

THE POWER OF CHOICE

TEACHING GUIDE

For Use With
Program 8

SEX

Discussion Questions

Group Activities

Writing Assignments

Program Background

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Recent polls have indicated that more than half of America's teens are sexually active by the age of 17. Meanwhile, the incidence of teen pregnancies is at an all-time high, proving that they're not very careful about what they're doing. This kind of behavior would be problematic enough without the ominous backdrop of a raging AIDS epidemic, but with risks of such magnitude, teen sexual activity calls for some serious guidance and consideration.

In this program, Michael Pritchard encourages teenagers to think more critically about their attitudes and approaches to sexual behavior. Students from Columbia, S.C.; Gainesville, FL; Wayne, NJ; Washington, D.C.; Dallas, Texas; and New York City, consider the thorny issues they face in making decisions about sex, and grapple with the question of *how to make choices tonight that you can live with tomorrow*.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

_ To stimulate young people to think critically about their expectations and behaviors regarding sexual involvement.

_ To get them to look realistically at the potential consequences of choosing to be sexually active.

_ To motivate them to make those choices for themselves, and to act responsibly on the choices they make.

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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: Teenagers are faced with choices about sex that can be either very difficult or far too easy. And their decisions can have a major impact on the lives of other people as well as on their own lives.

PRITCHARD asks how you know when it's okay to have sex. "You don't," says one girl, and a boy points out that one needs to know the difference between real love and puppy love, but distinguishing them is a problem. One girl says a person needs to be ready for sex because it creates a lot of feelings. Another says that there's a lot more to a relationship than sex and that a friendship should develop before physical intimacy.

DISCUSSION over rules for sex. A curly-haired boy asks, what do rules matter in the heat of the moment. Another boy says he never had sex with the girl he loved, but he told girls he didn't care about that he loved them in order to have sex with them. A boy in glasses says that he pursued a promiscuous girl during a time in his life when he had low self-esteem and needed to be liked.

PRITCHARD asks, where can you get information on sex. An older relative, says one boy, who will tell you "the bads and the goods," not just "the goods," as a friend might.

The curly-haired boy says that his mother, knowing he is sexually active, gave him condoms to prevent babies and AIDS. Parents have learned from their own mistakes, says the girl beside him. Another girl says parents are scared for their kids because once you have sex and make a mistake, they can't change it.

DISCUSSION about methods of transmission of AIDS. They observe that people don't talk much about AIDS in their high school and don't imagine that it can happen there.

DISCUSSION over who should be responsible for birth control.

Guys should provide condoms, says the curly-haired boy; another boy thinks it's the girl's responsibility to protect herself. One girl says that both partners should pay for birth control pills, and another notes that some girls carry condoms in their purse in case the guy doesn't have one.

HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION: You are at a party and someone who really turns you on wants to have sex, but neither of you has protection. What do you do? A boy in suspenders says he would have sex; he would think about the possible consequences before and after, but not during. He acknowledges that a moment of sexual pleasure is not worth the risk of jeopardizing his future, but he'd do it anyway, due to "stupidity."

A girl says that she made the wrong choice during a moment of passion and now she has a baby. She should have made her decision beforehand. Being at a party, especially when drinking, can impair a person's judgment.

A blonde girl says that she and a friend have not been as close since the friend became sexually active. Being less experienced makes her feel inferior. But she is indignant when people suggest that she needs to "get laid." That is her personal choice to make.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask before showing the video.

1. What is your pet peeve about members of the opposite sex when it comes to attitudes about sex?
2. What kinds of pressures are there to be sexually active?
3. What are your biggest concerns about sex?

Questions to ask after showing the video.

4. Who in this videot do you most agree with? Who do you disagree with? Why?
5. What makes it okay to have sex? What are some good guidelines?
6. How do you explain the double standard in which boys are respected for their sexual activities while girls are criticized for them?
7. How important is it to become friends before having a sexual relationship? To be in love before having a sexual relationship? To be married before having a sexual relationship? Are people who think and act differently than you wrong or immoral?
8. How would you respond if someone told you that you had to have sex with that person to prove your love?
9. When a person has, or wants to have, sex with someone he or she doesn't love, is there any reason to find out how that person is feeling? What are some of the emotional risks that a person might take in having sex?
10. Is there a link between promiscuity and low self-esteem? Explain.

11. What are some common misconceptions about AIDS? What are the ways in which AIDS can be transmitted?
12. How do you know that a potential sex partner is not infected with the AIDS virus or another sexually transmitted disease?
13. What kinds of information do you think you need in order to make good decisions about sex? Where are some good places to get that information?
14. What role, if any, should your parents play in helping you make choices about sex?
15. Some of the kids in this program talked about responsibility in a sexual relationship. What exactly is responsibility in sex?
16. Many of teens in this program advocated using birth control to protect against sexually transmitted diseases and un-wanted pregnancies. Do you agree with them? If so, whose responsibility is birth control?
17. What are the most effective forms of birth control?
18. When is the time to talk about birth control, before or after becoming lovers? Who should bring up the subject, and how?
19. Sexual choices may have serious consequences, yet according to the kids in this program, some have sex without protection and without thinking about what might happen. Why not?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. List all the misconceptions about sex you can think of.
2. List all of the sexually transmitted diseases. Discuss how they can be prevented and what to do or where to get reliable information if one gets one of these conditions.
3. Imagine that someone you really like wants to have sex with you, but you don't feel ready for it. Brainstorm some ways to say no without jeopardizing your relationship. Try role-playing this situation with both girls and boys in the role of the person saying no.
4. List all the stereotypes you can think of about sexuality: for example, that the most beautiful girls have the most boyfriends, or that if a guy doesn't want to sleep with a girl, something's wrong either with him or with her. Then discuss each one, considering why people believe it and whether or not it's true.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Make an inventory of your attitudes and beliefs about sex. Select two that you feel most strong about and write a paragraph defending each one. Then write a one-paragraph counter-argument for each one in which you take the opposite point of view.
2. Think of someone you imagine has a great sex/love life. This can be a movie star, a fictional character, a friend, anyone. Now write a list of questions about sex or love you'd like to ask that person.
3. What are your rules for sex? Where did you get these rules? How well have they served you?
4. Movies, TV, and other media often make it look like normal people have sex at the drop of a hat. How does this casualness affect you - your expectations and attitudes about sex?
5. If you could make the world perfect, how would people treat sex? What would the rules be? What would people's attitudes and behaviors be?

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