

THE POWER OF CHOICE

TEACHING GUIDE

For Use With
Program 6

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL PART II

Discussion Questions

Group Activities

Writing Assignments

Program Background

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In the current national push to "just say no" to drugs and alcohol, very little is being said about what to do when someone we care about has "just said yes." During his national tour of high schools, Mike Pritchard found that many of the kids were having trouble coping with friends and relatives who are abusing drugs and alcohol.

In this program, Pritchard and high school students in Albuquerque; Atlanta; Madison, Wisconsin; and Fremont, California, examine how chemical abuse damages relationships, what you can and cannot do about it, and how to respond when a chemically dependent person asks you for help. It is a useful and enlightening look at *what to do when someone you care about is hooked*.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

_ To show how drug and alcohol abuse affects friends and family members of the user.

_ To point out ways that friends and family members sometimes respond which are either ineffective or which contribute to the problem.

_ To reveal some ways of responding or intervening that often do work.

_ To clarify what power friends and family members do and do not have in the situation.

_ To show them they can make a difference and inform them about where they can go for help.

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

INTRODUCTION: When people abuse alcohol and drugs, it doesn't affect only them, it has a big impact on their family and friends.

DISCUSSION: Several kids talk about their thoughts and experiences with drug problems among their friends. A boy speaks about feeling helpless as his good friend became preoccupied with drugs and drifted apart from him. After his friend "fried his brain," the boy felt guilty about not doing more to help him. But he didn't know what he could do.

HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION: Your very good friend is getting into a cocaine habit. What are your options? A girl says she told her friend's parents. A boy says there's not much you can do because cocaine becomes the person's best friend, and anyone who tries to interfere becomes the enemy. A discussion in Madison raises the question of whether one has the right to intervene in a friend's drug abuse. Is the user exercising free will, or has the drug taken over his/her power of choice? You can't deal with an addiction by yourself, says one girl, you have to get help. A boy describes helping a friend get counseling for her alcohol problem.

PRITCHARD asks the kids what advice they would give someone with an alcoholic friend. One girl advises telling the alcoholic you won't contribute to the problem but you will definitely help with the solution. Pritchard asks what she means by contributing to the problem. She and the boy next to her give examples of rescuing and "enabling."

A boy says that when he became a heavy drug user, his mom told him how his drug use was hurting her, instead of what it was doing to him. Her approach opened him up to what she had to say. He went into treatment.

PRITCHARD asks, "what would you do if your parent were an alcoholic or a drug addict?" A boy says he'd tell the parent how the addiction hurts him and others in their family. You can't waste your life helping your parents, argues one girl, it's too late for them. Another girl responds, "It's never too late to help someone you love." She got her brother to break his drug habit by giving him a phone number he could call for help.

PRITCHARD asks about confronting a parent who has an alcohol or drug problem. One girl says that when she confronted her dad he hit her and said she was lying. Another girl, says that her father told her she had an attitude problem. A boy says that when his father drank and hit him, he blamed himself for his dad's behavior.

What do you do if a parent won't stop abusing alcohol or drugs, Pritchard asks. One girl says her mother gave her father an ultimatum to leave home if he couldn't be a loving father, and he left, which was best for the family and forced him to face his problem. Another girl tells a similar story, but now her father is recovering and back with the family. "It's the most beautiful feeling to have all my family back," she says tearfully.

PRITCHARD concludes: You may not be able to control another person's use of alcohol or drugs, but you can choose how you yourself deal with it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before showing the video.

1. How can you tell if someone you care about is hooked on drugs or alcohol?
2. Have any of you had a friendship fall apart because of drugs or alcohol? How did drugs or alcohol affect the relationship?

Questions to ask after showing the video.

3. What effects can a person's abuse of alcohol or drugs have on friends or family?
4. Do you have the right to intervene when someone you care about is heavily involved with alcohol or drugs and doesn't seem to want anyone to interfere?
5. Should you end a friendship with someone just because he or she develops an alcohol or drug problem?
6. If you think a friend is becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol, what can you do about it? Where can you get help? Should you tell that friend's parents? How do you expect your friend might react to your attempted intervention? How can you know whether you're doing the right thing?
7. Have you ever tried to talk to a friend or family member about his/her drug or alcohol use? How did they respond?
8. One boy in the video said it made a big difference when his mother told him how his drug use was hurting her, instead of how it was hurting him. Why would that make a difference?
9. Sometimes, without realizing it, people do things that make it easy for an addicted person to keep using. Can you think of any?

Tips:

Rescuing the addict from the consequences of his drug use, e.g., covering for the person, providing an alibi, lending money.

Assuming responsibility for the addict's behavior, e.g., "If I did this or that better he wouldn't have to drink."

Accepting the addict's excuses, e.g., "If my parents weren't so demanding, I wouldn't have to use cocaine."

Making allowances for the addict's behavior, e.g., "I'd never put up with your lying if you weren't an alcoholic."

10. Have any of you been effective in helping a friend with an alcohol or drug problem? What did you do? What was the outcome?
11. One boy talked about feeling responsible for his father's drinking, e.g., if he were a better son and took out the garbage more often, his dad wouldn't drink. Do you think he caused his dad's drinking? Why do you think he felt responsible? If a friend of yours felt that way, how would you respond?
12. What can a child do to help a parent recover from an alcohol or drug problem?
13. When your parent is a drug or alcohol abuser, how do you protect yourself?

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Team up with one or two of your classmates and attend an open meeting of **Alateen** (see Group Activity #1). Then, write an account of your experience giving your observations and what you learned. Present this as an oral report to your class. **Note:** You do not have to be the friend or family member of an addicted person in order to attend an open meeting of Alateen. Visitors are welcome.
2. Friends and family members of drug or alcohol abusers often unknowingly do things that help the person keep on using. Providing this kind of help is known as **enabling**. Some of the ways people enable are listed under discussion question #9. Do some research on enabling and write an essay or dramatic scene which illustrates one or more examples of enabling behavior. You'll find the subject in almost any book on alcoholism or drug addiction.
3. People who care about a drug/alcohol abuser often want to intervene but don't know how. Research the subject of **intervention** and write an essay or dramatic scene which presents an effective example.

Writing assignments #2 and #3 can both be used as the basis for dramatized presentations or role-playing exercises.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Invite a speaker from **Alateen** to come to your classroom for a question and answer session. Alateen, the young people's division of Al-Anon, is a self-help support group for kids who are being affected by somebody else's drug or alcohol use. You can find local chapters of both organizations on the web.
2. Make a list of all the resources in your community that you could turn to for help or information regarding drug or alcohol dependency.

If someone you care about is involved with drugs or alcohol, there are several organizations you can call for immediate help.

Al-Anon is a self-help organization for family members and friends of alcohol and drug abusers. **Alateen** (a division of Al-Anon) is for kids of all ages who are troubled by another person's drug or alcohol use. If it's your own use you're concerned about, call **Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Cocaine Anonymous**.

These organizations are listed on the web and in the telephone yellow pages under "Alcoholism" or "Drug Abuse."

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