

10-PART VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERIES

LEADER'S GUIDE

PeaceTalks™



PROGRAM #2

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Distributed by:



Promoting Growth Through Knowledge

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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 RESOLVING CONFLICTS.

As with the other videos in the *PeaceTalks* series, RESOLVING CONFLICTS 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 RESOLVING CONFLICTS 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 pages 5 and 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.

Resolving Conflicts: Objectives

- To understand why conflicts occur
- To identify common triggers which escalate conflicts
- To learn about peer mediation
- To realize the value of conflicts
- To demonstrate ways to communicate differences that will preserve friendships

Resolving Conflicts: Synopsis

To open this video, Michael Pritchard shares tongue-in-cheek rules for escalating a conflict. He then asks a group of teens what some of the most common conflicts are about in the teen years.

The answers include, “Over the littlest things, like ... why are you looking at my girlfriend like that ... don’t look at me like that ... gossip ... respect ...”

“Who are these conflicts with ... parents, teachers, adults, friends?” Michael asks.

The teenagers say that most of their conflicts are with adults who don’t understand or listen to their points of view, adults who tend to automatically tell teenagers what they should or should not do and don’t really take the time to listen.

Some of the teenagers share personal stories about small conflicts with parents that escalated into bigger arguments. Michael encourages these students to look at what they could have done differently to reduce the conflict.

Michael asks if there are benefits to having conflicts and arguments. Many of the students see that a conflict can have certain benefits:

- You learn what not to do the next time
- You learn other points of view
- You are able to strengthen the relationship if you can work out your conflict

According to Michael, we often think that conflict resolution only happens in a formal setting, by sitting around a table, following some rules, and trying to work a problem out. But the basic idea of conflict resolution is good communication, and that is something we can use every day to improve all our relationships.

In the teen years, it is often through friendships that we learn how to work out our differences. Conflicts with friends can be very emotional and when a friend hurts us by being disrespectful, inconsiderate or selfish, it can be difficult to confront the problem and try to work things out. Since expressing hurt feelings may make us feel vulnerable, it is often easier just to get mad. The problem with doing this is that the pain underneath our anger never gets expressed and builds. We may feel we are preserving the friendship by avoiding conflict, but when we sit on our true feelings, we not only hurt the relationship, but we can hurt ourselves as well.

Students share stories about friendships that ended as a result of an unresolved conflict. To help the teens see that there are ways they could handle these situations even now that would resolve the conflict, Michael role plays with them.

After one role play, Michael asks if the students are familiar with “I messages.” Michael defines an “I message” as a powerful way to express feelings. It describes what is bothering us and explains why in a way that doesn’t accuse, blame or judge the other person. It also lets the other person know what they can do to make things better.

It is usually in the teen years that we begin to work with classmates on big projects. Working with someone who is very different from us can be difficult, but it often provides an opportunity to learn how to resolve conflicts.

Michael asks students what they would do in this hypothetical situation: “You and a classmate are responsible for a section of your yearbook. The classmate wants to be in control and you think he or she isn’t listening to your ideas. This classmate thinks you’re not taking the project seriously and stays up all night to complete the project alone. When he or she comes to school the next day and shows you the finished section, you think it’s good, but it doesn’t include any of your ideas. What would you say?”

Michael role plays with several students, letting each attempt to resolve the conflict peacefully with Michael pretending to be the difficult classmate.

Afterwards, Michael and the students examine what Michael did to escalate the conflict.

- He got loud.
- He didn’t listen.
- He tried to have complete control.
- He blamed the other person.
- He used name calling.
- He didn’t care about the other person’s feelings.

Working with a difficult person can teach us a lot about what not to do in a conflict. When we take a step back and see how conflicts like this one escalate, it's not too difficult to see some of the positive things we can do to calm things down before a conflict gets out of hand. The students make these suggestions:

- Let the other person get their feelings out
- Avoid negative body language
- Put yourself in the other person's shoes
- Stay cool and calm
- Listen to what the other person is saying before jumping in to respond
- Step back and look at what you are doing
- Involve someone who is in authority if you feel you can't handle the situation alone
- Wear a smile
- Show that you have good intentions

"If you find out you're wrong about something, what should you do?" Michael asks.

"Apologize," one boy says. He adds that apologizing makes him feel better because it releases all the anger that has built up during the conflict.

One aspect of conflict resolution that is often overlooked is the art of active listening. Most of us think that listening is easy, but when you're in the middle of a conflict, one of the hardest things to do is to focus on what the other person is saying and not stay stuck in your own position. Using humor is also an excellent way to restore perspective. And if things look like they're not going to get resolved, it's worth-while to take a break and get help from a third party.

Many adults have conflict resolution skills and may be able to help teens in a conflict situation. In schools across the country, there are also peer mediation programs run by teens trained in conflict resolution techniques. Schools which have these programs are usually safer and have less violence.

Several young people share their experiences of having a conflict resolved through their school's peer mediation program. All of the students agree that the programs are worthwhile and work.

Peer mediation and conflict resolution work because they're based on simple values: respect, responsibility, honesty and compromise. According to Michael Pritchard, if we look to these values when we need to resolve conflicts, we will be able to resolve our conflicts without fighting and violence.

Resolving Conflicts: Discussion Questions

1. Many teens in the video agree that most of their conflicts are with adults. Who are most of your conflicts with and what are they about? What could you do to prevent some of these conflicts or deal with them more constructively?
2. A girl in the video recalls a friendship which ended because a conflict was never resolved. Have you ever lost a friendship because of an unresolved conflict? What

happened? Could you resolve the situation now? How?

3. One girl shares a story about a friend cheating off her on a test. How could someone express their feelings about this without jeopardizing the friendship?
4. Michael jokes about surefire ways to escalate a conflict. What are some other ways you can think of to fuel an argument instead of resolving it?
5. Have you ever been involved in a team or group project where conflict or poor communication interfered with the project's completion? What happened? How could better communication have increased the level of cooperation?
6. Michael stresses that it's okay to make a mistake, and the act of apologizing can actually help us let go of our anger. Do you agree? Have you ever had an experience like this? What happened?
7. One reason people lash out when they are hurt is that they would rather be angry than vulnerable. Why do you think we respond this way? Have you ever reacted to hurt feelings by getting angry?

Resolving Conflicts: Classroom Activities, Projects, and Events

1. Make a list of positive and negative body language. Ask students to act out one of these gestures for the class. As a group, discuss why each one sends a particular message.
2. Group the students in pairs. In each pair, one student will be the listener, the other student will be the reader. Give each reader a copy of the same short piece to read to their listening partner. Then ask one listener to tell the class what he or she heard. Use that as a starting point to discuss the qualities of active listening.
3. Ask students to brainstorm appropriate and inappropriate ways to deal with anger. Review each response and discuss why it might or might not resolve a conflict situation.
4. Review conflict resolution techniques with your students and role play conflict situations and their resolution for the class.
5. If your school does not already have a peer mediation program, consider implementing such a program. Train your students in peer mediation techniques and act out mock mediation sessions for the class. Work with others in the school to institute the program school-wide.
6. Assign a written report about great compromises in history. Ask students to select one such compromise, for instance, between individuals, between political parties, or between countries. The report should include the original objectives of each side, and what each lost or gained by compromising.

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.