

THE POWER OF CHOICE

TEACHING GUIDE

For Use With
Program 3

SELF- ESTEEM

Discussion Questions

Group Activities

Writing Assignments

Program Background

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The way we feel about ourselves affects every aspect of our private and social lives, and has tremendous influence on the kinds of choices we make. This issue has taken on such importance that government task forces and university researchers have been commissioned to study the impact of self-esteem on personal and social responsibility.

In this program, host Michael Pritchard and high school students from Albuquerque, Detroit, Dallas, Wichita, and Columbia, S.C., consider *what self-esteem is, what it does for us, and how we can tap into it*. The underlying message of this show is that good self-esteem leads to good choices, and good choices lead to greater self-esteem. As one boy in Detroit said, "Really, the only thing that you can really count on in your life is that you know yourself. I have my self-esteem. I know what I can do. You have to take it from there."

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

To stimulate young people to think about their level of self-esteem.

To make them aware of the relationship between their self-esteem and the quality of the choices they make.

To uncover some of the factors that can enhance or undermine their self-esteem.

To sensitize them to the affect their own actions have on the self-esteem of others.

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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: Pritchard tells the story of Gina, who did not let her high school classmates' jokes about her weight affect her self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION: Our self-esteem or lack of it has a tremendous influence on the choices we make, especially in our teenage years.

DISCUSSION: A girl says that her self-esteem derived from her parents' praise of her, as when her father told her she's too tough to cry. Another girl says self-esteem is important but often overlooked. A blonde says that people with self-esteem have confidence, and a girl in a pink sweatshirt says that self-esteem enables one to overcome disappointments in life.

A former athlete tells the story about having to find a new basis for his self-esteem after an injury prevented him from playing football. It took him a year to learn that he didn't have to be a jock to be popular.

A blond-haired boy says that his self-esteem was shattered when a girl he was in love with jilted him for an older guy.

PRITCHARD remarks that we run a risk when we base our self-esteem on something outside ourselves. The roots of self-esteem must grow within us. He tells the story of a chronic C student, whose self image was transformed when a computer error gave him a high SAT score. Believing he was brilliant, he started behaving like an A student - studying hard and taking pride in his schoolwork. The result was that he got A's.

By the time he learned of the computer error it didn't matter. A girl talks about being down on herself for getting low grades in geometry even though she studied extra hard for that course. She finally learned to accept the fact that she has no aptitude for geometry although she is very good in other subjects.

PRITCHARD points out that criticism can help us achieve our best, but when we turn it against ourselves, it can undermine our self-esteem. This point is dramatically illustrated by a boy in Dallas, who, despite his talents and popularity, reveals a low self image. He refuses to acknowledge his good qualities, choosing instead to dwell on what he perceives to be his failings. He says that he stays away from people because he doesn't like to get hurt; an unkind word makes him feel bad about himself. His classmates, who think very highly of him, express their surprise at his evident low self-esteem.

PRITCHARD observes that people whom we think have got it made can still have low self-esteem. He asks what we might do to help others feel better about themselves.

A girl tells the story of how she consoled a friend who has a heart condition by praising her for her "inner heart." She hadn't realized before what a profound affect she could have on the way someone feels.

Another girl comes to the realization that the nasty things she says to her brother hurt his self-esteem. She decides to start being more supportive and loving toward him.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before showing the video.

1. Think of someone you know who has high self-esteem. How can you tell that person has high self-esteem, what are the signs? What are the signs of low self-esteem?
2. What does self-esteem do for a person?

Questions to ask after showing the video.

3. Where does self-esteem come from?
4. Pritchard says that self-esteem, or lack of it, has a big influence on the choices people make. Is that true, and if so, why?
5. Can you think of a time when making a very good choice made you feel very good about yourself? Can you think of a time when making a very bad choice made you feel very bad about yourself? Can making good choices help you raise your self-esteem?
6. Is "self-esteem" simply a popular catch-phrase or is it really important? If it is important, why is it, as one girl says in the program, often overlooked?
7. Pritchard remarks that many of the kids he worked with in juvenile hall suffered from low self-esteem. What is the connection between low self-esteem and the trouble these young people had gotten themselves into?

8. What can happen when a person's self-worth is based upon something that will not last, like fame as an athlete?
9. The boy whose girlfriend left him for an older guy says that after losing her, he was not there for himself and that even now, pieces of himself are missing. What is he missing, and what would you counsel him to do to get it?
10. Has any event in your life had a significant effect, positively or negatively, on your self-esteem?
11. If you are your own worst critic, does that mean that you have low self-esteem?
12. In what ways can criticism help your self-esteem; in what ways can it hurt?
13. How can you give someone criticism without lowering his or her self-esteem?
14. How much power do you have to affect the ways that others feel about themselves? Give an example.
15. Pritchard says that self-esteem has its roots inside us. If this is true, and if Gina-Gina-Round-and-Fat could have high self-esteem despite the taunting of her classmates, what difference does it make whether we tear each other down or build each other up?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. List the skills you are best at. Then list the skills you want to develop. Then set a realistic plan to acquire one particular skill. Promise yourself you will carry out this plan.
2. Write a page about yourself - your skills, accomplishments, goals - that you might use in searching for your ideal job. Then write a page about your personality, your likes and dislikes, that would describe you to your best friend.
3. Write a description of the time you felt best in your life and explain how that feeling allowed you to grow as a person and contributed to your sense of who you are.
4. Imagine yourself twenty years in the future. Then write about what your life is like, what you have achieved, how you made it happen, what major problems you faced, how you dealt with them, and who has been the most influential person in your life.
5. Write an essay in which you describe how your home life contributes to your good or bad self-esteem.
6. What is the thing you like most about yourself? Why? Keep a daily journal in which you make at least one entry a day describing your good qualities and your accomplishments.
7. What would you like most to change about yourself? What is stopping you?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Make a list of words and phrases that are put-downs of other people or of yourselves. Phrases like "I'm a loser" or "you can't do anything right" undermine self esteem. After discussing the impact of negative language, decide as a group that you will not use these words. In fact, you might consider making you and your friends put a nickel in a kitty every time they use one of these negative words or phrases. Donate the funds to a charity or project that makes you feel good as a group.
2. From magazines you have around the house, cut out advertisements that produce negative images of teenagers. Put these ads up on a bulletin board. Discuss how you would like to see teenagers portrayed in ads in ways that would increase their self-esteem.
3. Break into two teams and research and debate the following proposition "Poor self-esteem causes negative social behavior."
4. Media project. Record television programs off the air, and then choose scenes that either make teens feel good about themselves or bad about themselves. Show these scenes in class and discuss their positive or negative impact.

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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THE POWER OF CHOICE

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