Roots of Empathy

Racines de l'empathie

International Conference on Social Entrepreneurship

Seoul, Korea

June 4, 2010

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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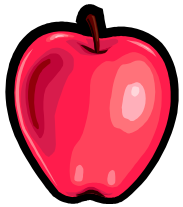
Johnny has **3** apples.

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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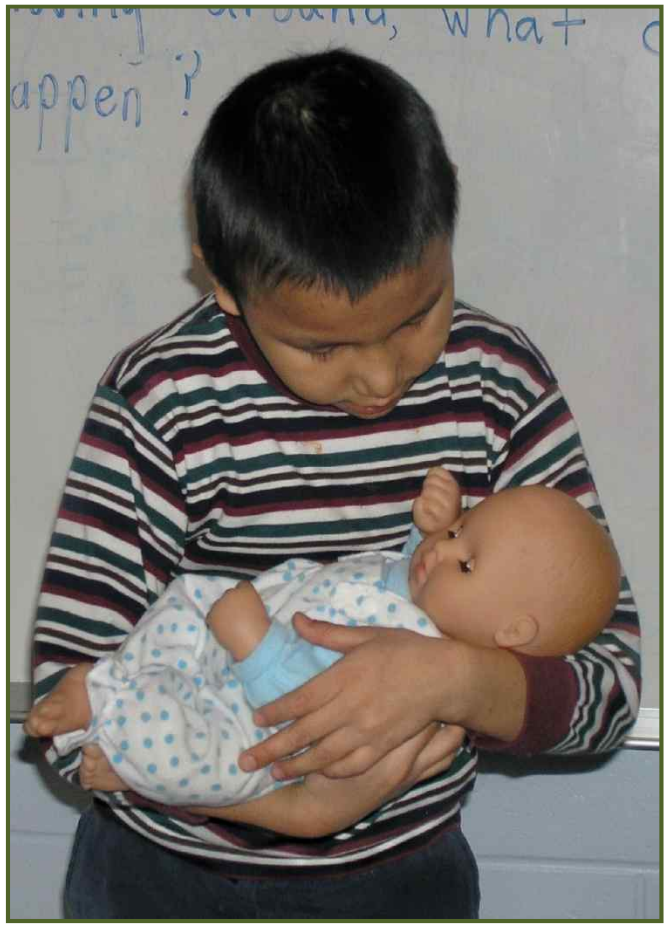
Why Promote Empathy in Children?



- 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 #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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