

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 5

DEALING with PRESSURES

In the Youth Guidance Video Series



EDUCATIONAL GOALS

YOUNG ADOLESCENTS WILL:

- Become more aware of the kinds of pressures they live with.
- Recognize how those pressures affect the way they feel and the kinds of choices they make.
- Understand how pressure can make them lose perspective.
- Learn some good ways to deal with pressures.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

p. 2	Introduction
p. 4	Program Content
p. 6	Discussion Questions
p. 8	How To Prevent Fights
p. 9	Writing Assignments
p. 10	Group Activities
p. 11	About Michael Pritchard
p. 12	License Agreement

- ▶ **Trigger group discussion**
- ▶ **Stimulate critical thinking**
- ▶ **Boost self-esteem**

Big Changes, Big Choices helps young teens work their way through the turmoil of early adolescence while making positive, healthful life choices. In each program TV cameras follow comedian / youth counselor Michael Pritchard to middle schools around the country, as he thrills young audiences with warm humor about growing up and engages them in problem solving sessions about serious issues that affect their lives.



The purpose of this video program is to shape young people's attitudes by appealing to their minds and their hearts. By watching and discussing these videos, kids will come to a deeper understanding of the issues presented in the tapes, think more critically about their own choices and behaviors, and gain confidence in their own better instincts.

HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO

Use in classrooms, libraries, youth groups, or show it to your kids at home. Ideal for parents, too.

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 tape, 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 can expect your students to have a lot to talk about after viewing the tape, 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.

ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

Entering middle school and becoming a teenager brings a batch of new pressures. Increased school work, higher expectations, greater stakes for academic performance, dating, social acceptance, bigger responsibilities and parental demands, more choices, more freedoms, all contribute to a lot of stress. This program explores positive, healthful ways for young adolescents to cope with it all.

PROGRAM CONTENT

Mike Pritchard on stage before a middle school audience gives a comedy introduction about how pressures have gotten worse with each new generation. He concludes that the amount of pressure you have isn't as important as how you deal with it.

PART I

SOURCES OF PRESSURE

Teentalk: Pritchard leads a group of middle school students in a discussion about how pressures have changed since elementary school. They name such pressures as sex, fitting in, having friends, increased responsibility, greater schoolwork demands, pressure to drink and do drugs.

A girl says that in elementary school they all played together, but now they're fragmented into groups. A new boy in school says the biggest pressure on him is to get identified with a group. A girl comments that there's only a pressure if you put it on yourself.

Other pressures discussed include: pressures to be attractive, pressure to prepare for the future, and the pressure that comes from becoming more aware of the awful things going on around the world.

The discussion turns toward good pressures, which include pressure to do work on time and pressure to be yourself instead of what others want you to be.

Pritchard on stage says when he was a teenager everybody had a Levi's jacket, and he tells what it was like convincing his mom he had to have one.

PART II

HARMFUL PRESSURES

Teentalk: Pritchard asks if there is pressure to act in certain ways. A boy talks about pressure to take dangerous dares. A girl tells about pressure to fight.

Pritchard asks if they feel any pressures to perform or achieve at high levels. Three girls

talk about how their parents make them feel bad by comparing them to other kids in the family who are honors students. Pritchard suggests telling their parents how that makes them feel. Another talks about being compared to her sister all the time and how she holds it in until it's too much and then she blows up. Pritchard asks if that's a good way to deal with it. She says that in the future she's going to talk to her parents right away instead of letting it build.

Pritchard asks how many of them hold pressures in instead of dealing with them right away. Almost all raise their hands. A boy says he doesn't want his parents to think he's a sissy. A girl says that's not healthy because when you hold things in you don't show emotions and you can be cold to your friends.

Pritchard on stage says that sometimes pressures are so great that you want to submerge inside yourself like a submarine. He concludes that part of growing up is learning good ways to deal with pressures.

PART III

DEALING WITH PRESSURES

Teentalk: Discussion about knowing when pressure is too much. One girl says she blows up at people. Another gets a headache and yells at friends. Another gets depressed and cries, or puts on an attitude.

Pritchard asks: What are some good ways to deal with pressures? Responses include: find somebody you can talk to, take a walk, do something nice for yourself, talk to your pet. Pritchard asks if pressures ever make us lose perspective. One boy replies that sometimes the pressure becomes all you can think about. A girl says that sometimes you shouldn't take things so seriously because when you've grown up you'll look back and laugh. This leads to a discussion about how a sense of humor can get us through hard times.

Pritchard on stage concludes that keeping perspective in the face of pressures is a good choice. And it's up to you to make the right choices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Questions to ask **before** showing the tape.

1. What pressures are you under?
2. Is all pressure bad, or can some pressures be good?

Name some good pressures. Why are those good?

Name some bad pressures. Why are those bad?

How do you tell the difference between good and bad pressures?

Questions to ask **after** showing the tape.

3. Did anybody in this video say anything you disagree with? What would you say to that person?

4. In what ways are the pressures on you changing as you get older?

5. What are the most serious pressures you are feeling?

6. Are most of the pressures you feel internal pressures or external pressures? What's the difference?

7. Can you think of a time when you felt like you were getting a lot of pressure from others, but it turned out that you were actually putting that pressure on yourself?

8. Do you ever put so much pressure on yourself that it makes it hard to enjoy what you're doing?

9. Do you ever put unfair pressure on yourself because you can't say "no" to people? Is that good? How could you change that?

10. Several of the kids in the video complained that their parents compare them to other kids. Does that ever happen to you?

How do you feel about that? What are some good ways of dealing with it?

11. Do you ever put pressure on yourself by comparing yourself with others? Is that good?

12. What's the worst way you've ever dealt with a pressure? How could you have handled it better?

13. What's the best way you've ever dealt with a pressure? What did you learn from that?

14. Do you think pressure sometimes affects the way you make choices? In what way?

15. How do you know when pressure is getting to be too much?

16. When you're having a big problem do you always try to work it out on your own or do you ever reach out for help? Why? When might it be best to reach out for help?

17. Does pressure sometimes make you lose perspective? (It may help to have a discussion here about perspective) How does losing perspective affect the choices you make?

18. Did anybody in this video say anything you disagree with? How would you answer that person?

19. What was most meaningful to you in this video?

HOW TO DEAL WITH PRESSURES

Pressures are a normal part of life. And entering middle school and becoming a teenager brings a whole batch of new pressures. What really matters, though, is not how much pressure you have, but how well you keep it all in perspective and deal with it. Here are some positive, healthful ways of dealing with pressures.

- 🍏 Take time out.
- 🍏 Do something else for a while - exercise, read, see a movie, listen to music.
- 🍏 Talk to someone - friends, parents, a teacher or counselor.
- 🍏 Ask for help.
- 🍏 Take a fresh look; brainstorm new solutions.
- 🍏 Don't be overly critical of yourself; give yourself a break.
- 🍏 Think of your past accomplishments.
- 🍏 Think about your good qualities.
- 🍏 Learn your limits; don't take on more than you can handle.
- 🍏 Put things in perspective; pressures usually pass.
- 🍏 Write in a journal.
- 🍏 Use your sense of humor.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write about the kinds of pressures you feel:

- a) as a student
- b) as a friend
- c) as a son or daughter or family member.

How do you deal with those pressures? Are you satisfied with the way you deal with them, or are there any ways to handle those pressures better?

2. Write about the kinds of pressures you feel about your future.

3. Write about a time when pressure made you lose perspective. What happened? What would have helped? What did you learn from that? How would you handle it differently in the future?

4. Write about a time when you were under a lot of pressure and somebody helped you through it.

5. Write about one or two positive pressures in your life. What's good about them? What do they do for you? How do you respond to these pressures?

6. Imagine that some day you will have a child. Write a letter of advice for that child to read when he or she reaches the age you are right now. Tell the child about the pressures you experienced at this age, how those pressures affected you, and how you hope he/she will deal with his/her own pressures at this age.

7. For one week keep a "Pressure Journal." Before you go to bed each night, write a description of the biggest pressures you felt that day. What caused them? How did they make you feel? How did you handle them? How will you handle them next time?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Have the class brainstorm ways to deal with pressures. (For some help, see "How To Deal With Pressures," on page 8.) Make a list and post it on the wall as a reminder for people when they need it.

2. Make up some hypothetical situations and have the kids do role plays in which they practice resisting negative pressures. In each case the person doing the resisting has two objectives: 1) to refuse to do it, and 2) to persuade the others not to, as well. Here are some ideas to start with.

a. Your good friend wants you to join him/her in experimenting with a drug.

b. Several kids you know are planning to play a cruel practical joke on someone and they want you to join in.

c. You have been invited to a party where there will be no adult supervision. Your parents forbid you to attend unsupervised events. Your boyfriend or girlfriend wants you to lie to your parents so the two of you can go.

d. You work as an assistant to a teacher and could easily get your hands on a copy of an upcoming test. Your friends want you to steal a copy of the test for them so they can cheat.

3. Break the class into groups and have each group develop a plan for creating a climate of positive peer pressure for the following:

a. Staying in school and doing well.

b. Staying free of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

c. Abstaining from sexual activity.

d. Respecting each other.

e. Non-violent behavior.

Then, have them present their plans to the whole class for discussion and critique.

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 moved 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."

Big Changes, Big Choices®
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