

THE POWER OF CHOICE

TEACHING GUIDE

For Use With
Program 2

ACTING ON YOUR VALUES

Discussion Questions

Group Activities

Writing Assignments

Program Background

**Licensing Agreement
including
Public Performance Rights**

While today's teens are often characterized as the *me generation*, caring only about themselves, conversations with many of these young people reveal quite a different story. As one student in Cleveland puts it, "My father always says that we're the *lost generation*, but I keep telling him, 'We're the future, and if we're the lost generation, then the future's gonna be lost.' And that pushes me because I don't want to be the lost generation."

In this program, comedian/youth counselor Michael Pritchard, talks with students in Philadelphia, Atlanta, Cleveland, and Minneapolis, to discover how *knowing what we value can guide us in making choices that are right for us*.

It is a candid exploration of the values on which today's teens base their lives, where those values come from, and what meaning they have, as teenagers grow toward adulthood.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

To stimulate young people to think critically about their behaviors and beliefs.

To explore the benefits of knowing what our own values are.

To discover how our values can serve as a tool for making good choices.

To reveal how living by our values gives us power over our lives and elevates our self-esteem.

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

HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION: "If you were given a million dollars, what would you do with it?" The answers include: living off the interest, throwing a big party, shopping, buying a car, paying for college, giving money to parents and supporting a shelter for the homeless.

DISCUSSION on what these choices reveal about values in our society. Kids speak about materialism, the power of money, and the pursuit of self-gratification.

PRITCHARD asks how corruption in the government and the business world affect people's values. He hears that those who were children during the Watergate era don't look to the government as a moral guide. "The battle's got to start with me," says one boy who later explains that he is recovering from drug addiction.

HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION: It's Christmas, your family is broke, and you find a wallet with \$267 in the parking lot of a drive-in restaurant. Do you keep the money or try to find the owner?

DISCUSSION between a redhead who would give the money to her mom and a classmate who would return the money - her mother wouldn't let her keep it.

PRITCHARD asks what you gain by knowing your values. Independence, says the redhead. Without values, notes another girl, you might get dragged into something you don't want to do. A third says that values are a foundation for life.

An ROTC cadet speaks about the painful choice she made between her injured boyfriend who needed her and her career goal of going to West Point.

PRITCHARD asks, how clear are you about what your values are? One person says his are not established yet, another says that she's getting back in touch with values she abandoned during her "walk on the wild side," and the recovering drug addict says that he learned that values can keep him on track for life.

PRITCHARD asks, where do we get our values? The redhead thinks they come from family, but that her grandmother's and mother's values don't work for kids in today's world; another girl gets her values from religion; and a boy says that he ignores his religious heritage and instead lives by the way he sees life.

PRITCHARD asks for role models. Answers include: Charles Darwin, a friend who always helps people, and a single mom. The single mother's son explains that when you look up to someone, you really "look up through them, and you see what motivates them to be the type of person that they are, and that helps you to make a lot of choices in your life."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before showing the video.

1. If you were given a million dollars, what would you do with it? What does your choice reveal about your values?
2. What does knowing your values have to do with making choices?
3. Where do your values come from?

Questions to ask after showing the video.

4. In Pritchard's dilemma over what to do about the lost wallet at Christmas time, what values are in conflict? What choice would you make?
5. The ROTC cadet who gave up her boyfriend indicated that she felt she had betrayed her values. Do you think that's true? What values were in conflict for her? What would you have said to her if she were your friend? If you had to choose between your career and loyalty to someone who needs you, how would you make that choice?
6. Can you think of an incident when you had values in conflict? How do you (did you) choose between them?
7. Have you ever made choices that were at odds with your values? Were you aware of it at the time? What made you realize there was a contradiction? Can you explain why it happened?
8. How do you feel when you act contrary to your values? Have these feelings ever led you to reevaluate your choices?
9. One girl in the program said that after temporarily abandoning her values, she had to learn to like herself again. Explain.
10. Who are your heroes and/or role models, and which of your values do they embody?
11. How clear are you about what your values are? How did you come to realize what your values are?
12. Has anything ever happened that made you question or change your values? What happened, and what was your response? How do you feel about the outcome?
13. Have any of your values changed over the years? Have certain ones remained unchanged? What is the difference between those that change and those that don't?
14. Do the values of one generation become outdated in the next?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write about a person whom you admire. Characterize that person's values and give examples of how he or she lived up to these values.
2. Write a list of questions to ask your parents about their values and the relationship between those values and their life choices. In so doing, explore any contradictions you may perceive between your parents' stated values and their actions.
3. Realistically describe the values that you live by, whether or not you are proud of them. For each of these values give an example of how you put it into practice.
4. Think of a book or a movie or a TV show in which a fictional character had a values conflict. Describe the situation. What are the values in question, and how is the conflict resolved?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Divide the class into small groups. Each group runs a hospital emergency room. On a night when only one surgeon is available three cases arrive at the same time, each requiring immediate surgery. They are: a teenage boy knifed in a gang fight, a grandmother with heart trouble, and a 40-year-old illegal alien who was hit by a car while running from the border patrol. List the factors you need to consider in deciding who to operate on first, prioritize these factors, then decide the order in which the patients will go into surgery. Then rejoin the class and explain how you arrived at your decision.
2. Divide the class into small groups. Each group runs an ad agency that may have to lay off lot of people, including one member of your group, because business is slow. Your company has been offered a contract from a biotechnology laboratory to give germ warfare a good image. If you accept it, every one of you will keep your job. First decide whether to accept the contract. If you turn it down, decide which one of you gets laid off. Then return to your class, report the results of your meeting, and explain your decision(s) in terms of the values in question.

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