

Choose Love Movement





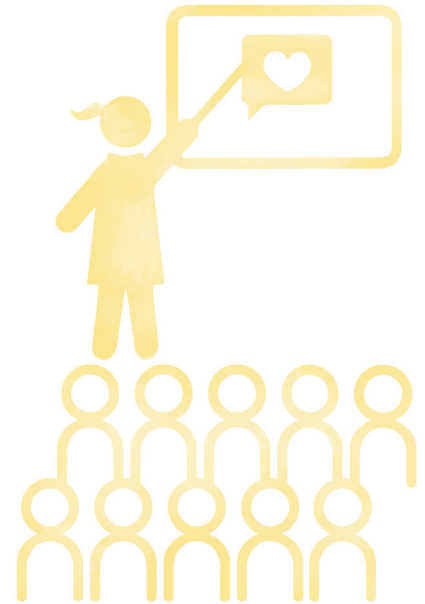
PROGRAM Overview

Subject

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 was murdered 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.

The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Foundation 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



WHY THIS CURRICULUM MATTERS

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.

Almost half of our young people will have a diagnosable mental illness by the time they are 18 years old ("Child Mind Institute," 2016). The most common diagnosis will be anxiety, and the majority will not get professional help, as children today are under more stress than children of previous generations (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). The average onset age for anxiety is six years old, and in our country these children often suffer alone. The long-term effects of anxiety are mental illness, substance abuse, anger, violence, and incarceration (Harbaugh & Vasey, 2014). It's not a mystery why we are seeing the issues we have in schools and in our society. There is a solution... teaching children to choose love.

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.



THE MISSION OF THE CHOOSE LOVE FOUNDATION

The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Foundation is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization with a commitment to reach students, educators and individuals, nationally and internationally, and provide them with a simple, yet profound formula for choosing love. Our signature program uses Jesse's three words as a foundation for learning and for life.

THE CHOOSE LOVE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

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:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Courage} \\ + & \text{Gratitude} \\ + & \text{Forgiveness} \\ + & \text{Compassion} \\ & \text{in Action} \\ & \text{(including service to others)} \\ \hline = & \text{choosing love!} \end{aligned}$$



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.

More information about the benefits of SEL can be found on the CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) website: www.casel.org. An overview of the neuroscience used to develop this program can be found at the end of this section.

THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING AND TEACHING 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.org). It is based in the idea that rich and meaningful learning occurs when people are engaged in positive and supporting relationships.

Over 30 years of research substantiates the benefits of social and emotional learning (SEL), (“CASEL: What is SEL,” 2016). 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).



UNITS

Lessons are flexible, educator-friendly, and allow for creativity- and fun. Lessons can be taught by teachers, counselors, social workers, other educators and trained volunteers. It is encouraged that all work together to maximize the impact of the program through using consistent language.

The lessons were written for educators, by educators, and are research-based. The content of the lessons is based on research on emotional intelligence, resilience, post-traumatic growth, neuroscience, mindfulness/focused attention, positive psychology and SEL. 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 whole child—mind, heart, and body—is supported through these lessons. There are four units: Courage, Gratitude, Forgiveness and Compassion.

Through these four units the following competencies are taught:

- Self-Awareness: recognizing one’s emotions and values as well as one’s strengths and limitations;
- Self- Management: managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one’s goals;
- Social Awareness: showing understanding and empathy for others;
- Relationship Skills: forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict;
- Responsible Decision-Making: making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior.



courage

Courage is the willingness and ability to work through obstacles despite feeling embarrassment, fear, reluctance, or uncertainty (Martinez, 2015). 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. **Courage requires self-awareness and self-regulation (Greenberg, 2016). 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 (Martinez, 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, 2014). 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 (J. Psychosom Res. 2009; Donaldson, Dollwet & Rao, 2014). 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). The act of being thankful helps release dopamine, which not only makes students feel good but is also a key neurotransmitter for learning (Wiss, 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 has two components: the first is empathy, which means putting yourself in someone else's shoes and trying to feel what that person feels, and the second is action, which means helping someone in need and performing acts of kindness without expecting anything in return. **Compassion in action is the understanding of a problem or 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.



LESSON BREAKDOWN FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

In each unit 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.

There are 17-19 lessons for the Elementary School Program, depending on grade level. Lessons are designed to be taught in sequence, and vary in teaching time from 20 to 45 minutes based on grade level. For example, there are 17 lessons in the PreK-K program. At a pace of one lesson per week, the curriculum can be incorporated for 17 weeks. Additional activities are provided to help keep the program going all year long, and ensure that it becomes part of your classroom vernacular.

In each lesson, you will find the following sections: **Student Objectives, Educator Preparation, Focused Awareness, Discussion, Activity, and Transfer of Learning.** 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.



LESSON BREAKDOWN 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.**

Lessons are shorter so that they may be easily plugged in during homeroom or advisory periods, or woven into a regular class period.

In each lesson, you will find the following: Character Trait Quote, Student Objectives, Educator Preparation, Brain Blast, and Power Surge. The Brain Blast is the overarching lesson or theme for that section of the unit, which lasts 15-30 minutes. This can be broken into two lessons or shortened as needed. Each unit has 7 Brain Blasts. Ideally, if a class meets every day, this lesson would be taught the first day of the week. After the first Brain Blast lesson and activity, there are 4 Power Surges. These are designed to be slightly shorter lessons which expand upon or reinforce the Brain Blast Lesson. Power Surges vary in teaching time from 5 to 15 minutes and 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 character value unit, 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 and 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.

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 **Discussion** section provides an easy-to-use script for you to read aloud. It guides students through a discussion of the Brain Blast lesson contents. The **Activity** section provides students with opportunities to practice what they've learned. The **Power Surge** days provide shorter lessons and activities to reinforce and extend what students learned in the Brain Blast lesson as well as introduce new skills and tools.



LESSON BREAKDOWN FOR HIGH SCHOOL

In each of the High School lessons 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 5-10 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.

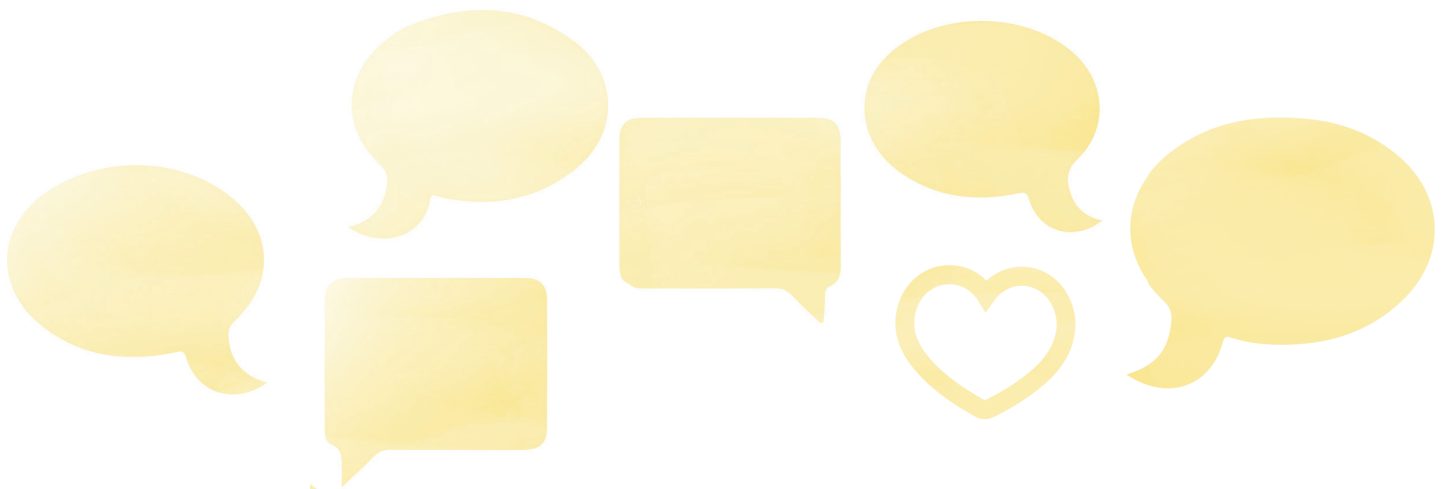
The **Student Objectives** section will tell you what the students will be able to do following the lesson. This will help you focus on why the lesson is being taught, and why it's important for students. The **Educator Preparation** section will tell you what materials or resources you need to gather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

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

- Early Learning and Development Standards
- Common Core State Standards
- American School Counselor Association Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success
- 5 Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies associated with CASEL.



WHO'S THE BOSS? THINKING ABOUT THE BRAIN, FOR KIDS & EDUCATORS



The Triune Brain

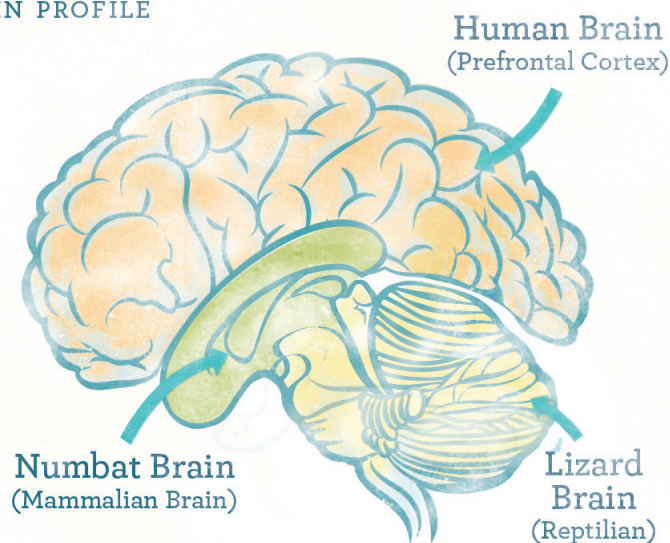
Written by Dr. Chris Kukk, author of *The Compassionate Achiever*

We're going to use the model of the brain developed by Dr. Paul D. MacLean to explain—in the simplest and most efficient manner possible—the neuroscience behind the Choose Love Enrichment Program. Dr. MacLean's model is called the triune brain, and it divides the brain into three sections (see the figure below) (MacLean, 1967; Newman & Harris, 2009). Although it is an oversimplified model, it represents the basic workings of the brain. The triune model provides a way to explain these basics so that every child can understand how thinking (ideas and thoughts) and behavior (actions and words) are connected.

The three interconnected brain sections of the triune model include: 1) reptilian (brainstem and cerebellum), 2) mammalian (limbic system), and 3) primate-human (neocortex).

The three brain sections of the triune model, which are interconnected, include: (1) reptilian (brain stem and cerebellum), (2) mammalian (limbic system) and (3) the primate-human (neocortex).

BRAIN PROFILE



The Reptilian Brain

The reptilian brain is responsible for the body's vital functions, such as breathing, heart rate, and body temperature (MacLean, 1967). This part of the brain helps us stay alert and reactive to the environment around us. It controls our balance, coordination, and reflexes, and it never sleeps (Strick, Dum, & Fiez, 2009). Think of the reptilian brain taking control when the doctor taps your knee and your leg instinctively kicks; it reacts quickly, without thinking. We call the reptilian brain “the lizard.”

The Mammalian Brain

The mammalian brain is responsible for our social and emotional behaviors, as well as our quick value judgments (positive or negative) (MacLean, 1967). It is buried deep inside the brain and is sometimes considered the “heart of the brain.” It is the part of the brain where many neurochemicals are produced, such as oxytocin, dopamine, and cortisol (Bujis & Swaab, 1979; Brownstein, Saavedra, & Palkovits, 1974; Dedovic, Duchesne, Andrews, Engert, & Pruessner, 2009). It strongly influences our initial behavior when we experience something (music, art, and even a smell), and it can make us feel as though we're riding an emotional roller coaster (Brown, Martinez, & Parsons, 2004). We call the mammalian brain “the numbat.”

The Primate-Human Brain

The primate-human brain is responsible for imagination, thought, planning, and decision-making (MacLean, 1967). It's the part of the brain that helps us develop language and it has infinite learning capabilities (McClellan, McNaughton, & O'Reilly, 1995). It helps us make rational, cognitive, and common-sense decisions (Gifford, 2002). When we use this part of our brain, it acts as a brake on our reflexive and instinctual reactions; it is the source of self-control. We call the primate-human brain “the human.”

Who's the boss? In other words, which part of your brain is influencing your behavior? By understanding how the lizard, numbat and human brains function, we can learn which of them is informing our choices at any given moment.



We make the choice of who (lizard, numbat, or human) controls our actions in every situation. When we encounter situations that excite us in either a positive or negative way, we can choose which part of the brain controls our response (Hariri, Bookheimer, & Mazziotta, 2000). Let's take an angry feeling as an example. When we become angry, that feeling feeds the numbat part of our brain (the limbic system) by sending blood and oxygen to it. We have a choice as to how we deal with the awakened numbat. The first is to send the angry numbat up to the human so that it is handled in a reasonable and rational way (we call this "hugging the human"). When we slow down and think about the anger, we are engaging, or hugging, our human brain. The second choice is to send the numbat's oxygen down to the lizard so that we feed our primitive and reactionary reptilian brain. In other words, we can nudge the numbat to either hug the human or feed the lizard. The Jesse Lewis Choose Love Foundation wants to help everyone learn how to leave the lizard, and to nudge the numbat toward hugging the human.

The Choose Love Enrichment Program uses a three-step motto to help students learn about the brain science of social and emotional development: leave the lizard, nudge the numbat, and hug the human.

(FUN NOTE: the initials of our social and emotional learning motto—LNH—are the same as Jesse's chalkboard message to his mom...love, nurturing, healing.)

Courage

Courage is about overcoming learned fear and learned fear mainly occurs in the brain's amygdala. The amygdala is the brain's sentinel; it is on the lookout for threats and it reacts without thinking. The "courage" exercises assist students in learning how to help their brains to regulate the amygdala by activating the prefrontal cortex. The exercises engage the prefrontal cortex (specifically the right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex), which is commonly referred to as the brain's 'brake pedal.' The exercises seek to increase serotonin and decrease cortisol levels.

Gratitude

The more gratitude a person shows, the more active the brain's hypothalamus becomes. While the hypothalamus controls various bodily functions such as drinking, eating and sleeping, it plays a significant role in a student's metabolism and stress levels. The "gratitude" exercises help students to become actively thankful for the kindness around them. The act of being thankful helps to release dopamine, which not only makes a student feel good but is also a key neurotransmitter for learning.



Forgiveness

To forgive is to activate a neural network connecting different regions of the brain. To forgive is literally and figuratively a coming together, both in the brain and behavior. The brain network of forgiveness mainly includes the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, precuneus and the inferior parietal lobule. The neural activation of this ‘forgiveness network’ results in a personal sense of relief or what Scarlett calls “cutting the umbilical cord of anger and resentment.” The Choose Love Movement exercises on “forgiveness” seek to increase endorphin levels (GABA, DHEA, serotonin and melatonin) while reducing cortisol. Forgiveness is another way of feeling what is called the “runner’s high.”

Compassion

From Charles Darwin to modern neuroscience research, scientists have found that human beings are wired for compassion. When a person thinks in a compassionate way they activate the neurochemistry of kindness, which begins with the release of the peptide hormone oxytocin. Oxytocin then activates dopamine and serotonin, which contribute to a person feeling happy and optimistic. The neuro keys of compassion are the vagus nerve (sometimes called the nerve of compassion and it gives us the feeling of ‘warm fuzzies’), the inferior parietal cortex, the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, the hypothalamus and the nucleus accumbens. The “compassion” exercises seek to activate the neuro-dominoes of compassion, beginning with oxytocin.

HOW TO GET STARTED WITH THE CHOOSE LOVE ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

- 1 Log on to the website!**
www.jesselewischooselove.org
- 2 Register to use the program!**
All we need is some basic information to keep track of who is using the program and to keep in touch with you!
- 3 Start by completing the Educator Pre-Survey with the link provided!**
Then, you can begin teaching the program right away!
- 4 Access your lessons!**
Find lessons, videos, resources and specific information for each grade level, PreK-12th!
- 5 Complete the Educator Post Survey!**
Your survey feedback will help shape further development of the program. We want the Choose Love Enrichment Program to meet your needs and be the BEST it can be!

