

LEADER'S GUIDE



LIFE STEPS
with Michael Pritchard



Program #7

**Getting Along
with Others**

Series Overview

LifeSteps is a 12-part series designed to help students build character and develop the social and emotional skills they need to become responsible, caring, and successful adults. With well-developed social and emotional skills, young people will be more aware of their feelings and more capable of managing them. They will be better able to set goals, make decisions, solve problems, and relate to other people effectively. In school, these skills can increase motivation, lessen anxiety, improve study skills and boost academic achievement.

LifeSteps uses lively, unrehearsed student-centered discussion, dramatized dilemmas that accurately reflect teen experience, and themed comic interludes that deliver their message through humor. Filmed with actual students in schools across the country, each program is culturally sensitive and multiethnic. The series covers a broad range of skills and attributes: self-knowledge, self-control, resiliency, empathy, problem solving, developing interpersonal relationships, building character, respect, responsibility, and working towards success. Each of these skills and attributes is an important component of social and emotional intelligence.

The underlying structure of the *LifeSteps* curriculum is an eight-step problem-solving strategy. Explored in depth in Program #6, *Creative Problem Solving*, this strategy is demonstrated in each program and provides students with a flexible, practical approach to managing the social and emotional challenges they face every day. The eight steps are:

- 1. Stop and calm down**
- 2. Name the problem**
- 3. Understand others**
- 4. Brainstorm solutions**
- 5. Evaluate and choose**
- 6. Make a plan**
- 7. Reflect and adjust**
- 8. Reward yourself**

Although each program has unique objectives, they all share the goal of providing students with the above important life skills. The *LifeSteps* approach can help teens think through difficult situations and make good choices, during a stage in their development when they are driven by strong emotions.

How to Use This Program

This program is designed for use in classrooms, community centers, youth organizations, camps, teen groups, libraries, or for children at home. Although teens are the target audience, parents, teachers, school administrators, school support staff, counselors, social workers, youth workers, peer counseling trainers, mentors, and anyone else who has regular contact with, and a commitment to, young people can benefit from the program. This Leader's Guide is aimed at teachers, but it can be used by any group leader who wants to get the most out of *Getting Along with Others*.

As with the other programs in the *LifeSteps* series, *Getting Along with Others* is intended for use as part of a learning experience that begins before viewing the program and ends beyond the classroom walls. The discussion questions and activities are intended to focus and enhance this learning experience.

Before showing *Getting Along with Others* to your students, you may find these steps helpful:

- Screen the program at least once, noting areas where you may want to stop the tape to focus on a particular issue.
- Read this guide through to get a sense of how you can use the program, what discussion questions would work best, and what follow-up activities would be most productive.
- 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. Be sure to review the questions in advance to make sure they are clear to you and appropriate for your students. You can then use them to encourage discussion after the screening.

Peer education, rather than frontal teaching, is the technique that underlies the entire *LifeSteps* series. 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 teens grapple with tough situations and model positive solutions.

Objectives

- To apply the *LifeSteps* problem-solving approach to everyday school activities, such as cooperative learning groups
- To learn the value of assertive, rather than aggressive, approaches to interpersonal conflict
- To develop positive ways to deal with rumors
- To strengthen mediation and negotiation skills that can help prevent and resolve conflict
- To communicate effectively through the use of I-messages and active listening

Synopsis

Onstage, Michael tells an amusing story about annoying people. Noting that getting along with others is not always easy, he begins the discussion by asking what kids in school do that is annoying. The teens mention gossiping, butting in, and spreading rumors; they agree that high school is a big rumor mill. Stories about arguments or sexual behavior spread quickly, and there are even "conversations" on the bathroom walls.

When Michael asks if these rumors have ever gotten anyone angry, a boy tells about a girl who spread a rumor about him. He confronted her, and although he tried to keep himself calm, a big argument resulted. After being involved in a fight, a girl says she now realizes how situations can escalate, and that violence doesn't solve anything.

Michael broadens the focus by asking about conflicts stemming from groups trying to

work together. A girl says she was in a group where others didn't do their share, and then blamed her for anything that went wrong. Another girl tells about a class where the students are noisy, and do whatever they want to. It is unfair to anyone who wants to learn. Michael asks the group for suggestions. Noting that this type of problem is hard to handle on your own, one teen says the girl could ask her teacher for help. The girl acknowledges that others feel the same way, and agrees that if they group together, they can get help.

The first dramatization introduces Sonya, a girl whom the other kids consider to be a top student. She is upset about what happened in a study group; Brian, a boy who never studies, constantly distracted the group by joking around. She realizes she could have talked to the group about what was happening; instead, she prepared a study sheet on her own. Brian seemed really interested in this sheet, and when she was out of the room, it disappeared. Certain that Brian took it, she urgently wants it back.

Michael asks about Sonya's feelings. Teens respond that she is angry, worried, and scared. One boy says she has a right to be so angry because someone has taken away her work; another says that Brian "used" her by taking the sheet. When a teen says Sonya doesn't know for sure that Brian was responsible, the group agrees she jumped to a conclusion. Two girls agree that Sonya is afraid to say anything, for fear of being an outcast. Asked what Sonya should have done, one girl says she should have taken control of the group and pointed out that they needed to study. The teens say it wouldn't be easy to do that. Other solutions include confronting Brian, talking to their teacher, seeing if anybody actually saw him take the study sheet, or just forgetting about it.

Bringing the problem to a personal level, Michael asks the group what they would do in Sonya's position. Some teens say they would confront Brian, while others say confrontation would just make him deny the accusation. Michael suggests a role-play. "Sonya" accuses "Brian" emphatically, and he denies having taken the study sheet. The conversation escalates to mockery and insults. After the role-play, Michael asks about the difference between aggressiveness and assertiveness. Aggressiveness is "mean," while assertiveness is "calm," one boy offers. Another boy offers a personal experience with being aggressive. He fought over a bike; the situation got out of hand and someone got hurt. He says that he could have reacted differently, possibly doing nothing at all.

Michael points out that there is a difference between assertive and aggressive reactions, and asks why it's better to be assertive. Teens agree that a calm, but assertive, approach results in a better outcome.

Onstage, Michael notes that high school teens can be really cruel to each other. By spreading rumors and putting each other down, they cut themselves off from potential friends. He introduces the second dramatization, featuring Kayla, who relates that Sonya has been accusing Brian and screaming at him. His test grade was better than Sonya's and other kids are saying that he cheated. Annoyed by all the rumors, Kayla says she knows Brian well enough to know he wouldn't have taken Sonya's study sheet.

One teen thinks that since Brian got a better grade, he may actually have taken the sheet.

Others say there are kids who understand a subject and can do well in it, even if they goof around. Asked how the rumor will affect Brian, two girls say other kids won't trust him. Michael asks why people assume something is true, just because a lot of people are saying it. One girl says no one takes the time to find out the truth. Another student adds that teens want drama and entertainment.

"What should Kayla do?" Michael asks. If people ask, she can say the rumor isn't true, one girl suggests. Another thinks Kayla should point out that Brian isn't like that. A girl says when people point out a rumor isn't true, she feels bad for even having thought it might be. Michael asks why it is important to block rumors and the girl answers, simply, "It doesn't need to go any further."

In a role-play, Michael portrays a teen gossiping about Brian, while a girl in the group plays Kayla. "Kayla" asks whether the teen actually saw Brian take the sheet. "Everybody knows he doesn't study," is the response. "Get to know him first," Kayla advises. The role-play ends, and Michael asks the girl what she just did. She says she "took up" for her friend. Expanding on her response, Michael adds that she blocked the rumor.

A girl talks about her frustration when rumors were spread about her friends using drugs. She describes how she blocked the rumors by giving the facts. Michael asks her why it's important to state the facts and she replies that then people are aware of the truth; if they still don't want to believe it, it's their choice. Again, Michael reiterates that this is how you block rumors.

In the final dramatization, Brian expresses his frustration. He can't believe everyone thinks he cheated, and points out that he's read many books on the test topic and knows a lot about it. He's upset that no one wants to talk to him—they just want to talk about him—and he realizes that he has to talk to Sonya about the situation.

Michael asks what Brian should do. One girl says he should talk to Sonya calmly and avoid name-calling and blaming. A boy thinks he should rehearse, so he doesn't say something he'll regret, and adds that if Brian talks in a nice way, Sonya might do the same. He should explain that he knows a lot about the test topic, another boy adds.

Teens add that it's important for Brian to approach Sonya one-on-one, so that their conversation doesn't give rise to new rumors. In a role-play, "Brian" tells "Sonya" he did well on the test because he knows a lot about the topic, and he didn't take her study sheet. He points out that everyone is calling him a thief and asks for her help in stopping the rumors. She agrees to try helping, and apologizes.

Michael asks what "Brian" did that was so powerful. A girl says he told "Sonya" how he felt, and Michael points out that there was no blaming, no name-calling, and no escalation. He asks the group if they know what an I-message is. One boy says it means showing what you feel, and another says I-messages are important because people who see your point of view will help you. Michael asks about active listening, and the teens define it as letting other people speak without interrupting, and making eye contact with someone who is speaking. A girl points out that the conflict would not have gone so far if Sonya and Brian had listened to each other at the beginning.

Michael asks what Brian and Sonya could have done to make this situation a win/win. They could have balanced their time between studying and relaxing, and kept each other from being too serious or too out-of-hand, teens say. Michael adds that they could have agreed to communicate. Asked about situations where listening helped to deflect a conflict, one boy tells about a time when his aunt accused him of taking her keys. He remained calm, and now he has a better relationship with his aunt. Michael points out the effect calmness can have.

Michael concludes by pointing out that conflicts are inevitable, but hard feelings are not. Asserting oneself, negotiating differences, blocking rumors, and communicating effectively are all important skills that help people get along with each other.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever had a rumor spread about you? How did it make you feel? What did you do, and what might you have done differently?
2. Have you ever spread a rumor about someone else? How did you feel when you did it? How could you have stopped the rumor, rather than spread it?
3. Teens in the program say that rumors spread because they make life more interesting. Have you ever seen the harmful effects of a rumor firsthand? Describe what happened.
4. Michael asks how to handle a situation where kids in the class are behaving in a way that prevents others from learning. Have you ever had this experience? What did you do?
5. What can members of a cooperative-learning group do to make sure that the work is spread evenly? How can they resolve the situation if there is an imbalance?
6. Can you think of a time you improved a situation by remaining calm? Made a situation worse by getting angry? Tell what happened.
7. If you think someone has behaved unfairly toward you, what would you do?
8. Conflicts may end with a win/win solution, a win/lose solution, or a lose/lose solution. What are the differences between these solutions? Why is a win/win solution the most preferable?
9. What techniques do good listeners use? How do you feel when someone really listens to you?
10. What is an I-message? Describe a time when you used an I-message in a confrontation. What effect did it have on the situation?

Activities

1. Design a game that can teach younger children how to get along with others. Arrange to play the game with a group of children. Then, discuss with the group what they have learned.

2. Two siblings have been asked to clean the kitchen after dinner. Their parents are out for the evening, and one sibling thinks the other is trying to avoid the responsibility. Role-play the situation first with an aggressive approach and then with an assertive approach. Discuss which approach worked better, and why.

3. Learn about peer mediation programs, either by inviting a speaker from your school's program or an outside program, or by Internet or library research. If your school does not have a program, design a model program and present it to the school counselor or principal.

4. Many TV shows feature conflict or misunderstandings between characters. Choose an episode from one show, and write a brief description of the situation it involved, including the methods used to resolve the conflict. If you think the resolution was successful, explain why. If you think the resolution was not successful, rewrite the ending with a better solution that depicts nonviolent conflict resolution.

5. Choose two classes (or adult-led groups) you are currently involved in. For one week, keep a record of each time the teachers (leaders) used I-messages or active listening techniques. In which class (group) were the students more involved? What impact, if any, do you think I-messages and active learning had on student involvement?



About Michael Pritchard

Youth educator, humorist, actor, former probation officer, and PBS host, Michael Pritchard is known across the United States for his ability to help young people gain self-awareness. He has a unique ability to get teens to listen and open up, and uses his distinctive style of humor to share serious messages with his audience—messages about making good choices, personal responsibility, and respect for others.

Michael's award-winning series include: *SOS: Saving Our Schools*; *PeaceTalks*; *You Can Choose*; *The Power of Choice*; and *Big Changes, Big Choices*. A nationally acclaimed motivational speaker, Michael serves on the boards of directors for The Guardsmen, The Giants Community Fund, the Special Olympics, the California Association of Peer Programs, the Chinese-American Educational Institute, Ronald McDonald House, and the Salvation Army.



Program Titles

- Program #1 The ABCs of Emotional Intelligence
- Program #2 Knowing Who You Are
- Program #3 Taking Charge
- Program #4 Bouncing Back
- Program #5 Empathy, Caring and Compassion
- Program #6 Creative Problem Solving
- Program #7 Getting Along with Others
- Program #8 Building Character
- Program #9 Respect
- Program #10 Responsibility
- Program #11 Developing Healthy Relationships
- Program #12 Doing Your Best

Each program is approximately 30 minutes long.

*LifeSteps Leader's Guides were written by
Karen Schader and edited by Sally Germain.*

***LifeSteps* was developed and produced by**

Jim Watson
HeartLand Media

Scientific Consultant

Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D.
Rutgers University, Department of Psychology Vice-Chair, Collaborative for Academic,
Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

***LifeSteps* was filmed on location at:**

Irvington High School, Fremont, CA
Dave Howell, Project Coordinator
Pete Murchison, Principal
Fred R. Turner, Director, Pupil Services and Alternative Programs

Abington Senior High School, Abington, PA
Carrie Jones, Project Coordinator
Dr. Robert Burt, Principal
Dr. Amy Sichel, Superintendent

Spring Valley High School, Columbia, SC
Beverly Hiott, Project Coordinator
Dr. Greg Owen, Principal
Dr. Steve Hefner, Superintendent, Richland School District Two

Mission San Jose High School, Fremont, CA
Fred Dillemath, Project Coordinator
Stuart Kew, Principal

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