




Roots of Empathy
Racines de l'empathie

We are helping to create a world where people help more and hurt less. We foster empathy in children.

Roots of Empathy is a classroom-based program for school children.

A neighbourhood baby and parent visit a classroom along with a certified Roots of Empathy Instructor throughout the school year.

With our age-appropriate curriculum and our Instructor as a guide, children learn to identify and understand the feelings of the baby, then themselves, and the feelings of others: empathy.

Children develop their social emotional competence. They learn how to create connections and healthy relationships which support their mental wellbeing and resilience, and set the foundation for optimal learning.

And it works. More than two decades of research tells us so. Caring, sharing, and including go up. Aggression and bullying go down. And the effects last.

“Emotional literacy is the foundational literacy of life. When a child develops emotional literacy, academic literacy falls into place more readily.”

~ Mary Gordon, Founder/President, Roots of Empathy

Why a baby

The relationship between a baby and parent is the world's best model of empathy. A parent must read, interpret and deliver on the needs and wants of the baby. Their attachment is a perfect way for children to see all the ways babies communicate. It offers a perfect mirror for a child's own feelings and ways of communicating and gives children the chance to take the perspective of another human being more vulnerable than they are.



How the program works

Our certified Instructor follows an age-appropriate curriculum to help children learn and understand the signs of infant development (both physical, cognitive, and emotional), temperament, and attachment to the parent.

The week before each family visit, children develop their sense of discovery through questioning and predicting changes they may see in the baby. During the family visit, the Instructor guides the students' observations of the baby, and children voice their opinions and express their curiosity by asking the parent questions. The next week the Instructor helps students reflect on the family visit and talk about their own feelings, and the feelings of others. It is a safe and non-judgemental space and children feel heard and respected.

Who benefits

- Children develop empathy and are more likely to help more and hurt less
- The volunteer family and baby have a better understanding of their baby's temperament traits and needs
- Parents of the students see that their child has a greater sense of belonging and a better sense of inclusion for others
- Roots of Empathy Instructors take the learning and philosophies of the program to their families, workplaces, and communities
- Educators can reach students more effectively because they have a deeper understanding of their students' emotional development, temperaments, vulnerability, and resilience
- Schools see positive impacts on classroom culture such as a better sense of inclusion and conflict resolution
- Donors (individuals, corporations and foundations) help transform a generation of children, classroom by classroom, to help more and hurt less
- Governments and community partners see that this proven program can help them achieve their goals more quickly and cost-effectively than creating their own program



Empathy is the antidote to hatred, racism, intolerance, bullying and cruelty of all kinds. Roots of Empathy, which was founded in 1996, supports every child in our program to create a kinder, more inclusive world. After all, our children are the future citizens, leaders, and parents of tomorrow.

“Roots of Empathy reminds each student fortunate enough to have this marvelous program of what being vulnerable feels like – and how we need to care for each other in this complex world.”

~ Dr. Daniel Siegel, Neuroscientist and Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine and Co-Director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center

“Roots of Empathy is solidly based on scientific knowledge of the human condition. But more than that, it takes us into the pedagogy of how one can develop and foster attachment, emotional literacy, authentic communication and social inclusion.”

~ Michael Fullan, Professor Emeritus, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto and Special Advisor to the Premier and Minister of Education in Ontario

“Roots of Empathy models key principles for learning empathy that can be used by anyone who wants to be more empathetic or help their children become that way.”

~ Bruce Perry, Senior Fellow, The Child Trauma Academy, Houston, Texas

Cross cultural | replicable | scalable | Multiple countries and languages

Please help us grow

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