

## VIDEO DISCUSSION GUIDE

for use with  
Program 8

# **SAYING “NO” to ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS**

In the Youth Guidance Video Series



### EDUCATIONAL GOALS

#### YOUNG ADOLESCENTS WILL:

- Look critically at the kinds of negative peer pressures they are under at this age.
- Recognize some of the ways in which they internalize peer pressure.
- Learn about the harmful consequences of alcohol and other drug use.
- See how innocent actions can often lead to serious consequences.
- Learn some ways to resist negative peer pressure

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- ▶ **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 presents and reinforces anti-drug attitudes and teaches practical techniques for saying "no" to our friends without appearing to be uncool. In addition to the specific matter of drug use, we examine the issue of peer pressure - both positive and negative - and figure out how to tell the difference. We consider why it's important to resist negative peer pressure, and what that has to do with taking charge of our lives.

## PROGRAM CONTENT

### PART I - PEER PRESSURE

**Mike Pritchard on stage** entertains a middle school audience with a story about a kid he knew in school who did a lot of silly things to be part of the crowd.

**Teentalk:** Pritchard leads a group of middle school students in a discussion about peer pressure. They reveal that what makes kids respond to peer pressure is the desire to be a part of something and the fear of losing companionship or being left out.

Pritchard presents a hypothetical situation: You're at a party where some cool kids are smoking dope and they want you to join them. The kids acknowledge that it wouldn't be easy to say no.

Pritchard asks if they've ever been in a group where they did something they didn't want to because of the pressure. Two girls tell about friends pressuring them into starting smoking. They remark that the pressure they feel comes from inside as much as outside, but the struggle is mostly with yourself. One boy says that peer pressure is nothing unless you fall into it, and you can choose not to do that.

### PART II - ALCOHOL & OTHER DRUGS

**Pritchard on stage** tells a funny story about a kid who claimed he could handle any dare. He concludes that you have to use common sense when it comes to doing what others want you to because you're the one who's going to live with the consequences.

**Teentalk:** Discussion about what happens when you drink alcohol. One boy asserts that you can't think for yourself because the alcohol is doing your thinking for you. A girl says it makes you say and do things you wouldn't if you were sober. A boy says when your brain isn't working right you're a hazard to yourself and others. Several of the kids tell stories about friends getting injured while drunk.

Pritchard asks if any of them have friends who got involved with drugs. A girl says her brother got into drugs because all his friends were. He started carrying weapons and threatening people until he was arrested and jailed. A boy says his friend got into drugs and turned weird and started stealing and was arrested. Another girl says that a friend whom she had stopped hanging out with because of drugs shot and killed someone.

A boy remarks that one of the biggest risks is the unknown - even if it's only one marijuana cigarette, you don't know what's in it. It could be laced with anything.

### PART III - SAYING NO

**Pritchard on stage** does a comedy bit mimicking various ways people try to get you to do stuff that might not be a good idea to do.

**Teentalk:** Pritchard engages three different kids in role plays in which he challenges them to refuse a drink.

The discussion then turns to ways of saying "no" to friends who want you to drink with them. Pritchard asks if there is anything they can do before they get into that situation. The kids offer several suggestions, culminating in the idea that if they decide in advance what they're going to do, and then just stick to it, things are a lot easier to deal with.

The discussion ends with comments by two boys who claim to have no problem saying "no." One says he's learned that it's okay to be yourself, and just because the others are doing something doesn't mean you have to do it, also. The other boy says that by refusing to join his drinking buddies he's learned that you can walk away from anything - any kind of pressure.

**Pritchard on stage** concludes that saying "no" to negative pressure is a good choice to make. And it's always up to you to make the right choices.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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

1. Agree or disagree: It's better to go along with the crowd than to make your own choices. Why do you agree or disagree?
2. What is peer pressure? What does it have to do with making choices?

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 has peer pressure changed as you've gotten older?
5. Do you think peer pressure sometimes affects the way you or your friends make choices? In what way?
6. One boy makes the point that peer pressure is nothing unless you fall into it, and you can choose not to do that. Do you agree with him? Why, or why not?
7. How do you decide whether or not it's okay to go along with the crowd. When is it okay? When isn't it okay?
8. How does it make you feel when you do something that you felt you shouldn't?
9. What makes it hard to say "no" to a friend?
10. What are the benefits of knowing how to say "no?"
11. One boy in the video said that when you're under the influence of alcohol, the alcohol starts doing your thinking for you. What did he mean by that? Do you agree? Why, or why not?

12. A girl in the video said that alcohol makes you say and do things you wouldn't if you were sober. Do you think that's true? If it is true, what's wrong with it? Have you ever seen that happen to anyone?

13. A boy in the video said that when you're under the influence of alcohol, you're a hazard to yourself and others. What did he mean by that? Do you agree? Have you ever known anyone to get hurt, or to hurt someone else, while intoxicated?

14. Do you think that movies and television make alcohol use look attractive or unattractive? Does that influence you in any way? Do you agree with the way they portray it? What changes would you make?

15. Do you know anybody who has ever benefitted from smoking, drinking alcohol, or using other drugs?

16. Do you know anybody who has been harmed by smoking, drinking alcohol, or using other drugs?

17. Does anything scare you about using alcohol or other drugs? What? Why?

18. The kids in the video suggest that pressure to do something is a lot easier to cope with if you decide in advance what you are going to do. What did they mean by that? Do you agree? Can you think of some examples?

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

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Write about a time when you had to resist strong peer pressure to do something you didn't want to do. How did it happen? How did it make you feel? Did you change anything or make any decisions based on that experience? What did you learn from it?
2. Write about someone you know who has gotten involved with alcohol or other drugs. How did it happen? How did it make you feel? Did you change anything or make any decisions based on that experience? What did you learn from it?
3. Write about the kinds of peer pressures that exist in your school or community. How do you feel about them? What could be done to reduce them or make them go away? What could you personally do to help improve the situation?
4. The kids in the video make the point that pressure to do something is easier to cope with if you decide in advance what you will or won't do. Write about a time when deciding in advance helped you, or would have helped you, deal with a tough situation.
5. Imagine that some day you will have children. Write a letter of advice for them to read when they reach the age you are right now. Tell them what you think about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, and how you hope they will deal with these things in their own lives.



## GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. People often give themselves excuses when they're about to do something they know they probably shouldn't. Here is a list of commonly used excuses. Have the class analyze each one and determine what's wrong with it. Then, ask them to think of other excuses that aren't in this list, and analyze those, as well.

- "Just one (or, a little won't hurt)."
- "I can control myself, so this once won't matter."
- "Everybody's doing it."
- "I don't want to be left out."
- "I deserve this."
- "I feel stressed out. This'll help me relax."
- "If I don't do this, they'll think I'm a . . ."
- "If I don't do this, they might not like me."
- "If I don't do this, they might get mad at me."
- "I'm too young for this to hurt me."

2. Excuses are things we say to ourselves to get out of saying "no." What are some good things we can say to ourselves that will help us say "no" when we want to. Make a list and hang it on the wall as a constant reminder.

3. Make up several hypothetical situations and have the kids do role plays in which they practice the saying "no" method from page 8. Here are a few ideas to start with.

- Your friends want you to lie to your parents about where you're really going, because if they knew the truth they wouldn't let you go.
- Several of your friends are organizing a system for cheating on a big test, and they want you to be a part of it.

## 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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