

LEADER'S GUIDE



LIFE STEPS
with Michael Pritchard



Program #11

**Developing
Healthy Relationships**

Series Overview

LifeSteps is a 12-part series designed to help students build character and develop the social and emotional skills they need to become responsible, caring, and successful adults. With well-developed social and emotional skills, young people will be more aware of their feelings and more capable of managing them. They will be better able to set goals, make decisions, solve problems, and relate to other people effectively. In school, these skills can increase motivation, lessen anxiety, improve study skills and boost academic achievement.

LifeSteps uses lively, unrehearsed student-centered discussion, dramatized dilemmas that accurately reflect teen experience, and themed comic interludes that deliver their message through humor. Filmed with actual students in schools across the country, each program is culturally sensitive and multiethnic. The series covers a broad range of skills and attributes: self-knowledge, self-control, resiliency, empathy, problem solving, developing interpersonal relationships, building character, respect, responsibility, and working towards success. Each of these skills and attributes is an important component of social and emotional intelligence.

The underlying structure of the *LifeSteps* curriculum is an eight-step problem-solving strategy. Explored in depth in Program #6, *Creative Problem Solving*, this strategy is demonstrated in each program and provides students with a flexible, practical approach to managing the social and emotional challenges they face every day. The eight steps are:

- 1. Stop and calm down**
- 2. Name the problem**
- 3. Understand others**
- 4. Brainstorm solutions**
- 5. Evaluate and choose**
- 6. Make a plan**
- 7. Reflect and adjust**
- 8. Reward yourself**

Although each program has unique objectives, they all share the goal of providing students with the above important life skills. The *LifeSteps* approach can help teens think through difficult situations and make good choices, during a stage in their development when they are driven by strong emotions.

How to Use This Program

This program is designed for use in classrooms, community centers, youth organizations, camps, teen groups, libraries, or for children at home. Although teens are the target audience, parents, teachers, school administrators, school support staff, counselors, social workers, youth workers, peer counseling trainers, mentors, and anyone else who has regular contact with, and a commitment to, young people can benefit from the program. This Leader's Guide is aimed at teachers, but it can be used by any group leader who wants to get the most out of *Developing Healthy Relationships*.

As with the other programs in the *LifeSteps* series, *Developing Healthy Relationships* is intended for use as part of a learning experience that begins before viewing the program and ends beyond the classroom walls. The discussion questions and activities are intended to focus and enhance this learning experience.

Before showing *Developing Healthy Relationships* to your students, you may find these steps helpful:

- Screen the program at least once, noting areas where you may want to stop the tape to focus on a particular issue.
- Read this guide through to get a sense of how you can use the program, what discussion questions would work best, and what follow-up activities would be most productive.
- Ask the students questions to get them thinking about some of the key issues presented in this program. You might want to distribute copies of the discussion questions on pages 6 and 7. Be sure to review the questions in advance to make sure they are clear to you and appropriate for your students. You can then use them to encourage discussion after the screening.

Peer education, rather than frontal teaching, is the technique that underlies the entire *LifeSteps* series. Because we believe that teen viewers will more easily learn the skills and attitudinal changes proposed if they are taught by their peers, the programs are structured around discussions where real teens grapple with tough situations and model positive solutions.

Objectives

- To identify personal support systems and understand the benefits of using them
- To foster open communication with adults
- To recognize trust and honesty as a critical foundation for all relationships
- To learn the qualities of true friendship and be able to navigate changes in friendships
- To understand the effect of peer pressure and develop effective refusal skills

Synopsis

Michael opens with a story illustrating the need to work on maintaining healthy relationships. He then asks the group who makes life fun for them; responses include parents, siblings, and best friends. The teens talk about what these relationships provide. One boy says a day isn't complete without talking to his parents. Another points out that parents support you and the things you do, adding that his mom never misses any of his wrestling matches. With a wide smile, a girl says of her friends, "They make me laugh. We just have a ball every single day." A third boy tells how he enjoys working with his grandfather, and still another says his tennis coach is always there for him, both in sports and academics. Michael asks him what it does for teens to have outside adults in their lives. The boy replies that it lets you be open and allow others to help you with your problems.

"Who do you guys talk to other than your parents?" Michael asks. One girl talks to her friends' mothers, and another adds that her best friend's mom won't give her advice that is typically "motherly." A girl who is not close with her parents talks to neighbors or friends' parents. Michael notes that these adults can help teens balance their options.

Michael asks, "Are there things you can talk to your best friends about that you can't talk to your parents about?" Laughing, the group responds with a strong "YES!" One boy says there are things his mom would freak out about, and another adds that friends may be more honest with you, while parents try to be uplifting.

Asked about friends who have come through for them, a boy says that without his friend, he probably would have been beaten up or jailed. A girl says her friends visited her after her suicide attempt; she knows she can talk to them and has realized that people do care about her. Michael tells her that he's proud of her and glad that she's here with the group.

Michael then asks the group about times they helped friends in difficult situations. One boy and his mom intervened when his friend was being beaten by his step dad; they got the friend placed in a foster home. Being able to tell his mom about this situation made the boy trust her even more, and having an impact on someone's life made him feel better about himself. Michael praises the boy for having done the right thing.

Michael shares an anecdote which illustrates that teen friendships can be hard. He comments that learning to negotiate the changes in friendships is an important skill. Next, Michael introduces the first dramatization about Terry, who is getting very bored with her best friend Debra. She meets a new girl, Jenny, who invites her to a party. Older kids will be there, and Terry thinks her parents won't let her go. Jenny says that Terry should tell her parents she is sleeping at Jenny's house; Jenny's brother will cover for them.

The teens say that Terry is excited about the party, but doesn't want to get in trouble. Michael says, "She is going to lie to her parents, isn't she?" Teens agree, and a boy says that lying breaks the natural trust between parents and kids. A girl says she was once in a situation similar to Terry's. Now her new friend and her original friend have become friends with each other. A boy adds that his new friends don't prevent him from seeing his old friends; he likes to do different things with different friends.

Next, Michael asks the teens if anyone has ever lost a friend. One boy's parents wanted him to stay away from a kid who wasn't a good influence. He lost the friend but gained more; his parents taught him how to make good decisions about choosing friends. "Simple choices in our lives, guys, simple choices about what we want," Michael comments.

Several teens say Terry should go to the party. One girl says she would bring a cell phone because you don't know what's going to happen, but it's still worth going. A boy adds that even if she doesn't become friends with the kids at the party, it's always good to have acquaintances. A girl raises a new question: would the kids at the party help Terry out if something bad happened to her?

Michael asks if anyone ever wanted to do something, but knew they couldn't ask their parents for permission. One girl tells about a time she snuck out with her boyfriend and was caught. Another thought her parents wouldn't allow her to go to a concert; she was surprised when they did. She learned that it was worth taking the risk of asking. Michael questions what might happen if Terry goes to the party without permission. A girl says she'd be putting herself in danger, and Michael asks whether the desire to have fun outweighs the potential danger. One boy says, "If I'm going to get in trouble, I might as well have as much fun as I can right now." The group laughs, and Michael responds that thinking about "right now" is what the teenage years are all about.

In the second dramatization, Terry is at the party. She feels weird about having lied to her parents, but is glad she went; there are lots of boys and the music is great. At the same time, she feels scared. Many of the kids are older, and they are drinking. She tries to stay close to Jenny, who hands her a glass and pressures her to drink.

Michael asks about Terry's feelings. A girl says she's beginning to feel like the party is not where she should be. A boy thinks she feels pressured by trying to fit in with people who are "older" and "cool." Several boys share that the pressure is indirect; one says that "...even if you want to say you don't care about what people think..." and another quickly chimes in, "you do."

Michael asks who would take the drink, and why. A girl says sometimes you feel like you have to try something new. A boy adds that people's reactions make it "really, really hard" to say no. Michael asks what Terry could say if she didn't want to drink, and suggestions include: "I'm the designated driver"; "It's against my religion"; and "I don't like throwing up." Michael engages one girl in a mock dialogue, using lines teens use to pressure others into drinking. Repeatedly refusing, she firmly stands her ground. A boy says he may feel the pressure, but if he doesn't want to do something, he would just say he couldn't handle it. A girl introduces an additional issue—concern for her reputation. She notes that Terry could get really drunk, and who knows what she might do? Michael makes the point that when people drink, their choices get more clouded; the group agrees.

In the third dramatized segment, Terry is very concerned. It's getting late, and Jenny has been drinking a lot. Terry doesn't know where Jenny is, and thinks she went off with an older boy. Guys are hitting on her; she's scared and wishes she could talk to Debra.

Michael asks the group what they think. A girl says Terry is feeling really alone; another girl adds that she needs someone to be there for her, other than Jenny. Michael asks about Terry's options, and a girl says she would call her parents, knowing they wouldn't want her to make bad decisions. Several teens agree that their parents would feel the same way. Michael notes that feeling unsafe is a big concern, and that having a plan can help teens feel safer.

Michael asks why it is important to stay close to parents, even though it's often difficult to do so. One girl says even though teens don't realize it, they will be close with their parents for the rest of their lives. She shares that talking about personal things with her

mom helps her and has made her realize the importance of a close relationship.

"What does a true friend give us in life?" Michael asks. A boy responds that a true friend gives you someone to trust—you can share your problems and your friend won't judge you. A girl shares a deeply personal experience about a difficult time, when she felt alone and unable to go to an adult for help. When she "hit rock bottom," she knew she had to talk to someone and went to her best friend. Michael asks how having that friend helped. The girl says it makes life easier and more joyful; you can't hurt yourself because you are both leaning on each other. Very gently, Michael says that he's glad she has such a friend in her life, but sometimes it is necessary to reach out to an adult for help. The girl says she's learned to do that; recognizing the problem as serious, her friend encouraged her to talk to her mom. Now, she has a better relationship with her parents and feels able to open up to a lot of people. Her friend helped her realize that she wasn't the only one with problems, and that others wouldn't judge her for what she was going through. Characterizing this relationship as healthy, Michael encourages the teens not to be closed to others during difficult times.

Michael concludes onstage, with Mark Twain's well-known observation that as he grew older, his father grew smarter. He points out that all teens need help from friends, teachers, counselors, coaches—and especially parents.

Discussion Questions

1. Having fun is an important part of a healthy relationship. Think about the different relationships you have: friends, parents, siblings, other family members, etc. What are some of the ways you have fun together?
2. Are you able to talk openly to your parents? How does their reaction affect your ability to talk to them? Can you talk to one parent more easily than the other? If so, why?
3. Other than your parents, who do you consider to be part of your personal support system? Why have you included these particular people?
4. What qualities do you think make a person a good listener? Does talking to a good listener help you think your problems through? How?
5. Michael asks the group if they have friends who have come through for them. Have you had situations where a friend helped you? Disappointed you? What happened? How did your friend's behavior make you feel?
6. In a healthy relationship, support is a two-way street. Tell about a time when you helped a friend. What effect did your support have on your friend? On you?
7. In the dramatization, Terry lies to her parents so she can attend a party. What impact might lying have on parents' willingness to trust teens? Do you think lost trust can be regained? How?
8. Do you find it hard to say no when you are pressured to do something against your

better judgment? Explain your answer. What are three techniques you can use to help you say no?

9. A boy in this program says that friends are often more honest than parents. Do you agree?

10. In choosing friends, what attributes are most important to you? Which of your attributes do you think your friends value most about you?

Activities

1. Your parents' rules do not permit you to drive your friends at night. They return home after an evening out and learn from another parent that you have broken this rule. Have three teams role-play the conversation between you and your parents. After the role-play, have a group discussion on how teens can regain their parents' trust if they have broken family rules.

2. Select an adult with whom you have a close and honest relationship. Write a letter to that person, describing what the relationship means to you. If you are comfortable doing so, send the letter.

3. Find a quotation that reflects your thoughts on the value of friendship. Using your personal experience with friends to illustrate your points, write an essay explaining the significance of this quotation.

4. Before corporations make decisions, they analyze the risks involved. Write a paragraph describing a situation involving a relationship, either real or imagined, that has both risks and advantages for you. Weigh the risks versus the advantages and decide your course of action, focusing on the importance of healthy relationships. Present your analysis to the class.

5. A sociogram is a diagram that shows the relationships between people in a group, usually showing which other people they prefer to associate with. Draw a sociogram of your group of friends. Include the positive and negative effects each person has on you. Use your sociogram to help you decide whether these friendships are healthy for you. (NOTE: To maintain confidentiality in a group where the participants know each other well, consider doing this as an individual activity.)



About Michael Pritchard

Youth educator, humorist, actor, former probation officer, and PBS host, Michael Pritchard is known across the United States for his ability to help young people gain self-awareness. He has a unique ability to get teens to listen and open up, and uses his distinctive style of humor to share serious messages with his audience—messages about making good choices, personal responsibility, and respect for others.

Michael's award-winning series include: *SOS: Saving Our Schools*; *PeaceTalks*; *You Can Choose*; *The Power of Choice*; and *Big Changes, Big Choices*. A nationally acclaimed motivational speaker, Michael serves on the boards of directors for The Guardsmen, The Giants Community Fund, the Special Olympics, the California Association of Peer Programs, the Chinese-American Educational Institute, Ronald McDonald House, and the Salvation Army.



Program Titles

- Program #1 The ABCs of Emotional Intelligence
- Program #2 Knowing Who You Are
- Program #3 Taking Charge
- Program #4 Bouncing Back
- Program #5 Empathy, Caring and Compassion
- Program #6 Creative Problem Solving
- Program #7 Getting Along with Others
- Program #8 Building Character
- Program #9 Respect
- Program #10 Responsibility
- Program #11 Developing Healthy Relationships
- Program #12 Doing Your Best

Each program is approximately 30 minutes long.

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