

10-PART VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERIES

LEADER'S GUIDE

# *PeaceTalks*<sup>™</sup>



**PROGRAM #10**

## **STEPPING UP TO PEACE**

Distributed by:

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## ***PeaceTalks: Series Overview***

Violence is a choice, and each and every one of us can reduce violence and make our lives safer by choosing peace. Choosing peace means understanding that violence is not random, universal, or inevitable. We can prevent and reduce violence by choosing to avoid or deescalate conflicts and avoid risk factors for violence such as alcohol, drugs, guns, and gang membership. This is the underlying message of the 10-part *PeaceTalks* video series featuring humorist and youth counselor Michael Pritchard.

Filmed across America, in real schools with real students, each *PeaceTalks* video program turns its attention to one aspect of the spectrum of violence that young people face in their everyday lives: managing anger, resolving conflicts, dealing with bullies and troublemakers, the issue of respect, sexual harassment and dating pressures, racial conflicts, peer pressure, gangs, and triggers to violence such as drugs, alcohol and guns.

In these programs, Michael and the young people take a long and honest look at kids' lives today and how the violence in our society affects them. Michael uses his special talents of humor, warmth, empathy and understanding to help the teens discover for themselves the choices they have and the answers to living together peacefully. Together, they look at the basic changes teens need to make in their attitudes and beliefs, and the skills they must learn in order to step up to peace.

*PeaceTalks* offers a three step program for choosing peace which is the unifying theme for all ten programs. These steps are:

1. Predict Consequences
2. Cool Down
3. Walk Away

Throughout the videos, Michael encourages young people to have the maturity, confidence, and composure to walk away from insults and confrontations, and channel peer pressure into a positive force for peace in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

## **How To Use This Video**

This video is designed for use in classrooms, community centers, youth organizations, camps, teen groups, libraries, or for children at home. Although teenagers are the target audience, parents, teachers, school administrators, school support staff, counselors, social workers, youth workers, peer counseling trainers, and anyone else who has regular contact with and a commitment to young people would benefit from the video as well. This Leader's Guide is aimed at the classroom teacher, but it can be used by any group leader or parent who wants to get the most out of STEPPING UP TO PEACE.

As with the other videos in the *PeaceTalks* series, STEPPING UP TO PEACE is intended to be used as part of a learning experience that begins before viewing the program, and ends beyond the classroom walls. The discussion questions, activities, projects and events suggested in the guide are intended to focus and enhance this learning experience.

Before showing STEPPING UP TO PEACE to your students, the following steps would be useful preparation:

- Screen the video at least once, and note areas where you might want to stop the tape to probe an issue more fully.
- Read this guide to get a sense of how the video might be used, what discussion questions would work best with your students, and what follow-up activities or projects would be most appropriate and beneficial.
- 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 page 6 of this guide. Be sure to go over these questions in advance to make sure they are understood and that they are appropriate to your students. They can be used to spark discussion after the screening.

The teaching technique underlying the entire *PeaceTalks* series is peer education. 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 kids grapple with tough situations and model positive solutions and attitudes.

### **Stepping Up To Peace: Objectives**

- To examine why there has been a breakdown in our sense of community
- To explore ways we can develop a stronger community
- To emphasize the value of each individual
- To consider the power of compassion and positive thinking

### **Stepping Up To Peace: Synopsis**

Michael begins the video by talking about what it was like to grow up in a small town where, if he did something wrong, his parents knew about it before he got home. Although it sometimes drove him crazy, it also made him feel safer. Some communities are still like that, but many are not. Today, too many kids feel they are pretty much on their own without a network of support.

“Let’s talk about the atmosphere here at school, in the general neighborhood, and in the community. Would you say that it’s friendly or not so friendly?” Michael asks a group of students.

Although some students feel their neighborhood is a tough place, most agree that it depends on how you carry yourself and how other people see you.

“Do you think teenagers respect power more than kindness?” asks Michael.

The kids answer yes, responding that people want to earn their stripes and get their name around. No one wants to be seen as “a punk.”

“The kids who respect power more than kindness, what does it say about them?” Michael asks.

“Those kids are lost,” answers one girl.

A boy replies, “No one is born lost. It all stems from the home ... if you’ve learned morals at home,

and if you've been taught a sense of self-value."

A girl comments that the community used to raise children. Now, parents are alone trying to raise their kids on their own.

"Do you think you belong to a community or are you pretty much on your own?" Michael asks one group.

One boy says that you have your family and friends and you might know people around the block, but it's not like you get together and do things.

"It's not like television where everybody knows everybody else. If it was like that, society would be better. But it's not like that, and you have to face up to that fact," adds another boy.

The kids agree that there's a sense of community within the group you hang out with, but not with other people. "What does that do for a sense of community if we all hang out in different pockets and groups?" Michael asks.

"It weakens it," answers one student.

"Does it build up suspicions between groups?" Michael asks.

One student tells about her school's Black History Month celebration a few years earlier. Some of the white students didn't have an interest in or respect for the celebration and wouldn't participate, and many black students were insulted. A series of fights broke out afterwards between some of the black and white students.

"What does it mean to our sense of community when violence breaks out?" asks Michael.

"It breaks us up. It isolates us and it divides us," answers a boy.

A girl tells about a boy in her neighborhood who was killed as a result of gang activity. The victim's friends told her that they were going to get revenge, but she told them that revenge would accomplish nothing, only cause more violence.

Several young people share feelings about the tragedy of young people dying or going to prison as a result of something as meaningless as fighting over a street corner.

According to Michael, creating a sense of community isn't easy. But it starts when we wake up to the fact that we're all in this together. If we're going to make it, we need to help each other out.

Michael describes a hypothetical situation to the group: "Your best friend is driving a car and you and a few friends are passengers. Your friend accidentally hits someone riding a bicycle. The person gets up, then falls back over. So, you know that the person isn't dead but you don't know how badly they're hurt. Your friend panics, hits the gas, and keeps driving. The other kids in the car say, 'Go, Go, Go.' You're sitting in the front. What would you do?"

At first, most of the kids say they wouldn't stop to help. They would just go along with their friends. Finally, one girl says, "What if it happened to you? Wouldn't you want someone to stop and help you? We're talking here about trust and love in the

community, but you'd just be adding to the problem."

And a boy says, "That's a person ... a human being on the ground. Get out of your car and see if they need help."

The discussion is personalized when one boy shares a story about his grandmother having a heart attack in downtown San Francisco. When she came to, lying on the sidewalk, people were walking over her. "You should stop," the boy says. "This may not be someone you know or love, but it's somebody who somebody loves. Even if you don't know them or love them, it's a human being." The boy's feelings cause many of the teens to rethink their earlier response to keep going.

"Even split second decisions can have serious consequences, especially when it is something as basic as helping a stranger in need," concludes Michael. The decisions we make in these pressured situations say a lot about who we are, our values, and our sense of community.

"By stopping, what values do we show?" asks Michael.

Consideration ... caring ... responsibility ... respect ... are some of the students' answers.

"And what does it take to stand up to someone who wants to keep going?" Michael asks.

The students say that it takes courage and a conscience. Michael asks why it is important to have compassion.

One girl says that to have a community, you have to care about the people around you. If you don't have compassion, there's no reason for them to have compassion, and then everyone is in their own little box.

When Michael asks the group if anyone ever had someone reach out to them in a compassionate way, one boy says that another boy in the group had reached out to him by becoming his friend. The boy had been a gang member, into drugs, alcohol, knives, guns, and every other kind of destructive behavior.

This one boy saw through his tough attitude and approached him as a friend. Through that friendship with someone who saw the best in him, he moved away from the negative things in his life and became a better, more caring person.

"That's what it's all about," Michael says, "the power of positivity, the power of the heart, the power of love."

Another girl says that it's the people who value kindness and love rather than power who are really powerful. They are the ones with the real power because they can take that power and help someone else.

In another school, a group talks about how you can develop these positive values. One boy tells about a support group he and his friends have established in school. The group has become their community where they can get things off their chest and get support from peers.

According to one club member, "You have to start a little community of your own and

build on that. And if everyone else has the same intention, they can build their own community ... Sooner or later, they're going to bridge the gap that's between us. If you want support, you've got to start helping people and bringing people together."

To sum up, Michael says that people often talk about the community as though it was something out there, apart from us, but it's not. Communities are built by people just like us, reaching out to help one another.

### **Stepping Up To Peace: Discussion Questions**

1. Michael Pritchard asks the students if power or kindness gets more respect. Overwhelmingly, the answer is that power gets more respect. Do you agree? Can there be power in kindness? If so, how?
2. According to the video, there has been a serious breakdown in our sense of community. Do you agree? Why or why not? If you agree, what have been some of the consequences of this breakdown? How can we regain our sense of community?
3. The video addresses the cyclical nature of violence, from attack to revenge, to counter-revenge. Why doesn't violence ever really solve a problem?
4. Michael Pritchard poses a hypothetical situation to the students in which they are in a car and their best friend, the driver, accidentally hits a bicycle rider. Everyone else in the car wants the driver to keep going. What would you do in this situation and why?
5. Standing up for what you believe can be especially difficult when it goes against what your friends are doing or saying. What are some of the qualities or values that help you stand up for your beliefs?
6. One of the students in the video says that if you don't have compassion, no one will. What do you think she means by that? What does compassion mean to you, and do you think you have it?
7. A boy in the video tells a story about his grandmother having a heart attack in downtown San Francisco. He says that even if someone is a stranger to you, that stranger is still a person who is loved by somebody. What do you think of that statement? How could a concept like that make a difference in our community?
8. What are some of the different communities to which you belong?
9. Who do you feel is responsible for creating a sense of community?

### **Stepping Up To Peace: Classroom Activities, Projects, and Events**

1. Organize an art contest around the concept of community and unity. The winning design will be painted as a mural on campus with students participating in its creation.
2. Have each student make a list of five different ways to show respect to others.

Ask students to rewrite their lists in the form of goals they will try to live up to in their daily lives.

3. Ask students to develop and organize a community-wide event which encourages local residents to come together for a common purpose. Whether it is cleaning up an empty lot, painting an outdoor mural, or any other activity, use the experience to help students realize their influence on and responsibility to one another and their community.

4. Assign each student to write an essay on "My Community." The piece should include steps they can personally take to make a positive contribution to their community.

5. On index cards, write down situations in which one individual has the opportunity to influence another in a positive or negative way (for example, Russell helping change Jacob's attitude by becoming his friend). Break students into pairs and give each a situation to role play. Ask students to act out the situation in two ways: one showing how you can influence someone in a positive way, the other how you can influence someone in a negative way.

## **A Few Words About Michael Pritchard**

Michael is a humorist, actor, youth activist, former probation officer and PBS host who is known to audiences across the United States for his ability to help young people gain insight into themselves and the choices they make. He gained national attention when *The Power of Choice*, his popular PBS series for teens on values and choices, first aired in 1987. His fans have grown with the release of his two subsequent series, *You Can Choose!* and *Big Changes, Big Choices*. Mr. Pritchard serves on the boards of directors for Special Olympics, The California Association of Peer Programs, and the Chinese-American Educational Institute. He also acts as a consultant to the California Consortium on Child Abuse and the Department of Pediatrics at San Francisco General Hospital.





## ***PeaceTalks Program Titles***

- Program #1 Preventing Violence
- Program #2 Resolving Conflicts
- Program #3 Managing Your Anger
- Program #4 Dealing with Bullies, Troublemakers and Dangerous Situations
- Program #5 Respecting Yourself and Others
- Program #6 Handling Dating Pressures and Harassment
- Program #7 Bridging Racial Divisions
- Program #8 Handling Peer Pressure and Gangs
- Program #9 Drugs, Alcohol and Guns: Triggers to Violence
- Program #10 Stepping Up to Peace

Each program is approximately 30 minutes long.