



EDUCATOR GUIDE

The Educator's Guide is a resource manual for anyone teaching the Choose Love Program in a classroom-based setting. The purpose of this Guide is to provide you with the “need to know” and “nice to know” information that will help you best teach the Choose Love Enrichment Program. It provides a description of the program, research, content, teaching strategies and best practices for teaching social and emotional learning.

CONTENTS

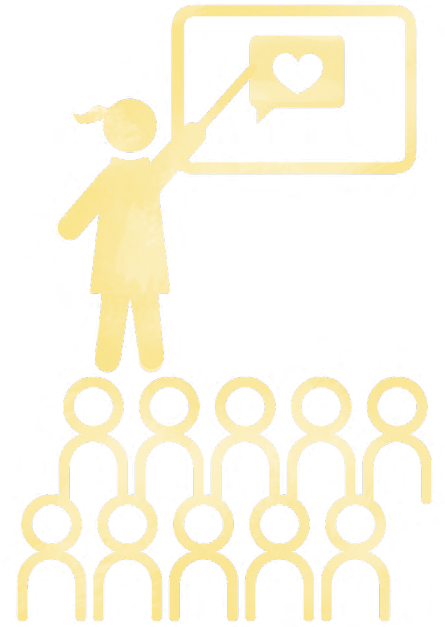


The State of Teaching Today	4
The Choose Love Movement	6
Why the Choose Love Program	7
Program at a Glance	8
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Research	9
What Is SEL	9
What Skills Does SEL Teach	10
What Is the Impact of Teaching SEL on Educators	11
What SEL Is Not	11
Classroom Climate	12
Curriculum Content	12
Courage	13
Gratitude	13
Forgiveness	13
Compassion in Action	13
Empathy	14
Emotion Management/Impulse Control	14
Communication and Problem-Solving	15
Lesson Breakdown, Pacing and Frequency for PreK-5	15
When to Start Teaching	16
Scheduling a Lesson	16
Preparing a Lesson	16
Presenting a Lesson	17
How to Extend Lessons All Year Long	17
Lesson Breakdown, Pacing and Frequency for Middle School	17
Lesson Breakdown, Pacing and Frequency for High School	19
Standards and SEL's Connection to Academics and Life Success	19
Teaching Strategies/Reinforcing Learning	20
Modeling	20
Coaching	21
Cueing	21
Nonjudgmental Responses	21
Varied Calling of Students	22
Working in Pairs	22
Small Group Work (4s)	22
Authentic Sharing (What's Appropriate to Share)	23
Pause/Wait Time	23
Reinforcing Positive Behaviors	23
Preventing/Handling Disruptive Behavior	24
Student Skills	26
Diaphragmatic Breathing	26

Rest and Relax	27
Reflection, Prediction and In the Moment	28
Intentions	28
Listening Skills	28
Classroom Constitution	29
Affirmations	29
Emotions Vocabulary	29
Gratitude Lists	30
Neuroscience	30
CALM Problem-Solving Steps	30
Nonjudgmental Responses	30
Choose Love Corner	31
Choose Love Journal	31
Upstander	31
Brave Pose	31
Adaptations	32
Adapting for Cultural Context	32
Adapting for ESL, ELL, or Multilingual Students	33
Academically Gifted	33
Afterschool/Daycare	34
Best Practices- An Educator's Perspective	34
Evaluating the Program	36
Counselor Implementation	38
Teacher-Counselor Collaboration	39
Referral to School Counselor	40
Handling and Reporting Disclosure of Abuse or Trauma	41
Trauma	41
Family/Community Integration	43
Family/Caregiver Take Home Letter	44
Additional Resources	46
Reading lists	46
Books on Courage	46
Books on Gratitude	47
Books on Forgiveness	48
Books on Compassion	49
Books for Middle School Students	50
Websites	51
Quotes	52
Quotes on Courage	52
Quotes on Gratitude	55
Quotes on Forgiveness	57
Quotes on Compassion	59
Poem	61
References	62

THE STATE OF TEACHING TODAY

Every year educators begin again ready to take on a new school year with excitement and trepidation. The world continues to change and with that educators are presented with even more challenges. You are wearing more hats than ever to meet the ever growing and changing needs of your students. Teacher, counselor, parent, protector, advocate, cheerleader, problem solver, detective, healer, motivator...the list goes on and on. Some of these roles you are prepared for and many you can never be...but you are still required to perform these roles under much scrutiny which is a daunting task.



As educators you do this job because you love children, you love teaching and inspiring and you want to make a difference. You know you are instrumental in changing the lives of students and guiding them to becoming their best selves with bright futures that you are shaping. There are so many intangible rewards that the teaching profession affords you, but it doesn't make it any easier or calm the anxieties and fears that you still face.



Each year you wonder, “What challenges will I be presented with?”, “Will we be safe?”, “Will my test scores be good?”, “Can I handle the class and the issues?”, “Will I have a positive classroom climate?”, “Will the students get along?”, “Will I teach them enough?”, “What barriers to learning will I face?”, “Will they learn and grow?”, “Will I have the skills and tools to reach them?”, “Can I make a difference?”. Again the list of questions can go on and on...and yet, teachers show up every day, no matter what you face in your own life, with a smile, a sense of purpose, and a willingness to face the unknown and to do whatever it takes to reach and inspire your students... and often with little support, encouragement, or acknowledgement.

So first and foremost, we salute you, we commend you, and we value you beyond words. This program was created by educators for educators, so we’ve been in the trenches and understand a good deal of what you face and what you do daily. We know how much you have on your plate and all of the difficulties you face, and don’t want to add something else without making sure it’s something that will not be just one more thing. But rather, we intend this program to be THE THING that we will make your job easier and help enhance the lives of the children you teach.

We hope and believe that this will not be another program that you begin half-heartedly and toss aside with indifference and frustration. What if you could have students that are focused and able to manage their emotions so they are free to learn? What if your classroom climate was positive, nurturing, and thriving where children felt safe and had the confidence and right attitude to learn? What if you could develop courageous students who had the tools to handle adversity, resolve conflicts peacefully, and make prosocial responsible choices? What if you could teach and reach the whole child - promoting their social, emotional, personal and academic growth and wellbeing?

This is what we want for you and for your students. This program helps you do these things. We are so excited to share it with you and help you transform your class, empower your students and even yourself!

We hope that the program we created will not only enhance lives but also SAVE lives. The skills we teach are essential to having the ability to discern our thoughts from our actions, to be aware of how our choices impact others, and to raise the consciousness of generations to come. Choosing love is at the core message of the program. Defining love is something philosophers, poets, scientists, artists and spiritual leaders have attempted across cultures for all of time. How do you define love? Perhaps there is more than one definition. There is the way we love our family, friends and romantic partners. There is the way we love our pets, our homes, and communities. You may feel love for your work, art, or through serving others. Love can be patient, kind, fierce, or indomitable, and it is the greatest of human experiences.

We are highlighting love in a way no one else has in schools. Love is something that every human being on the planet needs. Not just wants, but needs - for survival. We want any child and any educator who wants to choose love to have the skills and opportunity to do so. We want them to choose love, always.



THE CHOOSE LOVE MOVEMENT

My name is Scarlett Lewis, and I'm the founder of the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement. This initiative started with three words written on a kitchen chalkboard by my six-year-old son, Jesse McCord Lewis, on the morning of December 14, 2012. He wrote, "nurturing, healing, love." He lost his life later that day, alongside 19 of his classmates and six educators at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut. His message constitutes a powerful formula for choosing love.

Allow me to tell you a little about my personal story. I knew instinctively that the former Sandy Hook Elementary student who committed this crime had to be in a great deal of pain. Pain can cause anger which is a natural reaction to being hurt or fearful.

Thoughts have an incredible power to create our reality. Through the study of epigenetics we know that thoughts can change our genes, impact our cells and even change the wiring of our brain! Every time we have a thought, neurons fire and create neural pathways in our brains. These are strengthened by repeated thoughts. When we have repeated angry thoughts, we strengthen those pathways until this becomes a natural response.

Luckily, we can rewire our brains with each thought. A positive, loving thought can create new neural pathways that can be strengthened over time. This process is called neuroplasticity and can happen at any age.

When awareness and a nurturing environment is lacking, we might not have the emotional intelligence to deal with our thoughts and experiences in a conscious manner. The difference is in either reacting or responding. A reaction comes from the mammalian part of our brain (the emotional center, or "teen brain"). A natural response to someone who is making us angry is to respond defensively. Someone insults us, we insult them back. This doesn't require much thought.

We might learn to say, "I am angry." That does not disassociate the thoughts with who we are. Technically we are not angry, we are having an angry thought. When we can examine that thought and understand its origins, then we are able to respond in a conscious way. Our prefrontal cortex is the most recently formed part of our brain and is where logic and reasoning reside. Here is an example: we feel anger because someone insults us. We say to ourselves, "I feel angry!" We step back, in our mind, and examine the angry feeling. Why would the other person say something like that? Understanding that anger can be a result of pain enables us to respond compassionately. We can wonder why they tried to hurt us and what caused them to say or do that to us? Our response corresponds to our thoughtfulness. Responding compassionately, we say, "Is everything OK? Is there something going on with you? What's wrong?" If we think about Adam Lanza, the perpetrator of the crimes at Sandy Hook Elementary, we see a



tremendous amount of pain. As a young boy he was shunned by his classmates because of perceived differences. This caused him pain. His parents divorced and his father moved away and remarried. His mother spent a lot of time away from home. He started acting out, which is another way for kids to ask for help. He did not receive the help he needed. This reinforced his feelings of worthlessness and anger. Ultimately his anger became rage and he sought to cause others pain. The whole tragedy started with an angry thought and feeling. And an angry thought can be changed through social and emotional learning, and learning to choose love.

The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization committed to reaching students, educators, and individuals, both nationally and internationally, with a simple, yet profound formula for choosing love. Our signature program uses “*nurturing, healing, love*” as a foundation for learning and for life. Learn more about the foundation on its website: www.jesselewischooselove.org

Another message Jesse left was for his big brother. The message said, “Have a Lot of fun.” This is an important reminder that we need to enjoy our lives, and this is an integral part of this program.

WHY THE CHOOSE LOVE PROGRAM

Choosing love means having the courage to be grateful when life isn’t easy, to forgive when the person who hurt you isn’t sorry, and to step outside your own pain to help someone else. That’s the way to choose love, and the empowering lesson is that it’s a choice.

Children who feel connected, who are resilient, and who can reciprocate love won’t want to harm each other (Garney, 2016). We can teach children to choose love. Love is a universal need, the lack of which can be devastating. That’s why I started the Choose Love Movement.

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), over 30 years of research substantiates the benefits of social and emotional learning (SEL). It lays the groundwork for academic learning and responsible citizenship. SEL has been proven to increase grades, attendance, and focus, while reducing aggression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other issues (“CASEL: What is SEL?,” 2016). SEL has a critical role in improving children’s academic performance and lifelong learning (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2004). Children who are aware of their emotions and have good planning skills by the time they enter school are also at lower risk for problems with aggression and anxiety disorders (Greenberg, Kusch, & Mihalic, 1998).

Students aren’t the only ones who benefit from SEL. Schools are challenged by teacher attrition and unsafe learning environments (“CASEL: What is SEL?,” 2016). When educators teach SEL, they help students create safe, loving, and healthy problem-solving communities that enhance



teachers' ability to teach as well as students' ability to learn ("CASEL: Outcomes associated with five competencies," 2016).

By the time our college bound children are 18 years old, 49.5% of them will have a diagnosable mental illness (Child Mind Institute Report, 2015). This is one of the largest issues that we face in our educational system that not only negatively impacts a child's academic performance and social and emotional well-being, but can compromise school and community safety.

Research has shown that social and emotional learning can reduce anxiety and its long-term effects. Per CASEL.org, SEL positively impacts academic performance by an average of 11 percent; improves attitudes and behaviors, including greater motivation to learn, deeper commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork, and better classroom behavior; allows for fewer negative behaviors: decreased disruptive class behavior, noncompliance, aggression, delinquent acts, and disciplinary referrals; and reduced emotional distress: fewer reports of student depression, anxiety, stress and social withdrawal ("CASEL: Outcomes associated with five competencies," 2016).

There was a report done by the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission that referred to SEL as a possible way to prevent future school violence such as the tragedy that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary (2015). I believe that if SEL had been taught in school then the tragedy would never have occurred.

SEL teaches children essential life skills and helps children (and adults) develop into happy, well-adjusted individuals. SEL helps cultivate a safer environment in schools and as a parent, this is crucial. SEL is the solution to the issues we are seeing. We hope to bridge the gap between the problem and the solution by providing our free Choose Love Enrichment Program to educators.

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

The Choose Love Enrichment Program is a Pre-K through 12th grade curriculum that emphasizes the simple, universal teachings of courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion in action. The lessons are divided into these four units which create a formula for choosing love:

The Choose Love Formula is:

Courage + Gratitude + Forgiveness + Compassion in Action = Choosing Love

In each unit of the PK-5 Program, you will find:

- A Unit Overview summarizing the content of the unit.
- 4-6 lessons based on the theme of the unit.



- A list of student objectives for that unit.
- A Family Focus and Connection section that provides ideas for how to engage family members and caregivers in learning and reinforcing the unit's concepts and skills.
- A Make Your Move section that provides tips and ideas for how to leverage your teacher leadership and integrate the skills into classroom and school culture.

The Middle School and High School Program expands upon the teachings of the PK-5 Program. Students learn the same formula and core teachings, but material is developmentally adjusted for adolescents. The Middle School and High School Programs also offer significantly more lessons, and lessons are shortened so that they can be easily and readily woven into the busy and full school schedule. The program and lesson format is adapted to best be implemented in the Middle School and High School setting.

The Choose Love Formula teaches the foundational concepts and skills of social and emotional learning (SEL), and is informed by current brain research and neuroscience. The goal of the Choose Love Enrichment Program is to provide children with the knowledge, attitude, and skills they need to choose love in any situation. These abilities include:

- Understanding and managing emotions (self-awareness and self-management),
- Setting and achieving positive goals,
- Feeling and showing empathy and compassion for others (social awareness),
- Establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and
- Making responsible decisions.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) RESEARCH

What Is SEL

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (“CASEL: What is SEL?,” 2016). It is based in the idea that rich and meaningful learning occurs when people are engaged in positive and supporting relationships.

Social and emotional skills are not only critical to being a successful student, but also a good employee, leader and citizen. “Many risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out) can be prevented or reduced when multiyear, integrated efforts are used to develop students' social and emotional skills” (“CASEL: What is SEL?” 2016). Teacher leadership, effective classroom instruction, parent/caregiver engagement and strategic implementation and evaluation help lay the ground work for the most effective SEL instruction.



The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies for SEL. They include: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. These competencies are not only helpful in developing well-rounded children and school success, but are the same competencies used to develop the leadership potential in people in business and government.

More information about the benefits of SEL can be found on the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) website: www.casel.org. For a book list and additional activities associated with understanding and recognizing emotions, visit the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu>

What Skills Does SEL Teach

SEL fosters emotional-intelligence and improves decision-making by learning competencies such as self-awareness, self-regulation, self-monitoring, empathy, perspective taking, communication, problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Self-Awareness is the ability to recognize and understand one's own emotions, thoughts, impulses, physical cues, motivations, and beliefs, and acknowledge their influence on behavior. It is the complex and integrated way humans make sense of themselves and the world around them. This also includes accurately perceiving and assessing one's strengths and limitations, and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

Self-Management is the ability to regulate and adapt one's emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.

Social Awareness is the ability to take multiple perspectives and empathize with others. This includes working with others from diverse cultures, understanding social norms, and recognizing ethical behaviors. Social awareness also includes the ability to identify resources and support from friends, family, school and communities.

Relationship Skills includes the emotional intelligence and communication skills needed to begin, cultivate and end relationships in healthy ways. Being able to work individually and in groups requires skills such as: empathy, active listening, cooperating, resisting negative peer pressure, negotiating conflict constructively and seeking support when needed.

Responsible Decision-Making is the ability to take ethical standards, social norms, safety concerns, the consequences of one's action, and the well-being of self and others into consideration when making choices. Prosocial behavior is strongly encouraged and valued.



What Is the Impact of Teaching SEL on Educators

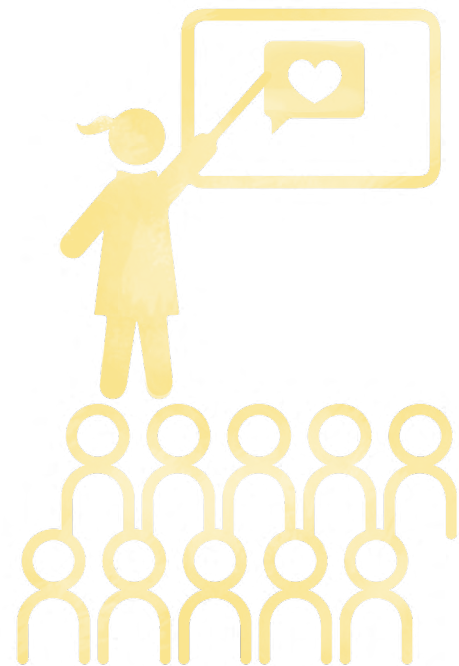
The teacher's role in an SEL curriculum approach is twofold. Teachers provide instruction for skill-building, leadership through modeling and norm-setting, structure through setting clear expectations, support through reinforcing skills, and building psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual safety.

Students aren't the only ones who benefit from SEL. Schools face challenges of teacher attrition and unsafe learning environments. When teachers teach SEL, they help students create a safe, loving and positive community that enhances teachers' ability to teach, as well as students' ability to learn. Teachers who are trained and teach SEL have cited the following benefits (Jones, 2010):

- Increased confidence in teachers' ability to handle conflict (among students, peers and families)
- Increased teachers' positive attitude toward teaching
- Increased teachers' perception that they are ready to teach about problem-solving, critical thinking, listening/communication skills, and conflict escalation.
- Increased teachers' perception that they are prepared to implement classroom management strategies: have students help and enforce rules, teach conflict strategies, and use cooperative learning.

What SEL Is Not

There are many myths and misconceptions about what SEL is. SEL is not parenting and it does not replace the role or responsibilities of primary caregivers. SEL is not psychotherapy and does not attempt to diagnose or provide therapeutic instruction. SEL does recognize, however, that building emotional intelligence and empathy improves children's ability to succeed in life. SEL does not occur at the expense of core academic subjects; rather it increases children's ability to learn. It is not a luxury, or something students do after they've studied their "academic subjects" (Zakrzewski, 2012). Finally, SEL has no religious basis. While the Choose Love Program encourages the development of the universally recognized values of courage, gratitude, forgiveness and compassion, it is not affiliated with any political or religious institution or organization.



CLASSROOM CLIMATE

The National School Climate Council defines school climate as: “quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school personnel's experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures” (2016a). The NSCC suggests that a sustainable, positive school climate fosters youth development and learning necessary for a productive, contributing and satisfying life in a democratic society. This climate includes:

- Norms, values and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally and physically safe.
- People are engaged and respected.
- Students, families and educators work together to develop, live and contribute to a shared school vision.
- Educators model and nurture attitudes that emphasize the benefits and satisfaction gained from learning.
- Each person contributes to the operations of the school and the care of the physical environment.

While there is not national agreement on what aspects of school climate should be assessed, benchmarks and standards are available for further inquiry and research (National School Climate Council, 2016b).



CURRICULUM CONTENT

The Choose Love Enrichment Program lessons were written for educators, by educators. The content of the lessons is based on research on emotional intelligence, resilience, post-traumatic growth, neuroscience, mindfulness/focused attention, and SEL. The whole child—mind, heart, and body—is supported through these lessons. Special attention is paid to how our physical bodies (nerves, muscles, etc.), minds (the triune brain), and hearts (emotions) work in collaboration to promote health, learning, connection, and life success. The curriculum is divided into four units: Courage, Gratitude, Forgiveness, and Compassion in Action.



COURAGE

Courage is the willingness and ability to work through obstacles despite feeling embarrassment, fear, reluctance, or uncertainty. When you practice courage, you make positive choices even when it may be difficult for you. It takes courage to express our feelings, make ethical choices, tell the truth, admit mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and to be kind. This is especially true when others might not be leading by example. Students practice identifying feelings in themselves and others. The “courage” exercises assist students in learning how to help their brains regulate the amygdala by activating the prefrontal cortex (Motzkin, Philippi, Wolf, Baskaya, & Koenigs, 2015).

GRATITUDE

Students learn that gratitude is mindful thankfulness and the ability to be thankful even when things in life are challenging. When you practice gratitude you feel thankful and want to share that feeling with others (Donaldson, Dollwet & Rao, 2015). Research has shown that the benefits associated with gratitude include better sleep patterns, increased levels of happiness and optimism, a sense of connection to peers and communities, and decreased levels of anxiety and stress (Donaldson, et al., 2015). Gratitude influences sleep through the mechanism of pre-sleep cognitions. These benefits have positive impacts in the lives of students, and they help cultivate safe and thriving classroom cultures. “Gratitude” exercises help students become actively thankful for everyday situations and opportunities (Lomas, Froh, Emmons, Mishra & Bono, 2014).

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness means choosing to let go of anger and resentment toward yourself or someone else, to surrender thoughts of revenge, and to move forward with your personal power intact. Forgiveness has been shown to improve relationships, decrease anxiety and stress, lower blood pressure, lower the risk of depression, and strengthen immune and heart health. Letting go of negative emotions can often have a remarkable impact on one’s physical, mental and emotional health (Chiaramello, Mesnil, Sastre, & Mullet, 2008). Students also learn how to forgive themselves if they’ve made a mistake, caused an accident, or hurt someone as a result of their actions (Thompson & Waltz, 2008). Students learn healthy ways to express anger and to calm themselves down. They also learn how their brains and bodies respond to anger. They practice listening skills to support each other when they feel angry or are having strong emotions.

COMPASSION IN ACTION

Compassion is the understanding of a problem or the suffering of another and acting to solve the problem or alleviate the suffering. Students apply their empathy and communication skills to support one another through compassionate action. Humans are wired for connection and compassion. The activities help students make choices that benefit their minds, hearts, bodies, and relationships.



EMPATHY

Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence researcher and thought-leader, suggests that there are three types of empathy: cognitive, emotional and compassionate (1995). Empathy is generally known as the ability to recognize and understand the experience and feelings of another. There is evidence-based agreement among researchers that empathy skills can be taught (Rosenthal, 2002; Salovey, Mayer & Caruso, 2002; Salovey & Pizarro, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2002). Empathy skills lay the foundation for communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution, impulse control, relationship skills and leadership skills. The Choose Love Program teaches children skills including: naming and recognizing emotions in self and other; differentiating between emotions; recognizing complex emotions; acknowledging emotions change and fluctuate with intensity; understanding that people may have different emotions about the same thing; identifying nonverbal and somatic cues of different emotions; and perspective-taking. For additional reading on the importance of empathy and emotional intelligence, check out these resources:

Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ. New York: Bantam.

Rosenthal, N. E. (2002). The emotional revolution: How the new science of feelings can transform your life. New York: Kensington.

Salovey, P., Mayer, J.D., & Caruso, D. (2002). The positive psychology of emotional intelligence. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), *The handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 159-171). New York: Oxford University Press.

Salovey, P. & Pizarro, D. A. (2002). The value of emotional intelligence.

In R. J. Sternberg, J. Lautrey, & T. I. Lubart (Eds.), *Models of intelligence: International perspectives* (pp. 263-78). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

EMOTION MANAGEMENT/IMPULSE CONTROL

Emotion management is the ability to recognize and mediate the cognitive, emotional and physiological response to emotional states. Regulating oneself in this way can decrease stress and anger, or can be used to increase motivation and enthusiasm. Impulse control is the ability to delay short term gratification for long term goals or rewards. For over 40 years, self-control has been studied to understand how it influences decision-making and life success. The [Marshmallow experiment](#) is a classic example of this (“Delaying Gratification,” n.d.).

Emotion management and impulse control are critical skills for being able to focus attention, engage in conflict constructively, and expressing oneself in healthy, socially appropriate ways. Using diaphragmatic breathing techniques, focused awareness, written reflection, verbal mediation and understanding the neurobiology of how the brain responds to heightened emotional states help students make prosocial choices about how they express themselves.



COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

Having good communication skills is about learning to read, write, speak and listen effectively. Students who practice communication skills are better able to be assertive, succeed academically, resolve conflict and form positive relationships. The Choose Love Enrichment Program helps students practice the following skills: verbal and nonverbal communication; active listening, reflecting, speaking in front of a group, writing, story-telling, asking questions, and focusing attention. Throughout the curriculum students practice problem-solving, resolving conflict scenarios, and cooperating. By learning, playing and practicing SEL skills individually, in pairs, in small groups and as a large classroom community, they build positive identities and relationships.

LESSON BREAKDOWN, PACING AND FREQUENCY FOR PREK-5



In each lesson you will find the following sections: Student Objectives, Educator Preparation, Focused Awareness, Discussion, Activity, and Transfer of Learning. The lessons are designed to be taught in sequence, and vary in teaching time from 20 to 45 minutes depending on grade level. Additional activities are provided to help keep the program going all year long, and ensure that it becomes part of your classroom vernacular.

The **Student Objectives** section will tell you what the students will be able to do following the lesson. This will help you focus on why the lesson is being taught, and why it's important for students. The **Educator Preparation** section will tell you what materials or resources you need to gather before the lesson.

The **Focused Awareness** section provides skills that are designed to help students increase their readiness to learn and improve their emotion management. It includes the following three skills: Breath (diaphragmatic breathing), Rest and Relax (mindful relaxation of the body), and Reflection (Garland, Farb, Goldin & Fredrickson, 2015). These skills help students:

- Increase their awareness of emotions,
- Manage their feelings when appropriate, and
- Regulate their feelings in the moment.

Educators can help students adopt these skills by modeling, coaching, and cueing students frequently. At first, younger students may find it difficult to focus their attention through this section, but with practice they'll lengthen the amount of time they're able to remain still, calm, and attentive.



The **Discussion** section provides an easy-to-use script for you to read aloud. It guides students through a discussion of the lesson contents. The **Activity** section provides students with opportunities to practice what they've learned. The **Transfer of Learning** section gives ideas on how to reinforce what students learned in the lesson.

When to Start Teaching

Ideally, starting lessons at the beginning of the school year helps set the tone for classroom culture and behavioral expectations. However, you can begin teaching the lessons any time. Lessons are designed to be taught in sequence, the skills building off one another. Begin with the courage lessons and do not skip lessons. Just like in other subjects, the concepts, vocabulary and skills build off of one another.

Scheduling a Lesson

Scheduling a lesson at the beginning of school week allows you to reinforce the concepts and skills throughout the week. Consistency, just like with other subjects helps the students see the curriculum as an integrated part of their learning, rather than a random side offering. The lessons are rich with content so it is recommended to not teach more than one new lesson per week. Just like with other subjects, the students need an opportunity to practice and reflect on the skills they are learning before adding to them. Allow students time to internalize their new skills. You can even revisit a lesson twice if it is beneficial.

Preparing a Lesson

Before teaching, preview the Student Objectives and Educator Preparation sections. While the lessons are designed to be easy to follow, you are encouraged to read the lesson through in its entirety before teaching it. Some lessons contain games or activities that require preparation. As a way to keep the lessons culturally and socially relevant to your students, many lessons ask you to come up with examples and scenarios based on your unique classroom, school, town and population of students. Use age appropriate examples, and anticipate any difficult questions students might ask you. Keeping learning in context can help students engage more deeply with the content.

Presenting a Lesson

Lessons can be completed in one sitting or divided up into sections if you want to begin the lesson at the top of the day, and continue it after lunch or the following day, schedule permitting. Natural places to stop are at the end of the Focused Awareness, Discussion, or Activity sections. Based on your discretion



and classroom needs, you can complete each lesson in one sitting or across the timespan of a week. The lessons include the following sections:

- Focused Awareness
- Discussion
- Activity
- Transfer of Learning

How to Extend Lessons All Year Long

Here are some ways you can keep the learning going all year long:

- Repeat any lesson
- Practice the suggested Transfer of Learning activities.
- Integrate lesson concepts into academic areas. For example, ask students: How did a character demonstrate gratitude in a book students are reading? How could forgiveness have helped two countries in conflict? Did it take courage to give your science presentation? How can you show compassion in gym class or at recess?
- Prompt students to practice the breathing techniques, focused awareness, or reflection activities at any time of day.
- Write and reflect in Choose Love Journals all week long.
- Include daily check-ins during morning meetings.

LESSON BREAKDOWN, PACING AND FREQUENCY FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Middle School Program has very similar content to the Elementary School Program in that students learn the Choose Love Formula, with a unit on Courage, Gratitude, Forgiveness, and Compassion in Action. However, the Middle School Program is laid out very differently from the Elementary School to better fit with the Middle School Schedule. It is designed to be started as close to the beginning of the school year as possible in order that the whole program be completed by the end of the school year.

If this program is used in a class that meets every day, there is a Brain Blast Lesson for Day 1 of the week. These can be easily shortened or lengthened, depending on the time available. The **Brain Blast Lesson** is the overarching lesson or theme for that section of the unit being taught for that week. Each Unit has 7 Brain Blasts. Therefore, the idea is that each Unit will last a minimum of 7 weeks, or longer if you don't meet every day and stretch out the content.



After the Day 1 Brain Blast Lesson and Activity, each day of the rest of the week we have provided Power Surges. **Power Surges** are designed to be blasts of learning to support, reinforce, and extend the learning from the Brain Blast. These lessons are designed to be slightly shorter lessons which expand upon or reinforce the Brain Blast Lesson. Power Surges can be utilized daily or weekly as time permits. Again, these can be shortened or lengthened based on the time available. These lesson blasts enhance students' understanding of concepts and introduce and reinforce essential skills.

Each Unit has 7 Brain Blasts and 28 Power Surges, for a total of 35 lessons. At a pace of one Brain Blast lesson per week (starting on Day 1) followed by Power Surges (on the remaining days of the week), each unit of the program will take 7 weeks to complete. If this is taught in a class that meets daily, the entire program can be completed in 28 weeks. This program is easily adapted to varying middle school schedules, allowing for quick blasts of learning in a homeroom or advisory period, or extended learning blocks in a class. You'll find lessons easy to modify to make them longer or shorter based on your needs. Altogether with 7 Brain Blast Lessons and 28 Power Surge Lessons for each of the four Units, there is a total of 28 Brain Blasts and 112 Power Surges for 140 days of lessons and activities to complete the entire program. We encourage you to teach all lessons in the program in the order and manner in which they are presented. However, we realize this may be taught in a class that doesn't meet every day. In this way, the program may take more than 28 weeks to complete. You may not have the time to get to all lessons. In this case, we advise you to teach the Brain Blasts Lessons and then pick the Power Surges that are most suitable and effective to meet the needs of your students and school.

Each Unit has:

- 7 Brain Blasts
- 28 Power Surges (4 for each Brain Blast)
- Alignment to: Common Core State Standards and American School Counselor Association Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success

Each week of each Unit has:

- 1 Brain Blast Lesson
- 4 Power Surge Lessons
- A Related Quote
- Student Objectives for the Week
- A Social Media Message (Grades 7 and 8)
- Educator Prep
- Scripted Discussion/Lesson
- An Activity related to the Lesson
- SEL Skills Taught



LESSON BREAKDOWN, PACING AND FREQUENCY FOR HIGH SCHOOL

In each lesson, you will find the following sections: **Student Objectives**, **Educator Preparation**, **Activity**, **Social Media Share**, **SEL Skills Practice**, and **Reinforcing Learning**. The lessons are designed to be taught in sequence, and vary in teaching time from 10-15 minutes. There are 180 total lessons in the High School Program, 45 lessons in each of the 4 units. At a pace of one short lesson per day, students will have frequent opportunity to practice attitudinal and behavioral change.

The **Student Objectives** section will tell you what the students will be able to do following the lesson. This will help you focus on why the lesson is being taught, and why it's important for students. The **Educator Preparation** section will tell you what materials or resources you need to gather before the lesson. The lessons themselves are very low prep because we know teachers have enough on their plate. Since using examples and scenarios that are relevant to your students help make the program more effective, most of the preparation suggests coming up with skill-based examples that will be meaningful to your students.

The **Activity** section offers scripts for discussion, games, reflection and activities. The **Social Media Share** section provides ideas for how students can extend and relate the lesson concepts online. We call out the specific SEL skills being used in the **SEL Skills Practice** section, and offer additional tips and teaching strategies for helping new skills stick with students in the **Reinforcing Learning** section.

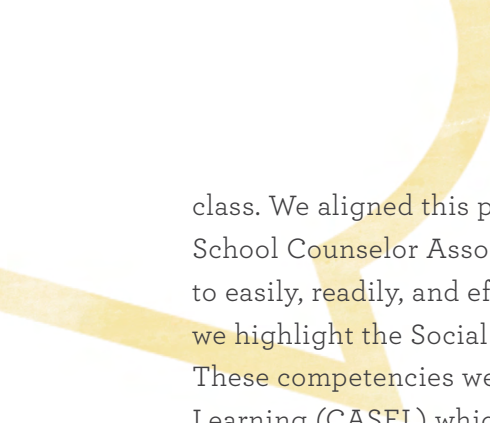
STANDARDS AND SEL'S CONNECTION TO ACADEMICS AND LIFE SUCCESS

The Choose Love Enrichment Program is aligned to the following standards:

- Early Learning and Development Standards (PreK-K)
- Common Core State Standards
- American School Counselor Association Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success

Since this program was created by educators, we understand how much you already have on your plate. We certainly don't want to pile any more work on you. Rather, our intention is to give you something that will be useful and offer many varied benefits to you, your students, and your





class. We aligned this program with the Common Core State Standards as well as the American School Counselor Association Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success to allow this program to easily, readily, and effectively be a part of your teaching/counseling practice. In addition, we highlight the Social and Emotional Learning Core Competencies addressed in each lesson. These competencies were identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) which are: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making.

These standards are created to highlight the knowledge, skills, and attitudes students need to achieve academic success, college and career readiness, and social and emotional development. Using a variety of educational efforts, these standards represent strong research and best practices in student achievement. By using this program that is aligned with teacher and counselor standards, you are guiding and strengthening your teaching/counseling practice and helping your students achieve their highest potential (American School Counselor Association, 2014; Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success: K-12 College and Career Readiness Standards for Every Student; Alexandria, VA: Author Connecticut Office of Early Childhood).

Each lesson is carefully crafted and placed in an intentional order to promote effective scaffolding and reinforce previous lessons. Some lessons directly address a standard, while others meet standards through the skills practiced over a series of lessons. This is why it is important to teach the lessons in sequence and allow time for practicing new skills and behaviors. The integration of the learning from the lessons is what helps build strong, thoughtful and compassionate children.

It is a combination and integration of curriculum content and teaching strategies that helps students deepen their learning, adopt beneficial life skills, and meet content standards.

TEACHING STRATEGIES/REINFORCING LEARNING

Modeling

Modeling is one of the most powerful teaching strategies an educator can use. Offering positive behavioral examples of how to successfully perform social emotional skills reinforces student learning. Throughout each day, practice using SEL skills in front of students. This shows them how to be successful applying these skills to everyday situations. When you model the skills you subsequently teach and support students in learning, you help build a sense of belonging in the school environment. By noticing your congruence, students' trust for you increases which fosters a sense of belonging and promotes a positive attitude toward learning and working.



Coaching

Coaching is a process of helping students learn how to practice new skills. Simply put, it includes giving students constructive and immediate feedback about the way they are behaving. According to the International Coaching Federation (ICF), coaching is defined as “partnering with clients [students] in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential” (International Coaching Federation: FAQs). For students this means establishing a caring and supportive relationship that helps improve their academic and life success. You may ask students powerful questions that help them understand concepts in new ways, or assist them in taking new perspective, for example. The ICF also suggests that when you are coaching someone, you are honoring that person as an expert at his or her life, and believe they are resourceful, whole human beings. As a result, you help them discover, clarify and align to their goals (for students this can look like getting good grades, making new friends, trying out for a team, or challenging themselves); you encourage their self-discovery; you elicit strategies and solutions that they come up with; and you hold them responsible and accountable for their actions. Coaching is helpful as students are still remembering how to use new skills. They may need support determining what to say/do, how to say/do something, or when the appropriate time is to apply a skill. Coaching students helps create a safe space for them to both fail and succeed, which in turn can improve classroom trust and school success.

Cueing

Cueing is when you support students in knowing when to use a skill. Students may remember how, but may be uncertain about timing. For example, when is a good time to let someone know they’ve hurt your feelings, or when is a good time to use a calming down technique? Reminding students and prompting them helps them understand and develop a sophisticated sense of when it is appropriate to use learned skills. This also helps students build an awareness of there being different social norms in different social settings. This cultural awareness helps them learn to be successful not only in the classroom but in their families and communities. Both coaching and cueing help students build self-confidence in their ability to succeed.

Nonjudgmental Responses

To encourage student participation in discussion, practice using nonjudgmental responses to their answers. Unlike subjects like math or science, when we talk about emotions and experiences there is not always one “correct” or “right” answer. There can be many possible responses to the same question. Use some of the following tips and nonjudgmental phrases when responding to students:

- Say, “Thank you.”
- Say, “That’s one idea, who has another?”
- Parrot back what the student said to acknowledge their response.
- Paraphrase what the student said.
- Ask a question about what the student said.
- Ask if anyone has another similar or different response.



Using nonjudgmental response is not the same as allowing incorrect responses. Off-topic or inappropriate responses should be corrected or redirected.

Varied Calling of Students

Be mindful of who your extroverts and introverts are – who likes to raise their hand for every question, and who is shy? Pay attention to students in the front and back of the class. Notice the frequency in which you call on students of different genders, races, or abilities. Mix up not only who you call on but how you call on them. Sometimes call on people directly, while other times ask for volunteers. In some situations have all the students chant a response out loud, or give you a thumbs up if they can relate to what you've said. Students can also use a talking stick that they pass around to denote whose turn it is to talk.

Nonverbal responses are also great ways to engage students. Students can raise their hands, snap, clap, or otherwise demonstrate agreement or disagreement with what is being discussed. They can make facial expressions or use body postures that indicate their response. This is a great way to promote whole body participation throughout the lessons.

Working in Pairs

At times throughout the curriculum students will be asked to turn and talk to a learning partner. These can be preassigned by you or can be determined by what is convenient (two students who sit next to each other). You can keep the same partners throughout the year to help build rapport among students, or mix them up periodically to give everyone a chance to work with one another. Use your discernment to determine what would most benefit the students' learning. You may consider pairing a stronger skilled student with a weaker skilled student to promote peer to peer learning. When pairing students, take into consideration race, gender and religious diversity. Do not pair up students who might be in bullying relationships.

Small Group Work (4s)

At times throughout the curriculum students will be asked to work in small groups of 4. This is a great opportunity for students to practice their social and teamwork skills. These can be preassigned by you or can be determined by what is convenient (four students who sit in a pod together). You can keep the same partners throughout the year to help build rapport among students, or mix them up periodically to give everyone a chance to work with one another. Use your discernment to determine what would most benefit the students' learning. This helps students practice collaborative conversations with diverse partners about age-appropriate topics with peers and adults in small and larger groups.



Authentic Sharing (What's Appropriate to Share)

Share personal examples with your students of times when you used curriculum skills. This is a great way to build trust with the students. Students will experience a stronger connection with you as they see the ways in which we are all alike. By sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences, students will come to see you in a more real, authentic, and human way which makes the teaching more genuine and impactful, and your relationship with your students more substantial. By seeing you authentically open up, they not only see a model for how to do so, but they develop a stronger rapport that creates a trusting, safe environment which encourages them to express themselves.

It is very important, however, that you use professional discretion when sharing with students. Remember this isn't a time for therapy, confession or adult content. It is not appropriate to talk about drama or sordid details. Share stories that are age appropriate and relatable. Often it is a simple utterance like "Wow, did I have a bad morning. This is what happened...", "I'm sorry guys, I just made a mistake when I was teaching that lesson...", "I'm having a really hard time with...", or "I am so happy right now because..." Share both challenging and celebratory experiences that relate to the skills students are learning such as dealing with feelings, being courageous, friendships, handling adversity, practicing gratitude, forgiving someone, showing compassion and the like. It's important to share some negative, challenging feelings and situations because that is honest and authentic...as long as they are appropriate. But make sure you balance it out with positive, "feel good", inspiring shares which will help build positivity and model resiliency and choosing love. Authentic sharing creates safe, connected environments, builds trust and relationships, and creates teachable moments that can be transformational.

Pause/Wait Time

Pausing after you pose a question is a great opportunity to give students time to think about their response. In SEL instruction, the speed of the response time is less important as the quality of the response. In fact, teaching students to pause and reflect is a valuable skill. Providing a wait time before you call on a student allows students who need more time to think an opportunity to participate in classroom discussion. This reinforces impulse control and encourages students to be thoughtful.

Reinforcing Positive Behaviors

Reinforcing learning from the lessons helps student transfer what they've learned to different areas of their lives. Rather than focus on external rewards, help develop students' intrinsic motivation, or the motivation to do something because the activity brings you pleasure, joy, or personal satisfaction. Here are a few suggestions for how to support prosocial behaviors:

- Let students know when they have used a skill the right way. Smile, nod or give them a thumb up as a cue that they made a prosocial choice or did something kind. Reinforce the things they do right as much as you might correct off-task behaviors.
- Give students positive verbal feedback when they act compassionately or perform a skill



correctly. Give them behaviorally specific feedback. Let them know exactly what you heard or saw them do, and how it impacted you or others around them.

- Encourage students to share positive feedback with one another. If one student does something kind for another student, cue them to describe how the kind deed affected them.
- Rather than reward children for “right” answers, give them attention and praise when they do something that promotes a healthy, safe and caring classroom.
- Instead of saying “don’t do this” (don’t run, don’t talk, don’t be mean, etc.) rephrase your instruction to focus on the behavior you want to see (please walk, use quiet voices, etc.).
- Create collective and public goals together. For example, try to demonstrate 100 compassionate acts as a class each month.
- Set clear, easy to follow classroom rules for behavior in the classroom.

When you reinforce positive behaviors, you help instill a belief in students using their abilities to their fullest to achieve high-quality results and outcomes. You also help model setting high standards of quality in your classroom both academically and socially.

Preventing/Handling Disruptive Behavior

SEL teaching strategies are sometimes different from other classroom teaching strategies. Students may notice this and at first respond in ways that are not desirable. Students may also not be used to discussing their thoughts and feelings openly. This nervousness can occasionally cause them to act disruptively. Have patience as students not only learn new content, but also learn new ways of interacting with one another. Off topic or disruptive behaviors are opportunities to reinforce SEL skills. Managing a classroom of diverse students can require a variety of techniques that a teacher may need to employ to help keep students focused, attentive, safe and productive. Here are some suggestions for how to prevent disruptive behavior during the lessons:

- Give simple, clear instructions and directions. Ask students to parrot back the instructions to you.
- Review listening skills before an activity that requires listening. Ask students to focus on one specific listening skill to practice.
- Reduce distractions on desks and in classrooms.
- Post the Choose Love Constitution where it is easy to see.
- Positively reinforce students demonstrating the behavior you want to see.
- Before asking for student responses, model what an appropriate response to the question would sound like.
- Make sure seating is arranged so that every student can see you and make eye contact.
- Let students know how long a lesson or activity will last (ie. We will spend two minutes on this activity.)
- Remember that all students learn differently, and engaging our bodies can help us learn. Consider allowing students to doodle, stretch, stand or walk during a lesson instead of sitting still. After the lesson, ask students if they think they learned better by engaging their bodies in the learning differently.



Attention-getting techniques to maintain focus:

- Clap your hands if you can hear the sound of my voice. (Or raise your hand, blink your eyes, etc.)
- Raise or lower the lights to denote focusing attention.
- Notice if you need to raise or settle the energy in the classroom to help focus attention.
- Repeat breathing techniques to calm down, or have students do jumping jacks to bring up the energy. Pause and invite the class to stretch.

During discussions, you may need to redirect off topic responses and can do so by some of the following techniques:

- Thank the student for their response and ask them to listen carefully to the question again. Then, restate the question.
- Nonjudgmentally move on to another response.
- Note that sometimes sharing feelings can be uncomfortable. Giggling or making jokes is normal. However, you are asking students to use their courage to overcome their discomfort, and to share authentically.
- Thank the student for a creative response, and ask them to focus on a more relevant or practical one that has to do with your example.
- Intervene and provide immediate feedback to redirect behaviors, rather than allowing inappropriate behaviors to continue.
- If a student is excessively disruptive and must be removed from the group, try to keep the student nearby so he/she can still listen to the lesson. It is often these students that need to practice SEL the most and removing them from class does them a disservice.

If students make fun of lesson content try the following:

- Stay curious in the moment and reflect back to them what you are hearing. For example, “It sounds like you are distracted by ... Can you help me make the example more relevant to our class and your experience? What would you do or say differently in this situation?”
- Validate that they are learning skills that might be different from what they have previously been taught by their families, peers or the media. Ask students to explore those differences with you.
- Preview the lesson content ahead of time so you can anticipate any sections that you may want to adapt to be more culturally appropriate for your students.
- Remind students about positive behavior norms and expectations for classroom behavior. They may choose different behaviors in different situations. Part of growing up and learning is discovering how to adapt to different situations.
- Connect with the student’s family and see if together you can find a way to help reinforce what the student is learning.

Connect with other teachers teaching the program and see if they have additional creative solutions for offering positive classroom management support. Connect any interventions you make to larger school efforts such as Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS).



STUDENT SKILLS

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Often, when people think of taking a deep breath, they expand and lift their chest. In diaphragmatic breathing, one breathes deeply, down into the lungs, expanding and contracting the diaphragm. This is commonly known as belly breathing, and it has a positive effect on the autonomic nervous system and mind. It is a breathing technique athletes and singers use to enhance their performance. Anyone can use this technique as an immediate stress buster to reduce tension and increase focus. The **Choose Love Enrichment Program** teaches four ways to practice diaphragmatic breathing:

- Brave Breaths
- Gratitude Breaths
- Forgiveness Breaths
- Compassion Breaths

Brave Breath helps us calm down and regulate the fight or flight response in our bodies which alerts us to danger. Often times our bodies are sending a false alarm and there is nothing present that is dangerous or anything that is going to harm us, we are just worried. When we manage our stress response with our **Brave Breath**, we can build up courage to face difficult situations with a sense of calm. When we breathe deeply, air goes in through our noses, fills your lungs, and our lower belly rises. This type of breathing helps to slow our heart rate and lowers our blood pressure (Harvard Health Publications, 2015). The Brave Breath helps us build a calm sense of courage and awareness. The Brave Breath also aids us in disengaging from distracting thoughts and sensations. When we are calm, we are better able to express ourselves and relate better to others.

When we practice the **Gratitude Breath**, we are bringing our attention to our body, using our focused awareness along with a visualization technique to see the breath moving like a wave. This type of relaxation is called autogenic, meaning it is something that comes from within us (Mayo Clinic, 2016). When we imagine a peaceful wave and then focus on a part of our breath and body, we calm our sympathetic nervous system and go into a more relaxed state of mind. In this relaxation technique, we use both visual imagery and body awareness to reduce stress. Bringing our focused awareness to what we are grateful for also helps to improve our physical health. When we are breathing and focusing on gratitude, it can improve our emotional well-being by increasing feelings of empathy and reducing aggression. Gratitude even improves self-esteem and can help us sleep better (Morin, 2014).

Forgiveness is not always easy and sometimes just thinking about a harm done to us can trigger the stress response in our bodies. The **Forgiveness Breath** helps us to regulate these difficult emotions. Our breathing affects our autonomic nervous system (ANS), which signal reactions



in the body, like fight or flight or a relaxation responses (HeartMD Institute, 2010). The ANS manages our breathing, as well as our body temperature digestion and heart rate. There are two branches of the ANS, the first one is the sympathetic branch, which initiates stress; the second branch is the parasympathetic branch, which creates a relaxation response. Through our breath, we can regulate and create a parasympathetic or relaxed state during moments of stress which helps us respond better to difficult situations (HeartMD Institute, 2010).

The Forgiveness Breath includes a tense and release relaxation technique, whereas we focus on slowly tensing and then relaxing each muscle group (Mayo Clinic, 2016). This simple technique helps us focus on the difference between muscle tension and relaxation. When we do this we become more aware of physical sensations in our bodies. By tensing and releasing the muscles we are able to reduce physical feelings of frustration and angry emotions. This helps to improve our mood and increase our concentration on what is happening in this moment. When we tense and release the muscles we also increase blood flow and reduce muscle tension (Mayo Clinic, 2016).

The Compassion Breath, expands the diaphragm's range of motion, which brings oxygenated air to the lower part of our lungs, helping us feel alert and relaxed. On the other hand, shallow breathing limits the diaphragm's range of motion and can make us feel short of breath and more anxious. When we practice the Compassion Breath, we can feel the air coming through our noses fully filling up our lungs as the lower belly rises. This deep abdominal breathing encourages the full oxygen exchange, meaning we get to experience the benefits of incoming oxygen and outgoing carbon dioxide. When this happens we can lower our blood pressure, stabilize our heartbeat and feel more relaxed (Harvard Health Publications, 2015). By placing the hands on the belly and heart, it allows us to have a greater awareness and focus on our breath going into our lower belly. This technique is very calming to our nervous system and helps us practice compassion towards ourselves and others.

Both the diaphragmatic breathing and rest and relax activities help students in a number of ways. It helps them learn to focus and pay attention which promotes their ability to work independently, delay immediate gratification for long term rewards, and practice perseverance when engaging in challenging coursework.

Rest and Relax

Rest and Relax activities are very beneficial to both the body and mind. It helps us improve our awareness of ourselves and others and increases our ability to focus and be in the present moment. When we take time to destress and relax, we reduce negative emotions and can see things from a clearer perspective. Rest and relax may give us an opportunity to gain energy in the middle of the day (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2014). There are additional physical benefits to resting and relaxing, for example it can relieve anxiety and feelings of sadness or depression (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2014).



Reflection, Prediction and In the Moment

Students will practice focusing their attention on the past, present and future. When students reflect, they are asked to critically examine their experience and connect it to their learning.

They will reflect in four different ways:

- Objective: What did you experience (thoughts, feelings, behaviors)?
What did they see, hear, notice, etc.?
- Reflective: What did you think or feel about your experience?
- Interpretive: What did you learn from your experience?
- Decisional: What decisions will you make now as a result of your experience?

Reflection allows students to understand the impact of their behaviors, and consider how they might change their behavior to create a different outcome.

Students will practice focusing their attention on being in the moment. This teaches them to express their thoughts, feelings and needs. They learn how to identify cues in their body and it helps them refine their impulse control and practice emotion management.

Students will practice anticipating and predicting how their current actions may influence future events. This is important for taking responsibility, learning about consequences, making decisions, and understanding the impact their behavior has on others.

Intentions

An intention is a purpose, or a reason for doing something. You might see it as a vision you have for yourself and build goals around in order to take steps to achieving it. For example, you may intend to try new things this year, or make new friends. An intention can also be an attitude. For example, you may intend to be more grateful for your family, or be kinder to yourself by scheduling self-care. Setting an intention helps teachers and students focus on how or why we are doing something. It helps them become clear on their motivation for their behaviors. When students practice this, they become better decision-makers, and can better learn to align their intentions with their conscious choices.

Listening Skills

While there are cultural differences in what ideal listening behaviors are, students are asked to practice the following listening skills acknowledging that they won't all be appropriate for every situation:

- Make eye contact.
- Face their body towards the speaker.
- Listen without speaking or interrupting.
- Nod their head to indicate they hear someone.
- Verbally acknowledge how someone feels. "I can see you feel sad."



- Focus on the other person, and don't do another task while you are listening. Remove distractions.
- Be curious about what the other person is saying. Try to understand their point of view.
- Think about the volume and tone you use when responding.
- Notice nonverbal communication. Watch for clues their body gives them about how they feel.
- Ask questions about what they said.

Classroom Constitution

A constitution is a document that students create together as a group that defines how they agree to treat each other. It is a set of rules that they list to ensure that each person feels safe, cared for, and able to be their best self in this classroom. It is essentially a social contract, generated by the students (not the teacher or authority figures). Students are empowered to determine what acceptable social behavior is and how to respond if someone is not following agreed-upon behavior. A focus on listening skills and the Choose Love Constitution help students follow agreed-upon rules for discussions.

Affirmations

An affirmation is a statement you say to yourself out loud or in your mind to help you focus your thoughts and feelings in a particular way. It is a specific statement that helps you make positive changes in your attitude and behavior, and can be particularly helpful when goal-setting. Students use affirmations to increase their self-esteem, decrease anxiety, set goals, believe in themselves more, and manage their emotions (Williams, 2013).

Emotions Vocabulary

Students develop an emotions vocabulary that helps them manage their feelings, support their peers, and learn to be assertive. When students are able to identify and articulate their emotions, they are better able to stand up for themselves and others, leverage courage, feel gratitude, practice forgiveness and offer compassion. Emotional Intelligence is a critical leadership skill, and leads to greater life satisfaction and success. Feeling words include (but are not limited to): happy, sad, angry, afraid, surprised, confused, shy, worried, nervous, and excited.

Cultivating an emotions vocabulary supports the development of empathy and emotional intelligence. This helps students demonstrate ethical decision-making and social responsibility. Empathy is the foundation for healthy collaboration and cooperation as well. As students grow older, these foundational skills become leadership and teamwork skills to help them work effectively in diverse teams. This is how students build social maturity and learn to practice behaviors appropriate to their situations and environments. Identifying emotions in self and others helps students assume personal responsibility for their actions and the impact those behaviors have on others.



Gratitude Lists

Students create gratitude lists throughout the curriculum. Practicing gratitude has been shown to make people happier and healthier, improve sleep, increase helpfulness and increase resilience (Main, 2015). By practicing gratitude students will begin to feel more connected to their school community and build positive associations with learning and academic success.

Neuroscience

Students learn the Triune Model of the Brain. Students learn about how their brain responds to strong emotions, in particular fear and anger. Teaching them how their brains and bodies respond helps them learn how to manage their emotions and regulate their impulses. Our program teaches students a simple phrase, "Leave the Lizard, Nudge the Numbat, Hug the Human" which reminds and prompts them to manage their emotions and effectively control their impulses to make appropriate choices. A more lengthy and detailed description of the Neuroscience behind the program is included at the beginning of Grade Level content. Please review this carefully so you will have a strong understanding of the Neuroscience. In addition, watch Dr. Dan Siegel's hand model that describes how the brain works: http://www.drdansiegel.com/resources/everyday_mindsight_tools/

CALM Problem-Solving Steps

CALM is the acronym used to help students problem-solve. CALM includes the following steps:

- **C – Collaborate** – The first step is that students consciously choose to collaborate to solve a problem. They decide working together (with one another or with an adult) is important.
- **A – Ask Questions** - How do I feel? How do you feel? What do I see happening? What do I hear happening?
- **L – Listen** – Practice your listening skills. Notice what parts of your stories are similar or different.
- **M – Make Your Move** – Decide what to do next and come up with solutions together.

This model is used in general problem-solving or conflict resolution scenarios. It is not intended to be applied to dangerous or threatening circumstances, or incidents of bullying.

Nonjudgmental Responses

When students are problem-solving, encourage them to use nonjudgmental responses to describe a situation. Describing problems using non-judgmental and behaviorally specific language sets the stage for assertive communication and discussions about tattling. To do this, students focus their attention on the behaviors they see, hear, feel and want rather than their opinions about a behavior. For example:

Judgement/opinion: Kristy pushed me out of line on purpose!

Nonjudgmental observation: I was standing in line, and I got knocked over by Kristy. She did not say sorry.



Judgement/opinion: She’s being mean.

Nonjudgmental observation: I was playing with the toy, and she took it without asking. I feel frustrated, and don’t think that’s fair.

Choose Love Corner

The Choose Love Corner is a quiet area of the classroom where students can initiate their own “time-out” if they need to calm down, focus or simply take pause. This is not a punitive space, but a reflective one. It should be comfortable but have minimal distractions. You can use a yoga mat, beanbag or pillows instead of chairs. You may have a sand glass timer to help students practice their breathing techniques for five minutes.

Choose Love Journal

Journaling provides students an opportunity to reflect and respond to the concepts taught in the program. Students decorate their journals to feel ownership over their reflective process. Journaling can help students clarify their thoughts and feelings when they are experiencing uncertainty or feeling overwhelmed. It can help students become more aware of what makes them happy, sad or frustrated, allowing them to get to know themselves better. Journaling helps reduce stress and improve mental health (Journaling for Mental Health, n.d.).

It can also help students solve problems and disagreements more effectively (Purcell, 2015). Through this reflective writing practice, students learn to evaluate their thoughts, emotions and behaviors. They deepen their awareness of their values and beliefs. Writing can help them lower their emotional reactivity, increase their tolerance for ambiguity, manage anxiety, cope with depression, and generally reduce stress (Journaling for Mental Health, n.d.).

Upstander

Students learn how to be an upstander. An upstander is someone who stands up for themselves or other people if they see they are being treated unkindly or unfairly. They practice scenarios for how to be an ally, offer support, act compassionately, and cultivate positive relationships with peers. Students practice assertiveness by learning to express themselves and acknowledge the impact of their actions on others.

Brave Pose

A Brave pose is a way to sit or stand when you want to increase your courage, confidence, or self-esteem. The concept is adapted from Amy Cuddy’s TED Talk on Power Posing (Cuddy, 2012). Practicing a brave pose is a way for students to align and embody courageous, grateful, forgiving and compassionate ways of being.



ADAPTATIONS

Adapting for Cultural Context

As an educator you already know the importance of cultural sensitivity not only within the classroom, but in life. This is a student-centered approach where the teaching persistently meets the cultural, emotional, and ethical needs of each student. The foundation of creating a nurturing environment for all students and teachers is to require communal respect. Respect can be modeled by the teacher through effective interpersonal communication and a caring heart. When students feel nurtured, cared for, and safe they are more likely to succeed within a classroom and adopt a communal sense of responsibility that negates ethnocentric attitudes. Students want to do better and become more motivated when they have a caring teacher. It is the job of the teacher to not only model respectful behavior, but to require it.

Creating a culturally sensitive classroom is not a simple task, but it is possible. Teachers must understand that behavior, emotion, and thinking can be directly related to multiculturalism, socio-economic status, religion, ethnicity, community leaders, geography, language, clothing, holidays, family structures, etc. Acting as a culturally responsive teacher requires sensitivity and understanding as to why a student may not participate in certain activities, make physical contact such as holding hands in a group circle, making eye contact with others, or various other verbal or non-verbal means of communicating. Ways of communicating differ greatly across cultures and it is essential we build upon these experiences and our cultural knowledge to set an example for our students and create a nurturing environment.

SEL can greatly assist the educator in fostering a culturally sensitive class because the curriculum is already designed to enable students in gaining a more global perspective and respect for worldviews. By stressing the importance and power of individual contribution within our society and respect for our differences, students will cultivate an enduring allegiance to our community and the practice of multicultural awareness.

Self-awareness is one of the most important components of a culturally sensitive classroom. By investigating your surroundings and encouraging students to do the same you are helping to model an environment that is conducive to all learning styles and one that meets the needs of all students. Before reacting to a situation that presents a challenge for you as the teacher ask yourself: What does this student need from me to be successful? As we all know this can be a daunting task especially when faced with so many diverse students each day. However, by building your own self-awareness you will become more connected to the emotions, morals, tribulations, and ethics of each student which will motivate and establish a safe and sensitive learning environment. Social and Emotional Learning does not begin and end in the classroom. For students to fully benefit from our SEL curriculum the learning must transcend the classroom.



into the personal lives of students through family and school partnerships, community organizations, religious societies, and cultural value systems (Zakrzewski, 2012). By embracing differences we are taking responsibility in building a safer, more tolerant community for all to enjoy.

Adapting for ESL, ELL, or Multilingual Students

ESL (English as a Second Language) or ELL (English Language Learners) have specific needs when it pertains to instructional methods in regular content areas that can differ slightly when teaching a curriculum based on Social and Emotional development. The most important way teachers can support and prepare for the learning of these particular students is to be aware of culture shock or lack of assimilation. Students may become frustrated, confused, and overwhelmed by the information presented and demonstrate unusual behaviors such as fearfulness, anxiety, aggression, depression, withdrawal, negative attitudes, or crying. These behaviors are not limited to those listed, but are most common amongst students experiencing difficulty assimilating into a new environment.

ESL and ELL students need information presented in a slightly different format that uses clear directives. Eliminate colloquialisms, unnecessary adjectives, and complex vocabulary. Speak literally, and without metaphors. Concrete examples and short sentences work best. The use of visuals and re-writing directions in steps is also extremely helpful.

Be sure to change or adapt the language used, not the content. It is necessary for ESL or ELL students to become exposed to the language of the school by listening and speaking with their peers and teachers. Encourage students when they make vernacular mistakes and offer a correction that does not belittle, but instead empowers the student. Use phrases like, “I see you are really trying and that is wonderful” or “Next time try saying this...” Another option is to use non-verbal cues such as thumbs up, body language, facial expressions, etc. The focus here is on comprehension over pronunciation, and repetition helps. This will help establish a nurturing environment where the student will feel safe, encouraged and in turn be more likely to succeed. The use of visuals such as posters, photographs, word walls, pictures, vocabulary cue cards, and videos with subtitles will provide ESL students with different learning options and mediums to increase comprehension. ESL and ELL students can also greatly benefit from outlines, or notes written in his or her native language. Although this is not feasible based on lack of resources or time, it is most helpful to provide the student with a translation dictionary. Another suggestion is to pair the ESL student with a “buddy” who can offer assistance, organizational tips, ease frustration, and help the student feel included.

Academically Gifted

It is important to remember that just because a child is gifted in a specific subject, doesn’t mean their development is the same across the board. Social situations are challenging, regardless of a child’s age. Here are some tips for how to engage students in more sophisticated ways:



- Have students come up with their own challenging scenarios so that situations are relevant to them.
- Have students write plays or skits about their learning.
- Have students write a short comic or book about their learning.
- Encourage students to model behavior to younger students.

Afterschool/Daycare

The Choose Love Enrichment Program curriculum is designed for a classroom setting, however using it in an afterschool setting can help further reinforce the skills and concepts taught in the program. Typically in afterschool and daycare settings students play more games and are more physically active than in a classroom. Encourage students to practice the skills they have learned during their activities, and encourage cooperative rather than competitive games. Utilize craft activities and games to help teach the lesson concepts. Since students may not be attending afterschool care on a regular basis, review and model concepts and skills frequently. If you are leading a mixed age afterschool program, invite older students to pair up with younger students as role models. Modeling, coaching and cueing will be the primary teaching strategies you can leverage to reinforce the students' skills.

BEST PRACTICES— AN EDUCATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Over the past year or so of teaching social and emotional learning (SEL), I have observed that the best way to introduce SEL is by modeling the behaviors you expect from Day 1. By modeling what SEL looks like and sounds like you are setting a prime example for your students and establishing the tone of your classroom. This is essential for building a quality rapport with your students and allowing them to build trust with you as their leader. Show your students what compassion looks like and sounds like when you interact with other students or even colleagues. Let them know when you are having a rough day or are frustrated, but are still making the choice to be grateful for all the things that are going right in life. Make a verbal note of when you are consciously choosing love or when you forgave someone who wronged you. *Show them the shift within your own thinking and they will shift and start to establish this pattern as their norm in your classroom.* (And for the teachers who are not ready to make a shift in their own lives—remaining diligent in teaching and modeling SEL strategies with students will soon produce a more peaceful and better behaved classroom).

Once this modeling has occurred and the tone is set within the classroom culture you can formally introduce SEL. This can be as simple as using a show and tell evidence based teaching strategy. Give them definitions, ask for real world examples, and offer sentence starters so they can connect to what you are teaching them. It is so important to allow students to connect to what you are teaching with sharing of their own experiences, stories, thoughts and



feelings. Many times all it takes is that one educator who allows students the guided time to reflect, express, and discuss which opens windows of exploration and promotes student/class engagement. You'll be shocked by the increase in participation and the ways in which this helps the class become an engaged, connected community. Again, these are all building blocks. Teachers often expect kids to readily open up and express their feelings and in my experience it doesn't work this way. Kids need to feel respected, safe, and nurtured in the classroom in order to fully engage and reap the full benefits of SEL. Although this takes time and effort to build this relationship and classroom culture, the benefits are amazing and certainly worth the time invested.

Once the definitions are introduced dialogue becomes your most important ally. This is where the true craft of instruction comes into play. Sure it's easy to work on class projects and thank you cards, etc. But, we also need to be able to connect SEL to our formal curriculum. This is easiest in the ELA setting because we can connect SEL knowledge to characters in stories (their actions, motives, etc.), to collaborative assignments, to reflections of the text (especially real world issues- when kids can dissect the problem), and even with the theme of a story. In other subject areas teachers can connect SEL to students' interactions with each other and other teachers, and to lessons from history. They can use the practice of intentionality, breathing and focused attention exercises to calm and focus, daily journal writing with SEL prompts or do now activities if students finish a test early or as extra credit assignments. In any subject area educators should be providing ways for students to become impactful, contributing, functional members of the class and the larger school as well as positive role models to their peers and younger students. Help them understand and practice their civic, social and personal responsibilities.

One of the ways I really work SEL into the dialogue of my classroom is when children tell me about things happening around the building (otherwise known as gossip). Children are always going to gossip so I use it to my teaching advantage. I encourage them to rethink their reactions, thoughts, words, choices, or lack thereof- and rework the problem or issue using the strategies they were taught. I set the stage for them to think about what the person or people in that situation might have felt like and what they might have needed from others or themselves in that moment. This is a time to for students to reflect on having courage, being grateful, practicing forgiveness, being empathetic and showing compassion in action....either how they have shown these traits or how they could have shown these traits in real life situations. These reflections and discussions can lay the foundation for them to make more positive, prosocial choices in the future. Girls often come to me with problems stemming from low self-esteem issues so I help build them up by facilitating gratitude and self-love thoughts and activities and hold them accountable to report back their courage and diligence in practicing the exercises.

Many students suffer from anxiety- something that has plagued me my entire life. I am very open with them about my anxiety so they can learn to respect the boundaries I have set and to help them show compassion when they see I am anxious or on edge. This may not be something

every teacher is comfortable with, but I do firmly believe it is essential for teachers to humanize themselves to their students on some level. Children will not absorb valuable information or look to their teacher as a model of success if they view them as robots. When I observe a student becoming anxious or even on the verge of a panic attack I will escort them into the hallway and do a 2-3 minute mindful breathing exercise with them (simple focused awareness and breathing). Almost always that student will redirect themselves and enter the class feeling better and stronger either from the mindful breathing or simply from getting some one on one quality time with the teacher they admire or look up to.

EVALUATING THE PROGRAM

The curriculum was piloted in schools to ensure that the activities and best practices recommended by experts work for teachers and their students. This program is intended to be a fluid, living project, meaning it will continuously be changed, updated, and improved using feedback and suggestions from the educators who implement it. You are part of the Choose Love Movement and we want you to have a role in the creative process. We rely heavily on the evaluation process to make the curriculum as educator friendly, impactful and effective as possible.

Included in your download of the program is a Survey Folder which includes a printable pre and post survey for both educators and students as well as a simple scoring worksheet. We encourage you and your students to complete the pre survey before starting the program and the post survey after completion. As educators we are always asked to show results. This pre and post survey, and the scoring sheet provided, can give you an easy way to show changes in perceptions which can highlight improvements and impacts of teaching the program.

Our evaluation surveys were specifically created to measure what our program teaches. The lists below suggest just a few of the indicators that we hope you see and that show the ways in which your students are positively impacted by the program in a multitude of ways. These indicators give a picture of the skills and strategies your students have learned and the personal, emotional, and social growth they have experienced.



COURAGE:

- Less anxiety and stress
- Less fearful (in the present and future)
- Enhanced self-esteem
- Improved ability to express oneself and one's feelings
- Increased self-awareness
- Willingness to try difficult tasks

GRATITUDE:

- Positive attitude towards self and others
- Improved attitude about school and learning
- Showing appreciation and kindness towards self and others
- Increased mindfulness
- Ability to see other perspectives and show empathy

FORGIVENESS:

- Better emotional self-regulation
- Less aggression and anger
- Better able to handle personal/social issues that arise
- Improved resilience
- Improved decision-making skills
- Heightened self-management

COMPASSION IN ACTION:

- Enhanced connections and relationships
- Able to respond in a loving manner
- More caring and concern shown to others
- Improved social skills
- Social and Moral Awareness

LEARNING:

- Improved focus and attention to task
- Eagerness to learn
- Improved self-confidence as a learner
- Improved emotional intelligence



Over time, you will see improvement in classroom climate, relationship dynamics, student focus, prosocial behavior, student attitudes, academic achievement, and an overall positive impact on all of the relationships in the school system. Your students and school community will begin exhibiting greater courage, practicing forgiveness, being grateful, showing compassion, and choosing love. Tell us about what you see! We want to hear your voice and we hope you share your success stories! We truly appreciate any of the input and suggestions you can give us as we continue to craft and improve this program.

COUNSELOR IMPLEMENTATION

The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Enrichment Program was written by educators for educators. It is our intention to have as many educators using this program with as many students as possible. With this goal in mind, we hope that school counselors will be instrumental in implementing this program at their schools, either through their school wide school counseling programs or in conjunction with their classroom teachers. School counselors, as always, must be creative in their use of time, resources, and scheduling when implementing this program. This should not dissuade school counselors from utilizing this program.

The content of this program will resonate strongly with school counselors as it aligns perfectly with the heart and soul of what they do every day in their essential roles at the school and with their meaningful and impactful interactions with a multitude of students. School counselors have been teaching and promoting Social and Emotional Learning and Character Values all along, whether they realized it or called it that or not. School counselors promote the whole child and give students the skills and tools to improve their academic, personal, social and emotional well-being.

This program will give you essential information, education, and resources on Social and Emotional Learning, Character Values, and the latest Neuroscience which will strengthen School Counseling Programs and the impact they have on students and on the overall school and classroom climate. The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Enrichment Program aligns with the American School Counselor Association Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success, as well as the Common Core State Standards which makes it especially effective and easily woven into your School Counseling Program.

While it would be unrealistic to expect a school counselor to implement this program in its entirety school wide initially, there are ways in which it can be slowly, carefully and effectively introduced to your students and the school by a school counselor or in collaboration with teachers.

To begin, read through the Educator Guide, Curriculum Overview and Program so you will be familiar with the concepts, benefits/objectives, lessons, and program format. If you are already scheduled into the regular class rotation for classroom guidance you will have immediate, consistent access to classes and grade levels. We suggest you target a specific grade level or two to begin with



to be most effective. As you become more familiar with the content and program format/involvement you can introduce it to more classes and grade levels as you are able with your schedule.

If you are not part of the regular class rotation for classroom guidance, we suggest you partner up with a teacher, class or grade level that would be most in need of this type of program and/or most accommodating of regular classroom guidance in their class/grade. It may be helpful to send out a survey to see who would be interested in having the program delivered to their class. Make sure you clearly explain the program concepts and benefits for the students, teachers, and overall classroom climate (sharing information from this Guide or the Program Overview). You can schedule classroom guidance lessons in the class (es) or grade level(s) by collaborating with the teachers. Perhaps you teach all the lessons in the program. Maybe you present some units and lessons and the teachers present the remaining ones. Or it might be that you and the teacher(s) teach the lessons together or develop a plan to alternate the delivery of the lessons in the program. School counselors communicating, collaborating, and teaming up with teachers is essential to the delivery of this program and can be a fun, impactful, transforming partnership that can produce and inspire benefits beyond those of this program!

School counselors can also use this program in its entirety in small groups that they conduct school-wide. This is a great way to carefully implement the program on a somewhat smaller scale to test it out, become comfortable with content, and work out the kinks before attempting to implement it on a larger scale through classroom guidance. And certainly, as you learn more about Social and Emotional Learning, Character Values, and Neuroscience through the program and its resources, you will find ways to incorporate concepts, skills and tools into your individual counseling sessions that will greatly impact and empower students. The opportunities for students' growth and enhanced well-being in addition to positive school wide climate are endless!

TEACHER-COUNSELOR COLLABORATION

In this program we use “educators” to refer to any teachers, counselors or other support staff that may implement the Choose Love Program. In many schools the classroom teacher or a support staff teacher will be using this program. In other schools, the school counselor will be implementing this program. Collaboration between both teacher and counselor is especially effective and impactful.

We encourage you to team up with your school counselor to deliver this curriculum. Most school counselors already have a working background in Social and Emotional Learning and Character Education. They regularly support students individually, in small groups, and through classroom guidance to promote the social and emotional well-being of the students. Counselors, therapists and school psychologists are a great resource to you.



They will be helpful allies, advocates and consultants to check in with before and during implementation of the program. We hope that your questions will be answered by this Educator Guide, but your school counselor can also provide a lot of valuable information about Social and Emotional Learning, Character Education, and promoting healthy emotional development in students. They have a lot of supplementary resources and experience in this realm that will support you and enhance your delivery of the program.

Below are some ways you could utilize your school counselor:

- Invite them to visit your class. Introduce them to students at the beginning of the program letting students know that this is another caring, helpful individual at the school who they can trust, share feelings with, learn from, or get help from.
- Have the school counselor assist with some lessons or help with an extension activity or class project.
- Invite the school counselor to teach one or several lessons in a unit.
- Check out their “counseling libraries”. School counselors usually have a great selection of books for children on feelings, managing emotions, character values, bullying and other social situations, decision-making, prosocial behavior, self-esteem and more! They also have a great many resource books for educators and parents that may assist you.
- School counselors also have a plethora of other supplementary resources - games, extension activities and lessons, incentives, and other materials that could be used to reinforce the curriculum and build upon its teachings.

In the next section, we will discuss another essential way in which teachers and school counselors will work together. That is, in referring students for counseling follow-up and the mandatory reporting of disclosure or suspicion of abuse and/or neglect.

REFERRAL TO SCHOOL COUNSELOR

This program will require that students delve into their feelings. They will become more aware of their feelings and be better able to identify and manage them. For many students this will be the first time they have really explored and talked about their feelings. Self-exploration and feeling identification is a very beneficial and powerful process. But it is important to be highly engaged and sensitive to the needs of your students as they work through their feelings. Gently encourage students to participate, but understand that some may have a harder time opening up in this way. For some students these lessons may bring up painful situations and the feelings associated with them. If you notice a student struggling with these lessons and with strong feelings that come up for them, please don't hesitate to refer them to your school counselor. School counselors are trained to help students work through difficult situations and feelings. Through individual counseling, they can deeper explore student's issues and give them the tools to help them



navigate and manage their feelings. They can provide the proper resources to the child, and parents if necessary, and make referrals where appropriate. When in doubt, err on the side of caution, and refer a student. A school counselor can better assess the situation and work with the student in a more personal, private and therapeutic way.

Handling and Reporting Disclosure of Abuse or Trauma

As students are encouraged to talk about and explore their emotions, they may begin to confront challenging, traumatic events they have faced or are currently facing. As students build trust and openly engage in sharing and expressive dialogue, it is not unusual for students to disclose violent and traumatic events. They may reveal abusive and/or neglectful family situations. In these instances, it's essential that you remain calm, engaged and sensitive. It is not your job to analyze the situations, but it is very important that you acknowledge the student's feelings in the moment by saying something like, "Thank you for sharing about a painful/hurtful situation.", "That sounds upsetting.", or "I can see why you feel hurt/sad/angry." Next, you can let them know that you care about them and that you would like to talk with them more about their experience at another time. The classroom setting is not the time or place to discuss or gather more information. Later in a private moment, follow up with the student by letting them know that that they did nothing wrong in sharing, and that, in fact, they are brave and courageous for doing so. Let them know that you care and that part of your job is to make sure they are safe and to ensure their well-being, which sometimes means sharing information with other caring adults at the school. Then, it is imperative that you follow your school and state's laws for reporting suspected abuse, trauma, neglect, and/or violence. At most schools, a report is made to the school counselor or principal who will then make the proper referral to authorities. But you need to follow your school's policies for reporting. If you are unsure, ask your administration or school counselor or consult your employee/school handbook. Remember that it is not your job to investigate or substantiate anything, but it is required that you report any suspicion of abuse or neglect. Report and then leave the official and proper follow up to the appropriate personnel.

Trauma

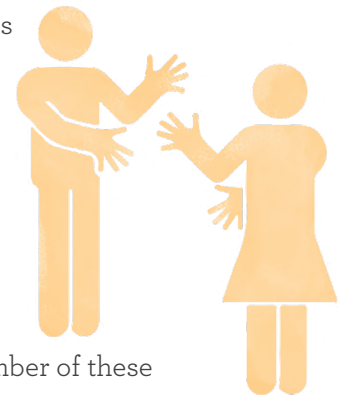
There are two types of trauma that one may face. Type I refers to a trauma event that happens one time with detailed memories and associations that accompany it. Type II trauma refers to traumatic experiences that reoccur and as a result may cause a person to present with denial, dissociation, other ways to "numb" the pain, or internal/expressed rage (American Counseling Association, 2011a).

Traumatic events can either be man-made or natural. Man-made or human trauma events include events such as a school shooting, family violence, car accidents, or street violence (American Counseling Association, 2011a). Natural trauma events are those natural disasters such as hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, earthquakes, floods and the like. Students may experience trauma events directly, or they may be impacted indirectly like when someone reads or hears stories about it, sees it on TV, or is close to someone who has experienced the trauma (American Counseling Association, 2011a).



In both cases, whether a student experiences a trauma directly or indirectly, they may experience post-trauma or post-disaster stress (American Counseling Association, 2011b). Post-trauma/ Disaster stress is usually associated with intense feelings that are beyond a person's normal coping skills. These may include hopelessness, helplessness, intense fear, pronounced pain and/ or anger. There may be some commonalities in the way students process traumatic events, but it's important to remember that everyone experiences things differently and may be impacted in a variety of ways unique to them. Below is a list of some things that students may experience as a result of a traumatic event, but it is in no way meant to be completely inclusive (American Counseling Association, 2011b).

- Denial of trauma
- Avoidance of remembering or talking about trauma or feelings associated with it
- Intense memories that are overwhelming and/or incapacitating/Flashbacks
- Withdrawal/becoming more nonverbal and less expressive
- Sleep problems- lack of, too much, disturbed sleep patterns
- Numbness/trouble "feeling" anything
- Intense feelings of anger, aggression, pain, sadness
- Difficulty focusing and concentrating/distraction
- Memory problems/cognitive confusion- perhaps a drop in grades or school performance
- Behavior problems/inappropriate behaviors/uncharacteristic behaviors exhibited
- Helplessness/despondency/depression
- Trouble interacting and being close to others
- Desire to be close to family and friends/clinging to caregiver/separation anxiety
- Wanting to live in the "now" and eagerness to do things, especially things that have been put off
- Physical ailments such as stomach aches, headaches, fatigue, lack of energy, dizziness
- Undereating, lack of appetite, or overeating, feeding the feelings/problems
- More risk taking and reckless behavior
- Lack of confidence in self
- Trouble handling change and transitions
- Increased fear/worrying about safety/preoccupation with danger
- Anxiety/heightened arousal
- Regression-behaving like a younger child, age inappropriate behaviors



Students having post-trauma or post-disaster stress may experience one or any number of these symptoms. Some things may only be experienced for a short time, others may be more longstanding. It can be expected that these problems would dissipate over time, or lessen in severity but some may become chronic. If these problems endure, or if students express suicidal thoughts, self-harm, or wanting to hurt others, it is essential that they be referred to a counselor or other professional.

We can't pick and choose the students we have in class or the students we work with. We must remember that many are fighting battles we know nothing about. We can and must be mindful of and sensitive to some of the "stuff" they may bring to the table (whether we are aware of it or not), which can present a multitude of challenges. Reach out to a school counselor if you suspect a student may be experiencing some of the listed symptoms above. As educators, we can be instrumental in providing a safe and loving environment where students can experience positive growth, change, and healing. The Choose Love Enrichment Program gives students much needed tools and skills to be able to work through emotions, to handle adversity, to build resiliency, to develop a strong sense of self and a positive, healthy and loving outlook on life. However, it's important to remember that while this program can be therapeutic, it is in no way intended to be or to replace therapy.

FAMILY/COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Before beginning this program, send home the Family/Caregiver Take Home Letter we have provided you in your downloaded resources and here (see page 44-45). This is not intended to be a consent or permission form, but merely a way to keep parents/families abreast of what you will be teaching through this program. This program will be even more effective if families are familiar with the benefits, the objectives, the general content, and the traits taught and specific skills associated with them. Be transparent about your implementation of the program so there are no surprises or angry parents who feel left in the dark.

Providing information to families can help them get "on board", willing and able to extend the learning outside of the classroom by continuing to model and reinforce the skills and tools students have acquired. It is essential to have a dialogue between educators and families, and one between families and their children, that facilitates and enhances continued learning and growth.

In addition to the parent letter, we encourage you to send home copies of any of the provided references and resources in this guide and within the curriculum, such as booklists, websites, and other pertinent information. Approach parents with curiosity when they have questions or concerns. All the information about the program is in this Educator's Guide and the lessons.

We encourage you to make this and other learning tools available to families. Share success stories and positive changes you see in the classroom dynamics and climate as a result of this program. This will further educate and engage families and encourage them to compliment and support the learning students are doing at school.



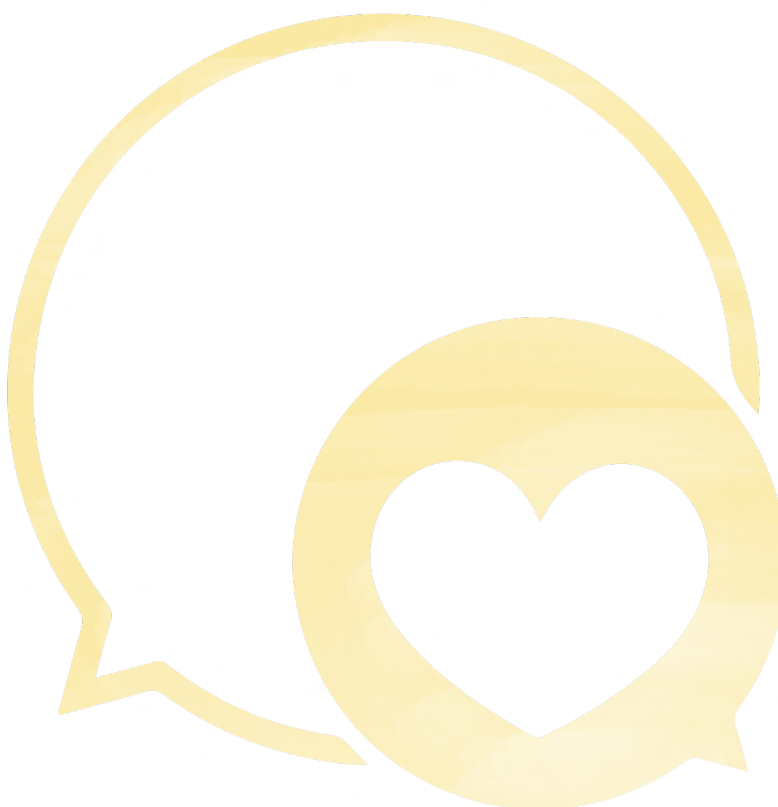
Dear Families and Caregivers:

Throughout the year, I will introduce students to the Choose Love Enrichment Program. This program teaches Social and Emotional Learning, Character Education traits, and related Neuroscience.. This program will play an important role in promoting student academic and personal success.

There are over 30 years of research showing the benefits of teaching SEL. Students who actively participate, practice, and apply skills and concepts learned in SEL programs have higher self-esteem, stronger communication and relationship skills, greater prosocial behavior, better class participation and attitude, and an increase in academic performance and test scores. For further information on SEL please visit the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) website- <http://www.casel.org>.

The Choose Love Program teaches 4 character values and SEL skills that cultivate optimism, resiliency, and personal responsibility. Each unit provides lessons that include important concepts and skills associated with SEL. There are connections to neuroscience and the brain, and activities for students to put learning into action.

Children will develop Social and Emotional Learning Competencies identified by CASEL which include: **Self-Management, Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills** and **Responsible Decision-Making Skills**



The 4 character values include:

- **Courage:** - Students will learn what it means to have courage in any situation. They will develop confidence to help them face adversity and do the right thing, even when it is hard.
- **Gratitude:** - Students will learn what it means to be grateful for all of the good in their lives. They will discover the many people and things they are grateful for and better understand how to express gratitude. This will nurture a positive attitude and inspire them to be kind.
- **Forgiveness:** - Students will understand what it means to forgive someone who has hurt you. They will learn that forgiving does not mean you forget or accept the hurtful actions as OK. But instead, students learn that forgiving will free them from bad feelings and help them to have a positive mindset that will help them in school and in life.
- **Compassion:** - Students will understand that compassion is love in action. They will understand what it means to have empathy and be sensitive to the feelings of others. And then, they will move beyond that to realize the importance of being in service to others.

The Choose Love Program provides the tools for students to foster personal responsibility, self-confidence, and enable them to manage their emotions throughout their lives. The goal of the program is to cultivate a positive and joyful classroom environment for students to achieve personal and academic success and well-being.

Throughout the year, your child will come home with optional activities that explain what your child has learned and extend the learning beyond the classroom. This is a wonderful way for you to become involved in your child's learning. We hope you will share in this experience with your children, ask questions about what they learned, and enjoy the benefits from this program as well.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me for more information. Thank you for your continued support in helping promote your child's academic, social, emotional, and personal well-being. We all need to work together to help our children become healthy, happy, successful individuals with the tools and skills to make their positive mark on the world!



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

READING LIST

Books on Courage

Courage - Bernard Waber

Spaghetti in a Hot Dog Bun (Having the Courage to be Who You Are) - Maria Dismondy

Only One You - Linda Kranz

The Bravest of Us All - Marsha Diane Arnold

The Daddy Mountain - Jules Feiffer

Thunder Rose - Jerdine Nolen

Sheila Rae, the Brave - Kevin Henkes

The Little Yellow Leaf - Carin Berger

Peep-A Little Book about Taking a Leap - Maria Van Lieshout

The Dandelion Seed - Joseph Anthony

The Recess Queen - Alexis O'Neill

The Princess Knight - Cornelia Funke

Little Polar Bear and the Brave Little Hare - Hans de Beer

If I Never Forever Endeavor - Holly Meade

The Terrible Plop - Ursula Dubosarsky

Brave Charlotte and the Wolves - Anu Stohner

I Don't Want to Go - Addie Meyer Sanders

Bear and Me - Ella Burfoot

Sylvester and the Magic Pebble - William Steig

Pete & Pickles - Berkeley Breathed

Big Al - Andrew Clements

Each Kindness - Jacqueline Woodson

Stand Tall, Molly Lou Melon - Patty Lovell

The Lion and the Mouse - Jerry Pinkney

The Boy Who Held Back the Sea - Thomas Locker

Brave as a Mountain - Ann Herbert Scott

Chicken Soup for Kids, Stories of Courage - Jack Canfield

The Big Wave - Parl Buck

The Brave Little Bird - Scott Beck

Brave Irene - William Steig

There's a Monster under My Bed - James Howe

Brave Potatoes - Roby Speed

Kids with Courage - Barbara Leaks

Secret of the Peaceful Warrior - Dan Millman

Jonathan James and the What if Matter - Michelle Nelson Schmidt

The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade - Justin Roberts

Out of the Blue - Alisa Jay



Books on Gratitude



All the World - Liz Garton Scanlon
An Awesome Book of Thanks - Dallas Clayton
Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are - Dr. Seuss
Just So Thankful - Mercer Mayer
The Secret of Saying Thanks - Douglas Wood
Splay Says Thank You - Rob Scotton
Thanks A Million (Poems) - Nikki Graves
The Berenstain Bears Count Their Blessings - Stan Berenstain
The Giving Tree - Shel Silverstein
The Thankful Book - Todd Parr
Those Shoes - Maribeth Boelts
The Most Thankful Thing - Lisa McCourt
Gratitude Soup - Olivia Rosewood
Bear Says Thanks - Karma Wilson
It Could Always Be Worse - Margot Zemach
There's a Flower at the Tip of My Nose Smelling Me - Alice Walker
Milo Armadillo - Jan Fearnley
Last Stop on Market Street - Matt de la Pena
Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures - Kate DiCamillo
Santa Like a Rock Star - Martha Quick



Books on Forgiveness

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse - Kevin Henkes

Forgiveness - Lucia Raatma

We All Need Forgiveness - Mercer Mayer

Forgive Me Please - Serena E. Bryan

Mr. Lincoln's Way - Patricia Polacco

I'm Sorry - Sam McBratney

Sorry! - Trudy Ludwig

Forgive and Let Go - Cheri Meiners

Will You Forgive Me? - Sally Grindley

Show Each Other Forgiveness - Melody Carlson

The Berenstain Bears and the Forgiving Tree - Jan and Mike Berenstain

Rising above the Storm Clouds - What It's Like to Forgive - Robert D. Enright

Matthew and Tilly - Rebecca Jones

The Forgiveness Garden - Lauren Thompson

Big Al - Andrew Clements

Desmond and the Very Mean Word - Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams

The Sandwich Swap - Queen Rainian Al Abdullah and Kelly Dipucchio

The Secret Olivia Told Me - N. Joy

Thank You World - Alice B. McGinty

Our Friendship Rules - Peggy Moss and Dee Dee Tardif



Books on Compassion

Stick and Stone - Beth Ferry
Each Kindness - Jacqueline Woodson
How Kind - Mary Murphy
The Kindness Quilt - Nancy Elizabeth Wallace
How to Heal a Broken Wing - Bob Graham
The Spiffiest Giraffe in Town - Julia Donaldson
The Nice Book - David Ezra Stein
A Sick Day for Amos McGee - Philip C. Stead
Out of the Blue - Alisa Jay
How Full Is Your Bucket - for Kids - Tom Rath, Mary Reckmeyer, Maurie J. Manning
The Teddy Bear - David McPhail
Bear Feels Sick - Karina Wilson
How to Heal a Broken Wing - Bob Graham
Great Joy - Kate DiCamillo
Angelo - David Macaulay
The Hundred Dresses - Eleanor Estes
The Lady in the Box - Ann McGovern
A Chair for My Mother - Vera Williams
The Can Man - Laura E. Williams
Tight Times - Barbara Shook Hazen
Because Ameila Smiled - David Ezra Stein
The Invisible Boy - Trudy Ludwig
The Lion and the Mouse - Jerry Pinkney
Those Shoes - Maribeth Boelts
Big Al - Andrew Clements
Zen Ties - Jon J. Muth
The Birdman - Veronika Charles
The Three Questions - Jon J. Muth
Stand In My Shoes: Kids Learning About Empathy - Bob Somson
What If Everybody Did That? - Ellen Javernick
Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids - Carol McCloud
Fill a Bucket - A Guide to Daily Happiness for Young Children - Carol McCloud
Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness - Three Rules for a Happier Life - Carol McCloud
Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures - Katie DiCamillo



Books for Middle School Students that embrace Courage, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Compassion

Finding Perfect by Elly Swartz

Marcelo in the Real World by Francisco Stork

Booked by Kwame Alexander

Rain Reign by Ann M. Martin

Fish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Wonder by R.J. Palacio

A Whole New Ballgame by Phil Bildner

Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper

Rules by Cynthia Lord

Footer Davis is Probably Crazy by Susan Vaught

Brown Girl Dreaming by Jaclyn Woodson

Wolf Hollow by Lauren Wolk

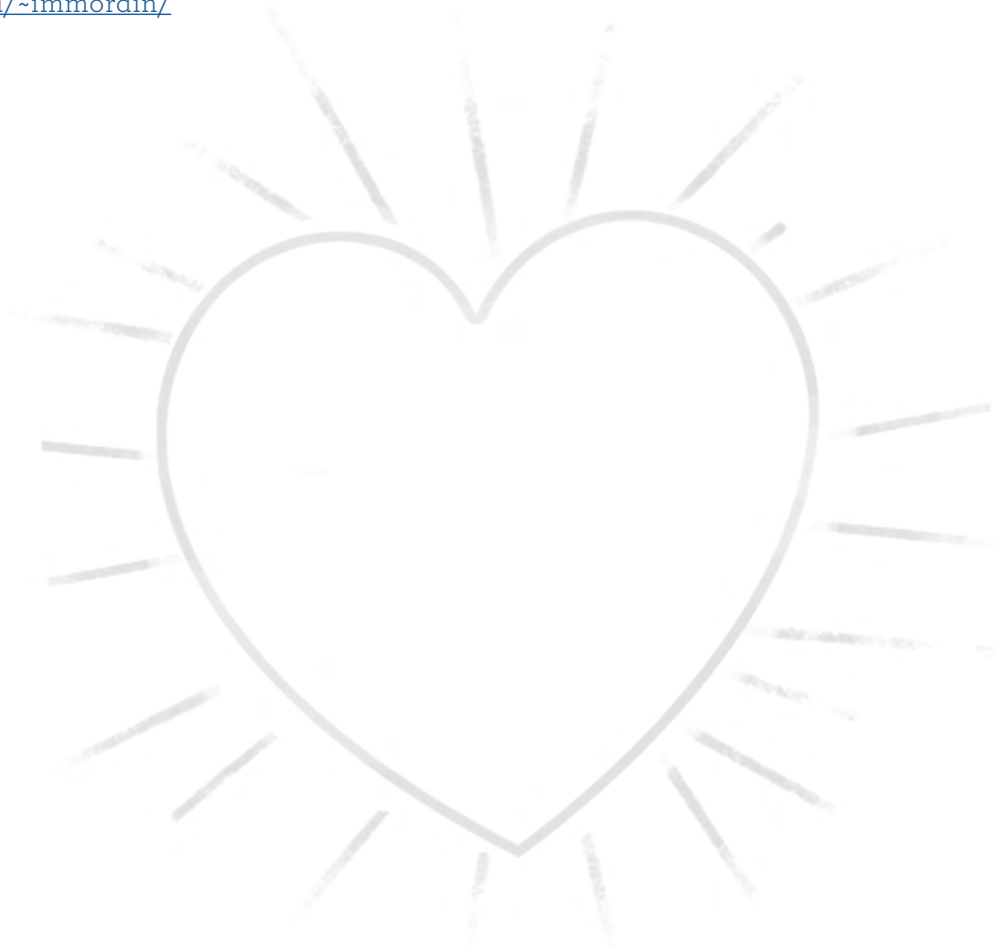
As Brave as You by Jason Reynolds

House Arrest by K.A. Holt



WEBSITES

<http://www.casel.org> Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning
<http://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning> George Lucas Educational Foundation
<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu> Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning
<http://ei.yale.edu> Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
<http://goodcharacter.com>
<http://charactered.net>
<https://character.org>
<http://schoolcounselor.org> American School Counselor Association
<https://www.counseling.org> American Counseling Association
<http://www.elementaryschoolcounseling.org>
<http://thehawnfoundation.org> Goldie Hawn's Foundation that promotes SEL
<http://www.kidsinthehouse.com> The Ultimate Parenting Resource
<http://www.parenttoolkit.com>
<http://www.zerotothree.org> National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families
<http://www.centerforresilientchildren.org/>
<http://theshapesystem.com/>
<http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~immordin/>

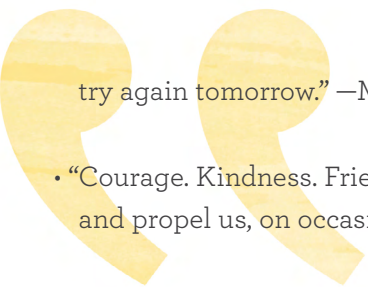


QUOTES

Quotes on Courage

- “It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends.” —J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*
- “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” —Winston S. Churchill
- “It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.” —E.E. Cummings
- “The most courageous act is still to think for yourself. Aloud.” —Coco Chanel
- “You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore.”
—William Faulkner
- “Don't be afraid of your fears. They're not there to scare you. They're there to let you know that something is worth it.” —C. JoyBell
- “A ship is safe in harbor, but that's not what ships are for.” —William G.T. Shedd
- “Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.” —Anaïs Nin
- “Courage is found in unlikely places.” —J.R.R. Tolkien
- “Freedom lies in being bold.” —Robert Frost
- “Courage isn't having the strength to go on - it is going on when you don't have strength.”
—Napoléon Bonaparte
- “Courage is grace under pressure.” —Ernest Hemingway
- “At times the world may seem an unfriendly and sinister place, but believe that there is much more good in it than bad. All you have to do is look hard enough. And what might seem to be a series of unfortunate events may in fact be the first steps of a journey.”—Lemony Snicket
- “Believe you can and you're halfway there.” —Theodore Roosevelt
- “The secret of happiness is freedom, the secret of freedom is courage.” —Carrie Jones, *Need*
- “Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll





try again tomorrow.” —Mary Anne Radmacher

- “Courage. Kindness. Friendship. Character. These are the qualities that define us as human beings, and propel us, on occasion, to greatness.” —R.J. Palacio, *Wonder*
- “It is not the strength of the body that counts, but the strength of the spirit.” —J.R.R. Tolkien
- “Man cannot discover new oceans unless he has the courage to lose sight of the shore.” —André Gide
- “Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.” —Frederick Buechner
- “What would life be if we had no courage to attempt anything?” —Vincent van Gogh
- “Walk with the dreamers, the believers, the courageous, the cheerful, the planners, the doers, the successful people with their heads in the clouds and their feet on the ground. Let their spirit ignite a fire within you to leave this world better than when you found it...” —Wilferd Peterson
- “You have plenty of courage, I am sure,” answered Oz. “All you need is confidence in yourself. There is no living thing that is not afraid when it faces danger. The true courage is in facing danger when you are afraid, and that kind of courage you have in plenty.” —L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*
- “Real courage is doing the right thing when nobody's looking. Doing the unpopular thing because it's what you believe, and the heck with everybody.” —Justin Cronin, *The Summer Guest*
- “Courage is very important. Like a muscle, it is strengthened by use.” —Ruth Gordon
- “Courage comes in different forms. There's strength—that's the muscle. But love's the heart. When you put them together, you can do anything.” —Nora Roberts
- Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength.” —Arnold Schwarzenegger
- “In the depth of winter, I finally learned that within me there lay an invincible summer.” —Albert Camus
- “Promise me you'll always remember: You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think. Christopher Robin to Pooh” —A. A. Milne
- “Don't wait until everything is just right. It will never be perfect. There will always be challenges, obstacles and less than perfect conditions. So what. Get started now. With each step you take, you



will grow stronger and stronger, more and more skilled, more and more self-confident and more and more successful.” —Mark Victor Hansen

- “Success means having the courage, the determination, and the will to become the person you believe you were meant to be.” —George Sheehan
- “You can't cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water.” —Rabindranath Tagore
- “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” —Franklin D. Roosevelt
- “A hero is someone who has given his life to something bigger than himself or something other than himself.” —Joseph Campbell
- “No one knows what he can do until he tries.” —Publius Syrus
- “It's not the size of the dog in the fight, it's the size of the fight in the dog.” —Mark Twain
- “Either you decide to stay in the shallow end of the pool or you go out in the ocean.”
—Christopher Reeve
- “Always be courageous and strong, and don't fear.” —Gabby Douglas
- “You may not always have a comfortable life and you will not always be able to solve all of the world's problems at once but don't ever underestimate the importance you can have because history has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own.” —Michelle Obama



Quotes on Gratitude

- “Be thankful for what you have; you’ll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don’t have, you will never, ever have enough.” —Oprah Winfrey
- “In our daily lives we must see that it is not happiness that makes us grateful, but gratefulness that makes us happy.” —Albert Clarke
- “Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of Gratitude.” —AA Milne, Winnie the Pooh
- “When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.” —Hellen Keller
- “The really happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery when on a detour.” —Author Unknown
- “We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures.” —Thornton Wilder
- “There is always, always something to be grateful for” —Author Unknown
- “Happiness is not getting what you want, it’s appreciating what you have.” —Author Unknown
- “Gratitude can transform common days into Thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” —William Arthur Ward
- “Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more.” —Melody Beattie
- “It is impossible to feel grateful and depressed in the same moment.” —Naomi Williams
- “Things turn out best for people who make the best of the way things turn out.” —John Wooden
- “Forget yesterday--it has already forgotten you. Don't sweat tomorrow--you haven't even met. Instead, open your eyes and your heart to a truly precious gift--today.” —Steve Maraboli
- “Gratitude and attitude are not challenges; they are choices.” —Robert Braathe
- “We should certainly count our blessings, but we should also make our blessings count.” —Neal A. Maxwell




- "In life, one has a choice to take one of two paths: to wait for some special day—or to celebrate each special day." —Rasheed Ogunlaru
- "I was complaining I had no shoes till I met a man who had no feet." — Confucius
- "Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass...it's about learning to dance in the rain."
—Author Unknown
- "Some people grumble that roses have thorns, I am grateful that thorns have roses."
—Alphonse Karr
- "You'll never find a rainbow if you are looking down." —Charlie Chaplin





Quotes on Forgiveness

- “Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future.” —Paul Boese
 - “When you hold resentment toward another, you are bound to that person or condition by an emotional link that is stronger than steel. Forgiveness is the only way to dissolve that link and get free.” —Catherine Ponder
 - “The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.” —Mahatma Gandhi
 - “To forgive is the highest, most beautiful form of love. In return, you will receive untold peace and happiness.” —Robert Muller
 - “Let us forgive each other – only then will we live in peace.” —Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy
 - “It takes a strong person to say sorry, and an even stronger person to forgive.” —Unknown
 - “Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness.” —William Arthur Ward
 - “Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.” —Mark Twain
 - “Forgiveness is the needle that knows how to mend.” —Jewel
 - “If we really want to love, we must learn how to forgive.” —Mother Theresa
 - “Life becomes easier when you learn to accept an apology you never got.” —Robert Brault
 - “Anger makes you smaller, while Forgiveness forces you to grow beyond what you were.”
—Cherie Carter-Scott
 - “You can’t reach for anything new if your hands are still full of yesterday’s junk.” —Louise Smith
 - “Pain is the fist that knocks you down. Forgiveness is the hand that helps you back up again.”
—Doe Zantamata
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- “Those who are free of resentful thoughts surely find peace.” —Buddha
- “True forgiveness is when you can say, ‘Thanks you for that experience.’” —Oprah Winfrey
- “Forgiveness is a reflection of loving yourself enough to move on.” —Dr. Steve Maraboli
- “Forgiveness is a funny thing. It warms the heart and cools the sting.” —William Arthur Ward
- “Forgiveness is not something you do for someone else; it is something you do for yourself.” —Jim Beaver



Quotes on Compassion

- “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a harder battle.” —Plato
- “No one has ever become poor by giving.” —Anne Frank
- “Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.” —Dalai Lama XIV, *The Art of Happiness*
- “There is no exercise better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up.” —John Holmes
- “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” —Leo Buscaglia
- “No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” —Aesop
- “I would rather make mistakes in kindness and compassion than work miracles in unkindness and hardness.” —Mother Teresa
- “It does not matter how long you are spending on the earth, how much money you have gathered or how much attention you have received. It is the amount of positive vibration you have radiated in life that matters.” —Amit Ray
- “Some people think only intellect counts: knowing how to solve problems, knowing how to get by, knowing how to identify an advantage and seize it. But the functions of intellect are insufficient without courage, love, friendship, compassion, and empathy.” —Dean Koontz
- “To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.” —Ralph Waldo Emerson
- “If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.” —Booker T. Washington
- “Never look down on anyone, unless you’re helping him up.” —Jesse Jackson
- “Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.” —Mother Teresa
- “Compassion is the wish to see others free of suffering.” —Dalai Lama



- “How beautiful a day can be when Kindness touches it.” —George Elliston
- “The heart is like a garden. It can grow compassion or fear, resentment or love.
What seeds will you plant there?” —Buddha
- “At the end of the day, the world will either be a more or less kind, compassionate, and loving place
because of your presence. Your move.” —John Pavlovitz

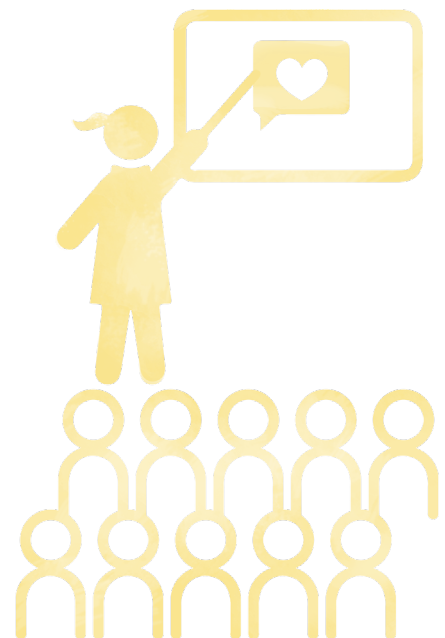


Poem

The Willow Tree

Written by: Kathy Soppet for Jesse Lewis

One day while walking my daughter to school, she said "Mama, what does love mean to you?" I stood for a moment, on the winding path, and thought about what elegant answer I'd craft, then I recalled, as the weeping willow brushed my skin, that that best answers seem to come from within, and just like love, my message shouldn't be blurred, or regurgitated like the meal of a nesting bird, so I said to my dear daughter, as we strolled the path, love is like this willow, it knows not what it lacks, but it must be fed with kindness, and watered with trusting tears, and its roots will take hold, and survive through the years, you must respect others, and watch what you say, for you cannot use willow branches, to brush hurt away, you must take care of your neighbor, and trim away the pain, and nurture each other, throughout all the rain, and your healing words and compassion, will help lead the way, to a less rocky path, and a much brighter day, I told her how love means all of these things, and we must choose it, for its infinite, like a deciduous trunk ring, and each piece of willow wood reflects our distant past, so always choose love, if you want love to last, and as she gave me a look of discernment, a willow flycatcher flew by, she said "I will always choose love," for love gives me wings to fly.



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