

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 11

GETTING ALONG WITH PARENTS

In the Youth Guidance Video Series



EDUCATIONAL GOALS

YOUNG ADOLESCENTS SHOULD:

- Develop a better understanding of how and why their relationships with their parents change as they enter adolescence.
- See the importance of keeping the lines of communication open with their parents.
- Learn that their key to increased freedom and autonomy is through building trust and acting responsibly.

Big Changes, Big Choices and this discussion guide were created and produced by Elkind+Sweet Communications, Inc. © Copyright Elkind+Sweet Communications, Inc. All rights are reserved

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

As adolescents begin to take charge of their lives, their relationships with their parents change, often painfully. This program encourages kids to understand their parents' concerns and motivations and to keep open the lines of communication. It urges them to take a realistic and empathetic view of their parents, and to realize that the freedom and autonomy they desire is best earned by proving to their parents that they are responsible and trustworthy.

PROGRAM CONTENT

PART I

Mike Pritchard on stage before a middle school audience gives a comical portrayal of the difficulties parents have letting go as their children enter adolescence.

CHANGING RELATIONSHIPS

Teentalk: Pritchard leads a group of middle school students in a discussion about how parents adjust as kids grow up. They explain that their parents are used to them being little kids. Now that they're older they are thinking more for themselves and getting into more things. It's hard for parents to deal with that. So parents react by setting silly rules, being overly-protective, invading their privacy.

PARENTS' CONCERNS

Pritchard asks why parents invade their privacy and the kids respond that it's "because we don't tell them anything." They wouldn't understand because things weren't like this when they were growing up. Life is more dangerous than when they were young. When they hear about things happening to somebody they think it's going to happen to us. They're worried about anybody new that we meet and about violence.

Discussion about parents having legitimate fears and about whether or not these kids would feel the same way with their own children. All this worry causes the kids to communicate less with their parents.

PART II

Pritchard on stage does a comedy bit about an interested parent trying to have a conversation with his uncommunicative middle school son or daughter.

COMMUNICATION

Teentalk: Discussion about typical kinds of behaviors that both kids and parents do that shut down dialogue. The kids do things like walking away, turning up the radio, rolling their eyes and making faces, and agreeing with parents in an obviously insincere way. Parents abuse their power by saying things like "because I'm your parent and I said so,"

or "if you say another word, . . . " or by taking away something really important.

Pritchard challenges the kids with a hypothetical situation: "There's a big party and everybody is going. I'm your dad and I don't know the people who are having the party. Convince me to let you go." This exercise demonstrates the wisdom and effectiveness of addressing parents' concerns.

PART III

Pritchard on stage tells a humorous story about being honest with parents and building their trust.

BUILDING TRUST

Teentalk: Pritchard asks, "how important is trust in your relationship with your parents?" The kids respond that it's very important, that it's the key to earning freedom. They go on to explain that the way to build trust is by communicating more with their parents and by showing their parents that they are responsible and worthy of being trusted.

IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

Pritchard asks the kids to think about what they personally can do to improve their communications with their parents. Suggestions include: be honest with them, try to be more open and answer their questions, put yourself in their shoes so you know how they feel, occasionally tell them you love them.

The discussion ends with a few ideas about the qualities that kids appreciate in a parent.

Pritchard on stage concludes with a message about choosing to make relationships with parents work as well as possible. It's a good choice to make, and in life it's up to each of us to make the right choices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. What things do your parents do that really bug you?
2. What do you do that really bugs your parents?

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. Do you think your parents understand the changes you are going through at this age? How could you help them understand?
5. What are some things you would like to talk to your parents about but feel you can't? Why don't you think you can talk to them about these things? How have you tried? What happened?
6. Do you find it difficult to express your emotions to your parents? If so, why?
7. How many of you think you have good communications with your parents? What makes it good? How many of you are unhappy with your communications with your parents? What gets in the way?
8. What are the benefits of communicating with your parents?
9. Does the amount of freedom your parents give you change? What are the factors that influence those changes?

10. Do you think your parents should give you total freedom, with no limits at all? If not, what should those limits be?

11. One girl in the video said that building your parents' trust is the key to freedom. What did she mean by that? Do you agree? Why? What can you do to build that trust?

12. Do you respect your parents? How do you show it? In what ways would you like your parents to show you respect? Have you earned that respect? How?

13. In an ideal relationship with your parents, what would be their responsibility to you and yours to them?

14. What differences exist between your parents' values and your own? Do these differences have anything to do with some of the conflicts that occur between you? Do you try to consider their values when you talk to them about difficult issues?

15. Are there things you feel you need from your parents that you're not getting? Do you tell them that? If not, what would happen if you did? Do you ask your parents what they need from you?

16. It's often said that people do what they're rewarded for doing. Do you ever tell your parents when you think they're doing a good job of being parents? If so, how do they respond? If not, how are they supposed to know?

17. What was most meaningful to you in this video? Why?

HOW TO HAVE A GREAT RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR PARENTS

1. **RESPECT EACH OTHER:** Without mutual respect, any relationship will be an unhappy one. People who respect each other: a) value each other's opinions, b) listen to each other, c) disagree without screaming or insults. And remember, your parents have lived longer than you - don't discount their experience and knowledge.

2. **COMMUNICATE:** Your parents want to know what's going on in your life. If you keep them in the dark they won't know when you need their help or whether they can trust you. Tell them what you're up to, share your thoughts and feelings with them, and seek their advice for your problems (you don't have to take it). Communication builds closeness.

3. **BUILD TRUST:** Trust is your key to freedom. The way to build trust is through honesty and responsibility. Honesty means you don't lie or manipulate. Responsibility means you are reliable and can be counted on to use good judgement. When your parents trust you, it's a lot easier for them to say "yes."

These guidelines work both ways. If, on occasions, your parents violate any of these guidelines, talk to them about it. Pick a time when you are both calm and feeling good toward each other (never when you're angry). Then, explain to them what they did, how it makes you feel, and what you'd like them to do instead.

Unfortunately, these guidelines don't always work. Since we can only control what we do, and not what our parents do, sometimes we are truly helpless to transform a bad relationship. If this is the case, try to use these guidelines to at least improve things a little, and talk with a trusted adult who may be able to help you.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Imagine that some day you will have a child. Write a letter for that child to open when he or she reaches the age you are right now. Tell the child how it feels to be a parent and what things concern you the most. Tell the child what you need from him or her in order to have the best possible relationship, and what the child can expect from you in return.
2. Has there ever been a time when your parents trusted you and you let them down? What happened? Was it harder to get them to trust you afterwards? Were you able to rebuild the lost trust? How? What have you learned from this experience?
3. Watch a television program that has both parents and children as characters. Analyze their relationships. How do they treat each other? Are they respectful? How well do they communicate? Do they trust each other? What is good about their relationship? What is bad about it? What suggestions do you have for improving it?
4. If you had the power to change any aspect of your relationship with your parents, what would it be? Is there anything you could do to make that happen? What?
5. What do you admire about the way your parents perform their role as parents? What do you disapprove of in the way they perform this role? How could you help your parents be better parents?

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. What are some things that kids your age say that are guaranteed to close down a conversation with parents? Let's make a list.
2. What are some things that parents say that shut things down? Let's make a list.
3. **ROLE PLAY (For girls)** You are going out with your friends to a big school dance. You've bought some new clothes and jewelry for the event. You spend a lot of time getting dressed and putting on your make up and you think you look great. But when you come downstairs, your folks go through the roof and say that girls your age shouldn't dress that way - dress is too short, too much makeup, etc..
4. **ROLE PLAY (For boys)** You have a friend who always gets in trouble. Your parents want you to stop hanging out with him. You still like him and don't think your parents understand. He asks you to spend Saturday with him at the mall. Now you have to get your parents permission.

Follow-up questions for both role plays. Put yourself in your parents' shoes and ask these questions:

- What would be my worst fear?
 - How could you talk to me about these fears?
 - How could you show me that you are ready for this responsibility?
 - What would be a fair solution to this problem?
5. **BRAINSTORM:** Let's think up some rules that would help make relations between parents and teens better. (See "How to Have a Great Relationship With Your Parents" on page 8.)

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®
LICENSE AGREEMENT

This license grants you some very useful rights regarding the use of this videotape, including public performance rights:

You **may** show this video to groups of any size, for educational, cultural, entertainment, or counseling purposes, as long as you do not charge admission.

You **may** play this video on your institution's closed-circuit television system within a single building or campus. This right **does not** extend to multiple schools within a district.

You **may** permit viewers to watch this video on your premises, or lend it to them to take out.

Along with these rights come some equally important restrictions:

You may **not** duplicate, alter, or reproduce this tape in any manner, in whole or in part.

You may **not** broadcast, narrowcast, or cablecast this tape, in whole or in part.

These restrictions have the force of federal law, which provides severe civil and criminal penalties for infringements. (Title 17, United States Code, sections 501-506).

If you have any questions regarding this license agreement, or your intended use of this tape, please contact:

**ELKIND+SWEET
COMMUNICATIONS, INC.
273 Ninth St., San Francisco, CA 94103
1-800-359-5437
info@livewiremedia.com**