

VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with
Program 2

YOU and YOUR VALUES

In the Youth Guidance Video Series



EDUCATIONAL GOALS

**YOUNG ADOLESCENTS ARE
ENCOURAGED TO:**

- Develop a vision of who they are as individuals instead of seeing themselves only as members of a group.
- Develop confidence in their ability to make their own choices instead of letting the group make their choices for them.
- Look to their own values as guideposts for their choices and actions.

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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

This program looks at the issue of identity and explores some of the major elements that go into forming our identities. We examine internal factors such as values and beliefs, and externals such as clothes, hairstyles, etc. We consider that all important adolescent issue of "fitting in," what that means, what we have to do and/or sacrifice to fit in, and when it's worth it and when it's not.

PROGRAM CONTENT

Mike Pritchard on stage before a middle school audience gives a comedy introduction to the problem of figuring out who we are.

PART I

FITTING IN

Teentalk: Pritchard leads a group of middle school students in a discussion that reveals that the need to fit in is a powerful influence and pressure at this age. The pressure goes beyond clothing and behavior. They admit that they even lie about themselves just to avoid being made fun of or rejected. They talk about "wannabees," cliques and categories, and some of the things they have to do to survive in their social environment.

They also concede that at school they are not always their true selves, rather, they are the way others want them to be. In that case, it's the group, not themselves, that's making their choices. Several of them tell stories about giving in to pressure and doing things they knew were wrong, concluding that it's bad to let other people make your choices for you.

Pritchard on stage does a comedy bit about kids trying to emulate other kids.

PART II

PEER PRESSURE & PERSONAL CHOICES

Teentalk: A boy recalls an incident where a group was picking on someone, and, even though he was opposed, he got sucked in and took part. It made him feel really awful about himself. He learned the importance of refusing to do what he knows is wrong.

Pritchard gives a hypothetical situation: A group you want to be friends with asks you to help them steal a tape from a record store. The first few kids say they wouldn't do it. A boy says that's easy to say, but being in the pressure of the situation is different. Another boy says he'd do it so the group would respect him. A girl says that under pressure she might also. Pritchard has them imagine that they are watching this in a movie. What would they think of the kid who buckles

under the pressure and helps steal the tape? They reply that they felt a lot better about the kid who refused than the kid who went along with it because the one who refused made the right choice.

Pritchard on stage does a comedy bit about being the hero of your own movie.

PART III

VALUES AND CHOICES

Teentalk: Pritchard asks, "when you're faced with a tough decision, how do you decide?" Responses include consulting family members and friends, listing and weighing the pros and cons, and looking to your values. They go on to talk about knowing what your values are and how that can be helpful. They make a short list of values to live by and agree that living by these values would help them make good choices.

More discussion on the benefits of values. The kids explain that values help you do what's right, and that leads to more self-respect, which gives you more confidence, which inspires you to do your best. Also, doing the right thing makes you think of yourself as a good person, which enhances your self esteem.

BEING YOURSELF

Pritchard asks, "how do you learn to be yourself?" Responses include: when you believe strongly in something, you can't just be pushed whichever way the wind blows; listen to your heart; realize it's not important where you get your clothes or who you hang out with, it's how you act and who you really are that matters.

Pritchard on stage quotes E.E. Cummings on being yourself. He concludes that being yourself isn't always easy, but it's the right choice. And it's up to you to make the right choice.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. When somebody says "just be yourself," what does that mean?
2. Is it always easy to be yourself, or can it sometimes be difficult? Why? How? Give examples.

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

3. Did anybody in this video say anything you disagree with? How would you answer that person?
4. The kids in the video talked a lot about "fitting in." What does "fitting in" mean? How do you do it?
5. The kids in the video said that at their school there's a lot of pressure to fit in. Is that true here? What do you have to do to fit in here?
6. Does fitting in ever make it hard to be yourself?
7. What if you don't fit in? Is that okay, or does it mean there's something wrong with you?
8. Are there groups here in school? Cliques? (Gangs) What are they?
9. Why do these groups exist? What do they do for the people in them?
10. Does being in a group sometimes make it harder to be yourself? How? In what way? Examples?
11. Are there pressures to fit into these groups? If so, describe the pressures.
12. Is it okay not to be in a group?

13. The kids in the video said that when we're in groups, the group sometimes makes our choices for us. Do you agree? Can you give examples? Is that good?

14. Do all the kids in a group have the same values?

15. What do values have to do with making choices?

16. Do you think that sometimes people make choices that conflict with their values? Can you give an example? Are they aware that they're doing that? What would cause somebody to make a choice that conflicts with his/her values?

17. In the hypothetical situation about the group wanting you to help steal a tape, what values are in conflict? What would you do?

18. One girl in the video said that when you believe strongly in something, you can't just be pushed whichever way the wind blows. What do you think she meant by that? Do you agree or disagree? Can you give a personal example?

19. How do you know what your values are?

20. Do you think we are born with values or we learn them? If we learn them, how do we learn them? Who helps you figure out what you value?

21. Is it sometimes hard to live by your values? (Do you sometimes have to make a sacrifice in order to do what is right?) Is it worth it? Why?

22. How can you benefit from knowing what your values are?

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

HOW TO BE YOURSELF

It's not always easy to be ourselves. Sometimes, when we're with other people, we make choices or act in ways that are different from when we're alone. Here are some ways to prevent that from happening.

- 🍏 Know your values and stay true to them.*
- 🍏 Make your own choices, don't just go along with the crowd.
- 🍏 Respect yourself.
- 🍏 Think about your goals and act accordingly.

*HOW TO KNOW YOUR VALUES

Your values are your personal inventory of what you consider most important in life. We all have values, but unless we take the time to think about those values, we can easily overlook them when we're making important choices. Here are some guidelines for identifying what you value.

- 🍏 Is this something that's important to you?
- 🍏 Do you feel good about this being important to you?
- 🍏 Would you feel good if people you respect knew that this was important to you?
- 🍏 Have you ever done anything that indicates that this is important to you?
- 🍏 Is this something you would stand by even if others made fun of you for it?
- 🍏 Does this fit in with your vision of who you are?

Oftentimes we find ourselves in situations where we have to make a choice between two values that are in conflict with each other. At times like this we must be ready to distinguish between our higher values and our lower values.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write a classified ad for the school newspaper, looking for a companion to join you on weekends to do some activity you really like. Describe yourself well enough so that people will know whether or not they would want to spend time with you. What does your ad tell you about how you see yourself?
2. Write about a time when either you or somebody else did something that conflicted with your values. How did it happen? How did it make you feel? Did you make any changes or decisions based on that experience? What did you learn from it?
3. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt as though your decisions were being made by the group instead of by you? Write about it. How do you feel about it? What did you learn from it?
4. Having heroes and special people we admire helps us to see what we value. Who is someone you consider a hero? Why? What does he/she stand for and believe in? What lessons do you learn from this person? What values does this person represent?
5. Imagine that 200 years from now your very great grandchildren find an article about you in the encyclopedia. What does that article say about you? What kind of person were you? What did you do with your life? Why are you interesting enough to be in the encyclopedia? In three hundred words or less write the article. Then, in one paragraph, write what that article tells you about your values.
6. Imagine that some day you will have children. Write a letter of advice for them to read when they reach the age you are now. Tell them about the pressures to fit in that you experienced at this age, and how you hope they will deal with those same pressures, themselves. Also, tell them about the two or three most important values you held at this age, and what values you hope they, themselves, will embrace.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Break the class into small groups. Have each group make a list of values to live by (no more than ten) in order of importance. Then, have a spokesperson from each group present the list to the class along with any needed commentary. Put all the lists up on the wall. What values did all groups share? Were there any serious differences between the groups? Discuss the differences and see if it's possible to develop a list that everyone will buy into.

2. Have everybody in the class bring in one or two advertisements aimed at teenagers. These can be cut out of magazines or taped off of TV. Have a class discussion to evaluate the ads by asking the following questions: What values does this ad appeal to? What values does this ad promote? Do you share those values? Is this ad in conflict with any of your values? What assumptions does this ad make about who you are? Is this ad attempting to influence your image of yourself?

3. Have the class consider and discuss these hypothetical situations. Be sure to have them identify what values are in conflict.

a. You are doing poorly in math class and your parents are putting pressure on you to bring your grade up. The day before the final exam somebody steals a copy of the exam and invites you to study it with him. You've never been a cheater.

b. You love being on the team. After practice one evening you see a teammate vandalize a teacher's car. The coach knows you saw it happen and threatens to kick you off the team unless you name the guilty person. You've never ratted on anybody.

c. A friend swears you to secrecy and then tells you he's planning to commit suicide. You've always believed in keeping a secret. (Hint: It's never okay to keep this fatal secret.)

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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