Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

International Conference on Social Entrepreneurship

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Mary Gordon

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Two Key Realities of our new decade – The Decade of Empathy

- Interconnectedness of human society
- Unpredictability of world events

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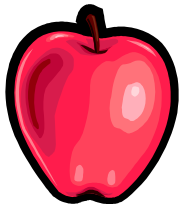
Johnny has **3** apples.

If Amélie takes **2** apples,



How will Johnny **feel**?

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Mission

Our mission is to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults.

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What is Roots of Empathy?

A universal primary preventive classroom-based social and emotional learning program designed to break the intergenerational cycles of violence and poor parenting.

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Our Teachers…
Changing the world child by child

Breaking the intergenerational cycle of poor parenting and violence.

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A Roots of Empathy Classroom

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Emotional Literacy

Observation and labelling of emotions

Reflecting and identifying own emotions

Understanding the emotions of others (empathy)

Comfort in discussing emotions

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Intrinsic Motivation

No trophies, no praise needed.

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Participatory Democracy & Building Consensus

Children as "Changermakers"

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Early aggressive behaviour is the single-best predictor of delinquency and later aggression.

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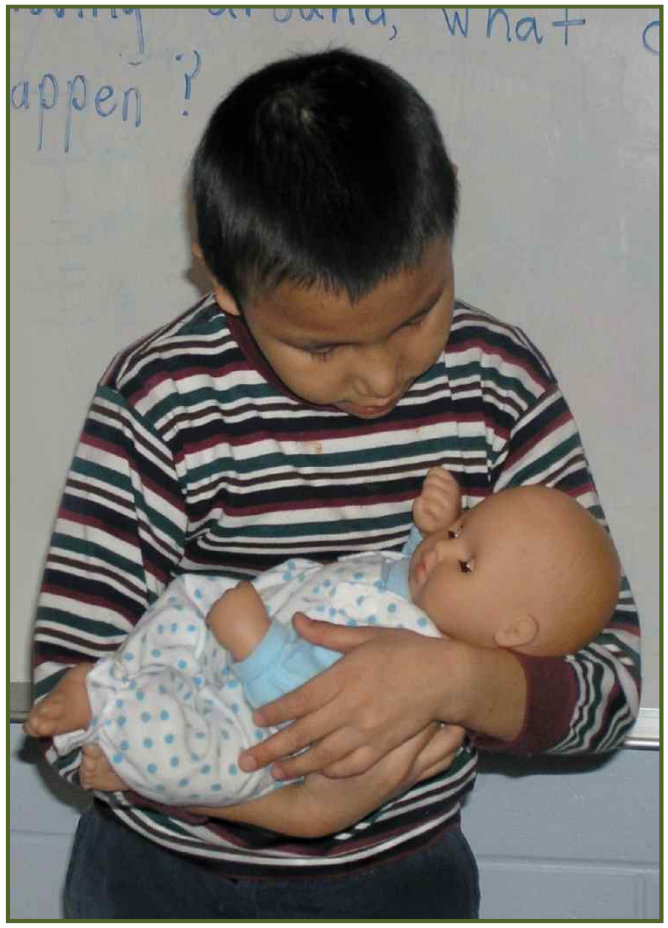
Why Promote Empathy in Children?



- Key to successful relationships in life
- Critical in resisting aggressive behaviours
- Key to social competence
- Positively associated with pro-social behaviours
- Key to academic functioning
- Key to competent parenting

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Independent Research

Key Finding #1:

Decrease in aggression

Aggressive children are at higher risk of depression, suicide attempts, alcohol and drug abuse, violent crimes, and neglectful and abusive parenting.

(Tremblay et al., 2004)

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Key Finding #2:

Increase in social and emotional understanding

Students who participate in SEL programs have lower levels of stress and depression, fewer conduct problems and aggression and do better academically.

(Payton et al., 2008)

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Key Finding #3

Creating more caring and supportive children

Quality relationships and perceived social support are powerful protective factors that increase resilience to negative and stressful experiences.

(Powers, Ressler, & Bradley, 2009)

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Key Finding #4

Increase in knowledge of parenting and needs of babies

Sensitive and responsive caregivers in infancy and early childhood protects against stress and reduces vulnerability to future psychopathology.

(Luthar & Brown, 2007)

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Key Finding #5

Lasting results

Improvements in behaviour were maintained up to **three** years after the end of the program.

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What does this mean for mental health?

- Poor emotional regulation skills are involved in most childhood and adult psychopathologies (i.e., *depression, anxiety, conduct disorder*).
- Increased understanding of emotions helps children to regulate their emotions and reduces their risk for negative mental health outcomes.

(Zeman, Shipman and Suveg, 2002)

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Mental Health

"The Roots of Empathy Program is solidly grounded in both current advances in developmental psychology and in recent findings in affective neuroscience."

~Dr. Allan Schore, Dept. of Psychiatry and Biobehavioural Sciences
Los Angeles School of Medicine, University of California

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Mary Gordon, Founder/President

250 Ferrand Drive, Suite 800

Toronto, ON CANADA M3C 3G8

t: 416-944-3001 f: 416-944-9295

e: mail@rootsofempathy.org

w: **www.rootsofempathy.org**

Charitable Number 89643 4818 RR0001

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