

7 - Choose Love Courage

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Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Hello, everyone, and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. We will upload a new episode every other week on Wednesdays. This month, we will release four new episodes, one each week.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Twice a month, we will come to you with a 10-minute professional development that you can quickly listen to for new ideas to use today. Don't forget to subscribe to this podcast to get notifications about future episodes.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: So today, you will want to listen to the next four episodes in order as they will build on each other.

We're honored to have Scarlett Lewis with us this month. These four episodes may be a bit longer, as there is so much to say about what Scarlett is doing to make the world a better place. Scarlett is our very special guest, and we will share her story of surviving and thriving one of the country's worst tragedies, Sandy Hook, while weaving in lessons she learned along the way and strategies that you can use in your own life to thrive even in uncertain times.

She will share a powerful formula that can lead you to choosing love in any situation, circumstance, or interaction. December is the month of that tragedy and when it occurred, and we are blessed to have her here with us.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Scarlett Lewis is an author, speaker, and founder of the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Movement that offers no-cost social and emotional programming in schools, homes, and communities all over the world.

Their mission is to offer a solution to the issues that our kids face in today's world and provide a path towards flourishing. Scarlett is the mother of Jesse Lewis, who was killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School and left a message on their kitchen chalkboard that inspired the movement, nurturing, healing, love. Jesse is on the presidential shortlist for the Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor, for saving nine of his classmates' lives before losing his own.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Scarlett is going to talk about courage today, and Scarlett, I have heard you speak many times, and I am always in awe of what you have done to ensure that people have courage and that how you share about Jesse's courage. So today, I just want to start out by asking you, what do you want us to practice and how do you want us to strengthen courage in our lives?

Scarlett Lewis Speaker: Well, first of all, thank you so much, Stephanie and Tisha, for inviting me on this podcast. It's a huge honor.

I appreciate your helping me spread the message about the Choose Love Movement. I think that courage is the most important character value because it's the one that we need to practice so much in our lives. And a lot of times when we think about courage, it's the big acts of courage.

It's courage like Jesse's, you know, for a six-year-old to stand up to a shooter that came into his classroom and save nine of his classmates' lives. But in actuality, it's the smaller acts of courage every day that are really, really important because hopefully, of course, nothing will ever happen to each one of us like Jesse, but it's these smaller acts of courage that we practice every single day. And that is the courage to be kind when someone's not being kind to us.

The courage to do the right thing, even when nobody's looking. The courage to tell the truth. The courage to face our fear and discomfort instead of resisting and avoiding it.

And life is this beautiful thing that gives us opportunities every day, all day long really, to be able to practice our courage. And research shows that courage is like a muscle, and we can practice it. We actually have to practice it.

The amazing thing to me is that we all have the capacity for Jesse's courage, that type of courage. In fact, his courage is what inspired me and motivated me to start the Jesse Lewis Choose Love movement and to literally quit the job that I was in and to focus and dedicate my life on being part of the solution to so much of the suffering that we're experiencing today. It's not just our kids, but that translates into homes and then our communities.

And I think that courage is first and foremost. And of course, we have this incredible formula for choosing love that we're going to be going through in these four different podcasts in order. And I encourage everybody to listen to all of them, courage being the first one.

And then we're going to go into gratitude and forgiveness and compassion and action. But you need courage to practice all of those.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Wow, Scarlett, what a great start.

I always have goosebumps when you talk. A large portion of our audience is educators and specifically early childhood educators. And getting that message of courage to our youngest ones and our families is really important because like you said, that's really kind of where it starts.

Do you have any advice for our children and our families just to start to become comfortable with that word and what it might look like in our society today?

Scarlett Lewis Speaker: I do. I think that especially for adults, it's very important that we are aware that we are modeling what courage looks like for our kids. I'll share a little story personally.

Of course, December 14th, 2012 is when the tragedy occurred that took Jesse's life. Jesse had an older brother at the time who was 12 years old. And I knew that because I practiced being present, by the way, and that's what I attribute this understanding to, I knew that I would be modeling for JT how to move through this tragedy, the discomfort, the roadblocks, the challenges, the pain and suffering with courage.

I would be modeling this. He would be looking to me and it's not really just what I say because that's only 40% of our communication. It's how I act.

It's my facial expressions. It's my gesticulation. It's my energy that has to match the words that come out of my mouth.

If the words are loving and kind. And so, with this awareness and realization, it really helped me rise to the occasion and to be the best person that I could be for him. And I think it's really, really important, especially now during COVID, everything is seemingly more complicated.

The issues that we had before, which were many seem a little aggravated now and escalating. And I think it's really important that we remember that in the moment all the time, we are modeling what getting through this difficulty looks like, how to do it courageously and gracefully. And just with that awareness alone, we can rise to the occasion and be our best selves.

And, uh, and there are a couple, there are a couple of different ways to practice courage as well.

Dr Tisha Shipley Speaker: So, Scarlett, I was just going to ask you how to practice courage. First of all, and when you go into schools and talk to teachers, what is it that you tell them? How do you have them do this? Do you have them do that with their students? But I would love to know how you practice that so that our listeners can start today.

Scarlett Lewis Speaker: Yes, absolutely. And you can start today right now. Um, we have a comprehensive social and emotional character development program that we offer at no cost online.

And literally there's no training required for educators. We have it, but really, they learn right alongside their students and they practice alongside their students. And I think that's a really, really important concept because learning these essential life skills can't be looked at as, uh, you know, like a program that you take off the shelf and open and teach and then shut and say, okay, now we're going on to math.

Social emotional learning is really something that we do every day, all day long. And as I said before, life is this amazing thing that gives us these opportunities all day long to practice our social emotional intelligence. And it really starts with breath and, and breathing and being present in the moment where life is happening.

Uh, I mean, there's so much happening right now and we're so distracted and so rushed and our list of to do's is so long, but life is happening right now in the moment. So I really encourage educators to sit with their students at the beginning of the day and do a brave breath. Just start the day out like that.

So sitting down or, you know, or standing, it doesn't matter, but putting your right hand over your heart, your left hand on your belly, and then taking three or four brave breaths, which is, you know, blowing up the balloon from your tummy, not raising your shoulders up and down, dropping your tongue from the roof of your mouth to signal to your brain that you're safe and just taking deep breaths in and thinking about courage and then holding that breath and then releasing any fear, anxiety, or negativity and doing that a couple of times. And then going around the room and just talking about how everybody's feeling. This is really incredibly powerful for not just kids who really appreciate being able to share how they feel, because when do we really actually sit and think about what we're thinking about and how we're feeling? And when does somebody ask us that, except maybe in a rhetorical question, hey, how you doing? But for teachers too, it's really given them, they've said the feedback has been time to really reflect on why they became a teacher and really to think about that and to appreciate it.

And so that's really a great way to start the day. Another practice that we do are power poses and a power high to power poses before every single talk. And they're expansive poses.

They're where you put your hands. You know, mine is like wonder woman. My hands are on my hips.

My legs are apart. My chin is up. My back is straight.

My shoulders are down and pushed together from my shoulder blades. And when we do a brave pose, it reflects to others and produces within us a feeling of power. It enhances our executive functioning.

It can enhance our performance and our self-confidence. Sometimes I walk in front of kids. I'll kind of walk off the stage and then I'll come back on and I'll be all hunched over and I'll have my hands folded in front of me and I'll be looking down and I'll cross my legs in front of them.

And I'll say, would you be really excited to hear me if I was a speaker that was standing like this? And they're like, no. And so I say, I get into my wonder woman pose, my brave pose. And I say, how about this? Yes.

Yes. We want to hear what you have to say. So, you know, there are a couple of ways, and then we have even more things, more ideas in the program for kids in our lessons, but we also have corresponding programming for our parents.

I think it's really important that parents learn these skills and tools too. And I say that because I was 44 years old when I first heard the term social and emotional learning. And of course, these are essential life skills that lead us towards flourishing.

And once I started researching a little bit, I realized very quickly that I do not have these skills and tools that I was a college graduate. I had done investment banking and, you know, a little bit of everything. I was single parent, but I was not socially, emotionally intelligent.

So I can tell you that I've learned these things as an adult and it has completely changed my life. So I encourage parents to go online and to learn right alongside their students and have fun with it. There are tons of resources, and you can improve your own courage as well. And it improves your life.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Scarlett, everything you said is spot on. And I want you to share a little bit about your website because it's got all of your fabulous free resources there.

So I want to make sure that everybody knows about that.

Scarlett Lewis Speaker: Absolutely. Yes.

The website is [chooselovemovement.org](https://www.chooselovemovement.org). And we have programming for schools, homes, and communities. We really have lifespan programming. We have programming for infant toddlers.

We have programming for pregnant moms. We have blogs, vlogs, podcasts. We are constantly offering free webinars with our partners that teach just incredible stuff.

And so I just please encourage everybody to go on our website to check it out. We have a book club and every month we're reading books that literally will change your life and having the authors on to speak with us. We have a daily email that we send out called the daily dose of love, which is feedback from schools, homes, and communities all over the world on how they're incorporating choose love and the formula into their lives.

And it'll give you really great ideas, but mostly it'll make you feel good. And, you know, right now that go out as well. This month we are doing gratitude and in December, we're going to be doing forgiveness and it's daily practice.

These things need to be practiced every day so you can strengthen them in your lives. And when you do that, I mean, if you think about what you want for yourself and what you want for your kids, it is to flourish. And these skills and tools literally lay out a direct, a direct path to flourishing.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Okay. We would like to end with three takeaways for our audience. What are your three takeaways from today, Scarlett?

Scarlett Lewis Speaker: Okay.

So the three takeaways that I have are that number one, courage is like a muscle and we can strengthen it through practice that is based on scientific research. Number two, it's really important. Life is such that it gives us opportunities to practice this muscle every day.

And number three, I want everybody to remember the brave breath. It's one of the favorite things of our kids. And you can do this with your kids as well as the brave pose.

Those are two ways that you can practice your courage right now, right when you get off this podcast and it'll make you feel better right away.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Those are so great, Scarlett. So, as we end up, wind up this session, can you please give our readers one challenge to walk away from the courage session with?

Scarlett Lewis Speaker: Absolutely.

So I, the challenge would be this. I challenge everybody to practice being present in the moment, not in the past, not dredging up memories, not fearing for or planning the future. We spend most of our time in the past or present, but actually in the moment, you have to be mindfully aware, bring yourself in to the moment.

It's where life is happening. And I can tell you having lost a child, that living your life in the present moment is the number one way to live it with the fewest regrets. Being in the moment, looking into your loved one's eyes, spending time with them.

That doesn't mean on a device or even watching TV. It means literally sitting across from the table, playing a game, reading a book, sharing, talking, that is really being present. It takes courage, especially when it's a difficult moment, but it's in those moments where you show deliberate caring.

And it's when people come in and you're just finishing up a text message, or you're kind of just glancing up for what you're doing on your computer, or you're watching a movie and it's just kind of like, Hey, it's only partial hello. But, and you say, well, that doesn't mean that I don't love them. I love them with my whole heart.

But to that person, it means you, you lack a little bit of caring. And so I really want people to the challenges to practice being present. It's not going to be every moment.

It's not going to be the entire time, but you're going to find that you'll slip, then come back to it. Be present with the ones that you love because that's where life is happening.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Scarlett, everything you just said resonates with me 100%.

And I think we all live in that world where we're busy and we're not being present. So thank you so much for that reminder and that challenge. And I accept that challenge and I'm going to do that today.

So next week, Scarlett is going to be talking about gratitude and I cannot wait to hear everything that she has to say about that. So please make sure you subscribe to this podcast and we will see you again next week.

Scarlett Lewis Speaker: Thank you.