

THE POWER OF CHOICE

TEACHING GUIDE

For Use With
Program 1

THE POWER OF CHOICE

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As we grow toward adulthood and take control of our lives, we become increasingly responsible for the choices we make. What is our basis for making those choices? Are there any guidelines we can use, or is every decision a unique event? In this program comedian/teen counselor Michael Pritchard visits high schools in San Francisco, Denver, New York City, and Biloxi, Mississippi to show young people how to be **V.I.P.'s** - to use **V**ision, **I**nitiative, and **P**erspective as tools for making good choices.

HOW TO BE A V.I.P.

V = Vision: Have a vision for yourself. A vision of who you are, and what you want for your life. Then, make choices that support that vision.

I = Initiative: Act, don't just react. Make positive, purposeful choices for yourself rather than reacting out of fear or guilt or spite.

P = Perspective: See the big picture. Don't get so swept away by the passions of the moment that you lose touch with your real priorities.

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 7. 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.

This program (unlike the other eleven programs in the series) is almost an hour long. Since it has four major divisions, you have the option of showing it over several sessions, or all at once. For your convenience of use, these four divisions are reflected in the way the material in this guide is organized.

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

PART I: GROWING UP

COMEDY: Growing up and making choices.

TEENS describe problems: a father who judges appearance; parents who compare to friends; confusion over career; a mother who doesn't believe her daughter's problems are real.

PRITCHARD: Growing up is like learning to fly your own plane.

PART II: VISION

COMEDY: Pritchard introduces *vision*. Be the hero in your own movie. Pritchard tells the story of a retarded youngster working at McDonald's who has a strong vision of himself.

PRITCHARD says if you have a good vision of yourself, you'll make good choices. If you have a bad vision of yourself, you'll make bad choices.

HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION: "You're offered a \$500 bike for \$100. You know it's stolen. Do you take it?" One boy, who says he'd take the bike, ends up in direct conflict with his own idea of who he is. Another boy says he wouldn't take the hot bike because that's not the kind of person he is. Pritchard points out to the group how important their vision of themselves is in guiding their choices.

DISCUSSION: A girl tells how loving yourself helps you take control of your life.

Part III: INITIATIVE

PRITCHARD introduces *initiative*.

COMEDY: Pritchard illustrates the consequences of reacting out of spite by telling the story of a street kid rebelling against authority. "I'm tired of people telling me what to do. I'm gonna join the Marine Corps."

DISCUSSION of peer pressure. A boy tells how his friends used to pressure him into shoplifting with them. He doesn't let that happen any more. "Let me lead my own life," he says. A girl tells that drugs used to control her life, but now they don't, because she took the initiative to ask for help.

DISCUSSION of drinking and drugs. A girl says many teenagers would like to give a non-drinking party but they're afraid nobody would come. They're waiting for someone else to take the initiative. A former cocaine user says people respect him when he turns down drugs, and it makes him feel good about himself.

HYPOTHETICAL: "What would you do if a friend tried to leave a party with a drunk motorcycle driver?" They emphatically agree they would stop her, and they would expect their friends to do the same for them.

PRITCHARD sums up *initiative* with a story of a retarded actress portraying God. When an audience member asked why his prayers aren't always answered, she replied, "I make the sky blue, I make the grass green. Some things you have to do for yourself!"

PART IV: PERSPECTIVE

COMEDY: Pritchard illustrates *perspective* with a story of how his wife's sense of humor helped them through their baby's life-threatening illness. "You don't stop laughing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop laughing."

PRITCHARD: When we lose sight of the big picture, we often hurt the people and things we most care about.

DISCUSSION: The ex-cocaine-user tells how he senselessly isolated himself from his dad because drugs caused him to lose perspective. A girl tells how she got carried away with using her mother's automated bank card.

PRITCHARD: Perspective keeps us mindful that there are consequences to everything we do, including sex.

DISCUSSION of sex and teen pregnancy. Two teenage mothers

describe their experiences. A boy says: "I think sex is an adult game."

COMEDY: Pritchard illustrates the link between humor and perspective. Tells about playing war with his son. Gets the audience to make silly noises.

DISCUSSION about how to deal with depression. Suggestions include; 1) having friends who love you; 2) talking to your mom; 3) writing a letter to God; 4) doing something constructive, concentrating on homework, staying active; 5) telling people how you feel; 6) crying.

COMEDY: Pritchard talks about love and cooperation. He tells the story of a runner at Special Olympics who stopped at the finish line and waited for the others to catch up, so they could all cross the finish line together. "We all win!" He tells the high school audience that their generation is going to be expected to fix a lot of what is wrong with the world, and assures them that they can do it because they are the best and the brightest generation ever to arrive on this planet. "All you have to do now is prove it. (laughter) And you will."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before showing the video.

1. What is your definition of a "good choice," and how do you know when you've made one?
2. Do you have any guidelines for making good choices?

Questions to ask after showing the video.

Part 1 - Growing Up

3. What did you find most meaningful in this segment of the program? Why?
4. One boy said he can't decide whether to become a lawyer and pursue money, or a game warden and pursue happiness. Can you suggest some criteria for making a choice like that? How might self knowledge help?

Part 2 - Vision

5. What does it mean to have a **vision** of yourself? [See V.I.P. guidelines on page 2.]
6. How can vision help you make choices?
(Tip): Vision gives you a frame of reference. You can ask, "which of these options is most consistent with my vision of myself?"
7. Pritchard talks about being the hero in your own movie. What does that mean, and how can it help you make choices?
(Tip): If we observe ourselves as if we were watching a movie, it's easier to see if our actions are consistent with who we think we are.
8. What did the discussion about buying a stolen bike have to do with "vision"? (See tip on next page.)

(Tip): It made the kids see the conflict or unity between the choices they make and the vision they have of themselves.

Part 3 - Initiative

9. What does Pritchard mean when he talks about having *initiative*? [See V.I.P. guidelines on page 2.]

10. How does taking the initiative help you make good choices? Who is in control?

(Tip): You are making the decision based on what's right for you. You are in control.

11. What happens when you do not take the initiative? Who is in control?

(Tip): The situation dictates your actions. You give control to someone or something else, and that often results in poor choices.

12. How can not making a choice be a choice in itself?

Part 4 - Perspective

13. What does Pritchard mean by *perspective*? [See V.I.P. guidelines on page 2.]

14. What does perspective have to do with making good choices?

(Tip): It keeps us from overreacting. We stay in touch with our priorities, and we don't lose sight of the consequences of our actions.

15. The girl who overused her mother's bankcard had lost perspective on what she was doing. What was the result?

(Tip): She stole money from the person she loves the most - her mother.

16. What happens to your perspective when you get depressed? How does that affect your ability to make good choices? What can you do about it?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. What is your vision of yourself? Does it help or hinder you? Are you satisfied with that vision? In what ways would you like to improve on it?
2. Are your actions usually consistent with your vision of yourself? In what ways? Give some specific examples.
3. Describe an instance when your actions conflicted with your vision of yourself? Describe it. How did it make you feel?
4. Write about a time when you, or someone you know, made a bad choice by reacting out of fear or guilt or spite? What did it feel like?
5. Describe an instance when you made a choice you felt really proud of. What was so special about that choice? In what ways did that choice show vision, initiative, or perspective?
6. Write about an incident when you got so carried away with something or someone that you lost perspective and made some bad choices? What was the outcome? What can you do in the future to prevent that from happening?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Create a hypothetical problem situation and have your students brainstorm ways to solve it. Write all their potential solutions on the board, then test all these solutions against the V.I.P. guidelines. Determine which is (are) the best solution(s).
2. Have your students keep a V.I.P. journal for a week, a month, or a semester. In these journals they should make note of any choices they make that seem significant, and what those choices reveal about their vision, initiative, and perspective.

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