

## VIDEO TEACHING GUIDE

for use with  
Program 7

# PREVENTING CONFLICTS and VIOLENCE

In the Youth Guidance Video Series



### EDUCATIONAL GOALS

#### YOUNG ADOLESCENTS LEARN:

- How conflicts escalate, and what they can do to prevent that from happening.
- How their attitudes and behaviors can exacerbate the problem.
- Not to tolerate violence.
- That violence is a choice, not an inevitability, and that they have the power to avoid it in most cases.
- Ways of dealing with anger.

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- ▶ **Trigger group discussion**
- ▶ **Stimulate critical thinking**
- ▶ **Boost self-esteem**

*Big Changes, Big Choices* helps young teens work their way through the turmoil of early adolescence while making positive, healthful life choices. In each program TV cameras follow comedian / youth counselor Michael Pritchard to middle schools around the country, as he thrills young audiences with warm humor about growing up and engages them in problem solving sessions about serious issues that affect their lives.



**The purpose of this video program is to shape young people's attitudes by appealing to their minds and their hearts.** By watching and discussing these videos, kids will come to a deeper understanding of the issues presented in the videos, think more critically about their own choices and behaviors, and gain confidence in their own better instincts.

## HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO

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

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 can expect your students to 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.

## ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

This program challenges the underlying attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that contribute to a climate of conflict and violence in our schools and communities. We look at how conflicts typically develop and how fights can be avoided. Insults and other disrespectful behaviors are discouraged. Kids are urged to find ways of controlling their anger, and to realize that violence is always a choice—a very bad choice.

## PROGRAM CONTENT

Mike Pritchard on stage delivers a comic monologue about two best friends getting into a fist fight over a silly misunderstanding.

### PART I

#### HOW CONFLICTS START

Teentalk: Pritchard leads a group of middle school students in a discussion that reveals that conflicts often start over "dumb stuff" - trivialities such as name-calling or minor disagreements and antagonisms. Often these small conflicts get out of hand and someone gets hurt. Sometimes it even escalates into deliberate violence and the use of weapons. Many of the kids seem resigned to the constant potential for violence in their schools and neighborhoods. They maintain that it's just something you have to get used to because it happens all the time. One girl claims there is nothing she can do to prevent becoming personally involved in a violent confrontation. Pritchard ends this portion of the discussion by telling the kids that there is a lot they can do to prevent that from happening to them.

Pritchard on stage encourages the kids to take personal responsibility for steering clear of violence. He mentions several ways they can do that.

### PART II

#### MISDIRECTED ANGER

Teentalk: Pritchard asks the kids whether they've ever blown up at somebody for no good reason. We hear several personal stories from the kids about venting their anger inappropriately at innocent friends or family members.

#### HOW CONFLICTS ESCALATE

The kids talk about some of the hot buttons that lead to escalating violence. They report that they are likely to lose their tempers when they are called names, when their family members (especially their mothers) are insulted, when they are accused of something, and when they are not being listened to.

## PART III

Pritchard on stage recalls a humorous story about two juvenile hall inmates who couldn't back off from a fight even though they both wanted to. He concludes by exhorting the kids to proudly walk away from violence.

Teentalk: Discussion about how difficult it can be to walk away from a fight.

### RESOLVING CONFLICTS WITHOUT FIGHTING

Pritchard asks the teentalkers to suggest positive ways to resolve conflicts without fighting. Recommendations include: listen to the other person, let him/her know how you feel about the situation (but not in a mean way), understand the other person's point of view, walk away, use words instead of fists, and respect each other.

Pritchard on stage brings it all to a close by making the point that whenever people react violently they are making a choice. And in this time of life, when they go through so many changes and face so many choices, it's up to them to make the right choice.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask **before** showing the video.

1. Agree or disagree: When you get into a conflict with someone, it's okay to hit and call names.
2. Do the conflicts here at school sometimes get violent? Why? Are these things really worth getting violent over? Is it okay to get violent? What's bad about violence?

Questions to ask **after** showing the video.

3. Did anybody in this video say anything you disagree with? What would you say to that person?
4. Have you ever gotten into a fight because you were upset about something else?
  - What happened?
  - How did you feel afterward?
  - What did you learn from that?
5. When somebody says something insensitive to you, should you confront him/her on it? What's a good way to do that without starting a fight?
6. Have you ever said something in the heat of an argument that you regretted later?
7. Do you find it easy or difficult to apologize when you are wrong? Why is that?
8. When is it okay to hit another person?
9. Why are some people violent?
10. Why do some people get so angry when somebody says something insulting about their mother?
11. Some of the kids in the video said that violence is just something you have to get used to because it happens all the time. What do you think of that kind of an attitude? Is it a good idea to get used to violence? Why, or why not?

12. One girl in the video claimed there is nothing she can do to prevent becoming personally involved in a violent confrontation. Do you think she's right? What would you tell her if she said that to you.

13. How does it make you feel when you see people hurting each other in a fight?

14. Whose responsibility is it to prevent violence?

(Tip: It's yours, because you are the only person you have control over.)

15. Do you think there's something wrong with someone who will just walk away from a fight?

16. Some people think it's very hard to just walk away from a fight. Why do they feel that way? Do you agree? What could you do to make it easier for yourself to walk away.

17. What are the benefits of resolving conflicts in a peaceful and positive way?

18. What was most meaningful to you in this video?

## HOW TO PREVENT FIGHTS

Conflict is a normal part of life. We all have occasional conflicts, even with people we love. But we shouldn't let little conflicts turn into big fights, especially violent ones. Here are some rules for keeping conflicts from getting out of control.

- 🍏 Tell the other person what's bothering you - but do it nicely.
- 🍏 Don't let your emotions take control.
- 🍏 Listen to the other person.
- 🍏 Try to understand how the other person is feeling.
- 🍏 No name-calling or insults.
- 🍏 No hitting.
- 🍏 Don't yell or raise your voice.
- 🍏 Look for a compromise.

And, if all else fails, ask somebody else to help!

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Have you ever gotten into a disagreement with a friend and it got way out of hand? What happened? Was it worth it? What did you learn from it? What would you do differently now?
2. Write about a time when you either physically hurt somebody or were, yourself, physically hurt by someone else. How did it happen? How did it make you feel? Did you change anything or make any decisions based on that experience? What did you learn from it?
3. Many people think there is too much violence on television. They say it makes us less sensitive to real violence in our homes and communities and more tolerant of it. And they say it sometimes even encourages some people to do violent things. What do you think about all this? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
4. Imagine that some day you will have a child. Write a letter of advice for that child to open when he or she reaches the age you are right now. Tell the child what you have learned and how you feel about violence and violent behavior, and how you hope he or she will deal with violence in his or her own life.

## GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Brainstorm ways to deal with anger without fighting.

2. Role play: Take a particular conflict situation (either give it to them or let them make it up). One person's objective is to escalate it into a fist fight. The other person's objective is to resolve it peacefully, or at least prevent a fight. After the role play, have the class analyze what each person did to satisfy his/her objective. What general principles or guidelines can be drawn from this?

3. Define what constitutes violence by discussing each item on the following list. Is this violence? Why or why not? Can you think of a case where this might or might not be a violent act?

- A big kid keeps a smaller kid from getting into the lunchroom by physically blocking the entrance.
- A boyfriend and girlfriend are having a disagreement, and when she tries to walk away he grabs her arm and won't let her go.
- Physically forcing another person to have sex.
- Shoving somebody out of your way in the hallway.
- Spitting at somebody.
- Beating somebody up.
- Threatening to beat somebody up.
- A couple of kids corner another kid in the lavatory and demand that he or she give them money.
- A kid is walking to school and two or three other kids follow behind yelling nasty insults.
- Deliberately voicing any kind of hurtful insult at another person.
- Yelling angrily at another person.

## ABOUT MICHAEL PRITCHARD

Michael Pritchard is a juvenile probation officer turned comedian / youth counselor / public speaker. After his college graduation, Mike went to work for the St. Louis Police Department and then moved 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."

## Big Changes, Big Choices LICENSE AGREEMENT

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