boy responds. "Honesty," says another. "Mutual respect," says a girl.

Asked to describe the ideal parent, one girl speaks of her mother as understanding, available and open-minded, while another praises her father for meeting all her needs. When the first girl complains that her father sees her differently than she really is, the second urges her to tell him who she is. Pritchard observes that the first girl and her father may be seeing themselves in each other, and she responds that her father doesn't let her go to house parties, knowing how he used to act at such parties.

DISCUSSION of parental involvement: A girl expresses sadness that her career-oriented dad never established a relationship with her. A boy says that parents shouldn't wait until you're in trouble to become involved. Another says that a parent should know who you are inside. A girl who feels that her parents didn't get to know her emotionally when she was younger resents their attempts to communicate now. Show your parents how you feel, advises a boy who speaks of a time when he gave his father a hug and told him he was scared. That opened things up, he says.

Are your parents too involved in your lives, Pritchard asks. A girl says that her parents wouldn't let her "blossom like a flower" or learn from her own mistakes. Her dad's control over her life and his pressure on her to excel led her, she says, to attempt suicide. A close friend observes that this girl's relationship with her parents has improved since she started doing some things they needed, like calling to let them know where she is.

PRITCHARD asks what role parents should play in your choices

about sex. A girl wants parents to give advice, but not judgments. A boy says parents can only advise you, since you make your own decisions, anyway. Another says a parent should teach you to take responsibility for your choices. Why talk to your parents when you know their views already, a girl asks, but another says that her parents' views change with time and circumstance. Parents should be teachers, says a boy, telling you for example to go to the drug store before you have sex, but they also have to be there for you when you need their help.

Pritchard observes that you can learn things the hard way, but you don't have to. A girl asks how you're supposed to become your own person if your parents make choices for you. "Maybe your parents make choices with you, suggests Pritchard," but she says she doesn't think she can say anything to change their minds. Another girl counters that parents can surprise you, as when her mom reacted calmly to a car wreck she was in.

Pritchard asks, "in an ideal relationship with your parents, what's their responsibility to you?" Letting you have "the keys to your own cage," says a girl who proved to her mother that she can make good choices. Now her mother has confidence in her.

A big part of raising your parents, Pritchard concludes, is showing them that you know how to make the best choices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Question to ask before showing the video.

1. Describe your ideal parent. Describe the ideal parent-child relationship.

Questions to ask after showing the video.

2. What does Pritchard mean by the term "raising your parents?"
3. What was the one thing in this program that meant the most to you? Why?
4. Did you disagree with what anybody had to say?
5. When it comes to raising you, what do you think your parents biggest fears are?
6. Do you think your parents are worried that they might not be doing a good enough job?
7. What do you like best about the way your parents deal with you? Have you ever told them that? Why not? What if you did?
8. Do you think your parents should give you total freedom, with no limits at all? If not, what should those limits be?
9. What do you think your parents look for in you that tells them how much freedom they can give you?
10. Does the amount of freedom your parents give you change? What are the factors that influence those changes?
11. What worries do your parents have about you? How can you alleviate their fears so that they will not be overprotective?
12. In an ideal relationship with your parents, what would be

their responsibility to you and yours to them?

13. Can a parent really be your friend? Give an example of a time that happened in your life. Did you let your parents know that you needed them to be your friends, or did they make that choice?
14. One boy in the program said that it's okay for parents and kids to express anger with each other, that it's necessary for mutual honesty. How can you do that without starting a yelling match that might interfere with mutual understanding?
15. Is there a way to argue or negotiate with a parent so that there is neither a winner nor a loser?
16. A girl says that it is hard to be a parent. In what ways might it be hard to be your parent? Explain.
17. Is there anything you could do that would make it easier for your parent to be the kind of parent you want?
18. In what ways are you and your parents alike? Do those similarities make it harder or easier for you to get along?
19. How do you regain a parent's trust after you have lost it?
20. How might you help your parents find the right balance between being under-involved and over-involved with your life?
21. Do you think that, if you have children, you will be a different kind of parent than your parents are? Do you expect to do a better job than they did? In what ways?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. As a class project, write an instruction manual about how to be a good parent. Make a list of topics and then brainstorm ideas that should be included in each topic. Assign these topics to different people to write about. Compile all this material, print it up, and distribute it to parents.
2. Divide into small groups for some peer helping. Each person describes the major problem or limitation he or she faces in relating to their parents. The others then suggest options their peer might have in improving this situation. The point of this discussion is not to come to a conclusion, merely to present a number of options before going on to the next person.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Describe the major barriers that stand between you and your parents. Differentiate the ones you think might be changed from those that probably can't be. Describe one thing you could do that might weaken or bring down one of those barriers.
2. What do you admire about the way your parents perform their role as parents? What do you disapprove of in the way they perform this role? How could you help your parents be better parents?
3. If you were your parents, what would you do differently?
4. Write a 30 second public service announcement giving advice to the parents of your community.
5. Interview a grandparent, either by phone or in person. If possible, record, transcribe, and edit selected responses for your assignment. Ask questions focusing on your grandparent's relationship with his or her children. For example: "How did you and Mom get along when she was my age?" "How much freedom did you give Dad when he was my age?" Write about what you've learned from this interview, and what ideas it gives you for dealing with your parents.

ABOUT MICHAEL PRITCHARD

Michael Pritchard is a juvenile probation officer turned comedian/youth counselor/public speaker. After his college graduation in 1973, Mike went to work for the St. Louis Police Department and then relocated to San Francisco's juvenile hall. In his years of working with young offenders, Mike discovered that his penchant for humor served as a powerful counseling tool, enabling him to break down communication barriers and help a lot of troubled kids turn their lives around. As Mike is fond of saying, ***"the shortest distance between any two people is a good laugh."*** Mike's unusual combination of talents gained him recognition as California's "Probation Officer of the Year" the same year that he won the San Francisco International Comedy Competition.

Whether he's being funny or serious, Mike's big love is talking with kids about the choices they make in their lives. He teaches young people that they have the power of choice, that they are responsible for the choices they make, and that they owe it to themselves to choose the best.



"The shortest distance between two people is a good laugh."

HOW THIS PROGRAM WAS PRODUCED

THE POWER OF CHOICE began as a one-hour TV special for PBS. Our aim was to create a show for teenagers that would be both entertaining and educationally useful. With this goal in mind, we took San Francisco comedian/ youth counselor Michael Pritchard and a TV production crew to four high schools across the U.S. to talk with kids about how they make choices in life.

At each school Mike entertained a student assembly with comedy about growing up. Then, he led small groups of students in highly productive problem-solving sessions. These groups were selected by the schools before we arrived (we asked for a representative mix of students). The kids we got were amazingly candid. They revealed deeply personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and shared useful solutions and insights. We captured all this on videotape using three cameras, and edited the material down to a one-hour show.

When the program aired on PBS, educators and broadcasters expressed enthusiasm for having it made into a series. So, we immediately began work on eleven new half-hour programs exploring a whole range of issues important to teens. To develop the content, we spent one full semester at schools around the San Francisco Bay Area meeting with students and teachers. Following that, we took Mike and our production crew on a nine-week, 21 state tour of high schools throughout the U.S. (see list).

We returned with more than 100 hours of material, and spent five months editing the eleven new programs. The series was televised on PBS and is used in classrooms, libraries, and youth groups throughout the U.S. and other countries.

LOCATIONS

THE POWER OF CHOICE was shot at the following high schools:

San Francisco, Calif.

Lowell H.S.

Denver, Colorado

West H.S.

Biloxi, Mississippi

Biloxi H.S.

New York City

Murry Bergtraum H.S.
for Business Careers

San Rafael, Calif.

San Rafael H.S.

Los Angeles, Calif.

Venice H.S.

Phoenix, Arizona

Washington H.S.

Albuquerque, N.M.

West Mesa H.S.

Dallas, Texas

Woodrow Wilson H.S.

Wichita, Kansas

Southeast H.S.

St. Louis, Missouri

St. Thomas Aquinas/ Mercy
H.S.

Nashville, Tennessee

McGavock H.S.

Atlanta, Georgia

Northside H.S.

Gainesville, Florida

Buchholz H.S.

Columbia, S.C

Dreher H.S.

Washington, D.C.

School Without Walls

Philadelphia, Penn.

George Washington Carver
H.S. for Engineering &
Science

Wayne, New Jersey

Wayne Hills Senior H.S.

Brooklyn, New York

Edward. R. Murrow H.S.

Boston, Mass.

Newton North H.S.

Cleveland, Ohio

Glenville H.S.

Detroit, Michigan

Cass Technical H.S.

South Bend, Indiana

La Salle H.S.

Chicago, Illinois

Senn Metro Academy

Madison, Wisconsin

West H.S.

Bloomington, Minn.

Thomas Jefferson H.S.

Fremont, Calif.

Irvington H.S.

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Program Titles

- 1: THE POWER OF CHOICE
- 2: ACTING ON YOUR VALUES
- 3: SELF-ESTEEM
- 4: COPING WITH PRESSURES
- 5: DRUGS & ALCOHOL - Part 1
- 6: DRUGS & ALCOHOL - Part 2
- 7: DRINKING & DRIVING
- 8: SEX
- 9: FRIENDSHIP & DATING
- 10: DEPRESSION & SUICIDE
- 11: COMMUNICATING with PARENTS
- 12: RAISING YOUR PARENTS