



Roots of Empathy
Racines de l'empathie

ROOTS OF EMPATHY INFORMATION FOR PARENTS



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

- The focus of Roots of Empathy in the long term is to build the capacity of the next generation for responsible citizenship and responsive parenting.
- In the short term, Roots of Empathy focuses on raising levels of empathy in children, resulting in less bullying and aggression and increased levels of caring, sharing, kindness, and inclusion.

Roots of Empathy is celebrated as a
Mental Health and Wellbeing program with proven results.

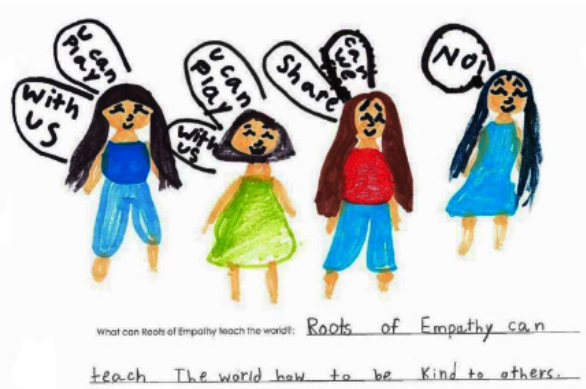
THE ROOTS OF EMPATHY PROGRAM

Founded in 1996 by social entrepreneur Mary Gordon, Roots of Empathy is an evidence-based classroom program proven to significantly reduce aggression and bullying among elementary school children. It fosters empathy and emotional literacy, creating a safe space for children to express themselves, explore their feelings, and develop supportive friendships that reduce stress and anxiety while promoting mental health. In Canada, the program is available in all ten provinces in both English and French, reaching rural, urban, and remote areas, including Indigenous communities. Roots of Empathy is also implemented internationally and has been translated into seven languages.

Your Baby as the “Tiny Teacher”

At the heart of the program are a neighbourhood infant and parent who visit the classroom nine times over the school year. Children witness the loving relationship between an infant and their parent and are coached to connect with the baby’s vulnerability and humanity by a Roots of Empathy Instructor.

The Instructor guides children to observe and recognize the baby’s feelings and then to reflect on when they felt similar emotions, gaining an understanding of their feelings and an ability to talk about them. Through this experiential learning, children develop the ability to read the emotional cues of classmates, which allows them to understand others better and make friends. Outfitted with a special t-shirt, the baby is identified as the ‘Tiny Teacher’.



“Roots of Empathy never tells children what to do or what not to do, but rather reaches them through experiential questions. Their growing empathy allows them to understand how other people feel. One beautiful outcome is that in addition to kindness and caring going up and aggression and bullying going down, we see children proactively supporting classmates without the teacher asking them to help.”

~ Mary Gordon, Founder/President, Roots of Empathy

Does it Work?

Independent research by academics and Annual Program Evaluations by participants of the Roots of Empathy program has shown that children who participate in the program know more about emotions, are kinder to their friends, are less aggressive and bully other children less, and have improved mental health and wellbeing. The program also lays the foundation for children to develop skills for responsive parenting and responsible citizenship.

Are there Requirements to Volunteer as a Roots of Empathy Family?

Our program celebrates your baby's attachment to you as their parent, and children also observe your attunement to your baby. Fathers and/or mothers are equally welcome to participate. We will ask you to share your parenting experience with your baby with the children, as you are the expert on your baby. During the school year, you and your baby will be visiting the classroom nine times. At the start of the year, the Instructor will come to your home to talk about how the program will run and answer any questions you may have. The Instructor will call before each of the nine Family Visits to talk about the theme for the visit and tell you about questions the students have asked since the last Family Visit.

Our Commitment to You

Instructors are supported throughout the year by certified Roots of Empathy Mentors to ensure the best experience possible for your family.

Your baby will be loved by every student, and be a star in the school, and your family will be helping to build caring, peaceful, and civil societies. On the last Family Visit, you will be given a photo album as a memento of your baby's first year as a Roots of Empathy teacher and a Wishing Tree filled with children's heartfelt wishes for "their baby." At the end of the year, Roots of Empathy invites you to fill out a feedback form on your experience with the program.

The Roots of Empathy curriculum has received highest honours and is specialized for different age levels. There is a lesson plan for every visit; in total there are 27 Roots of Empathy visits during the school year. Nine themes are covered and each theme is addressed over three visits (Pre Family Visit, Family Visit, and Post Family Visit).



OVERVIEW OF CLASSROOM VISITS



The Pre Family Visit

- 9 visits total
- Roots of Empathy Instructor without family
- Each is 30 to 40 minutes in length
- Focus on infant development and preparation for Family Visit
- Students predict what changes they may see in the baby's development at the Family Visit

The Family Visit

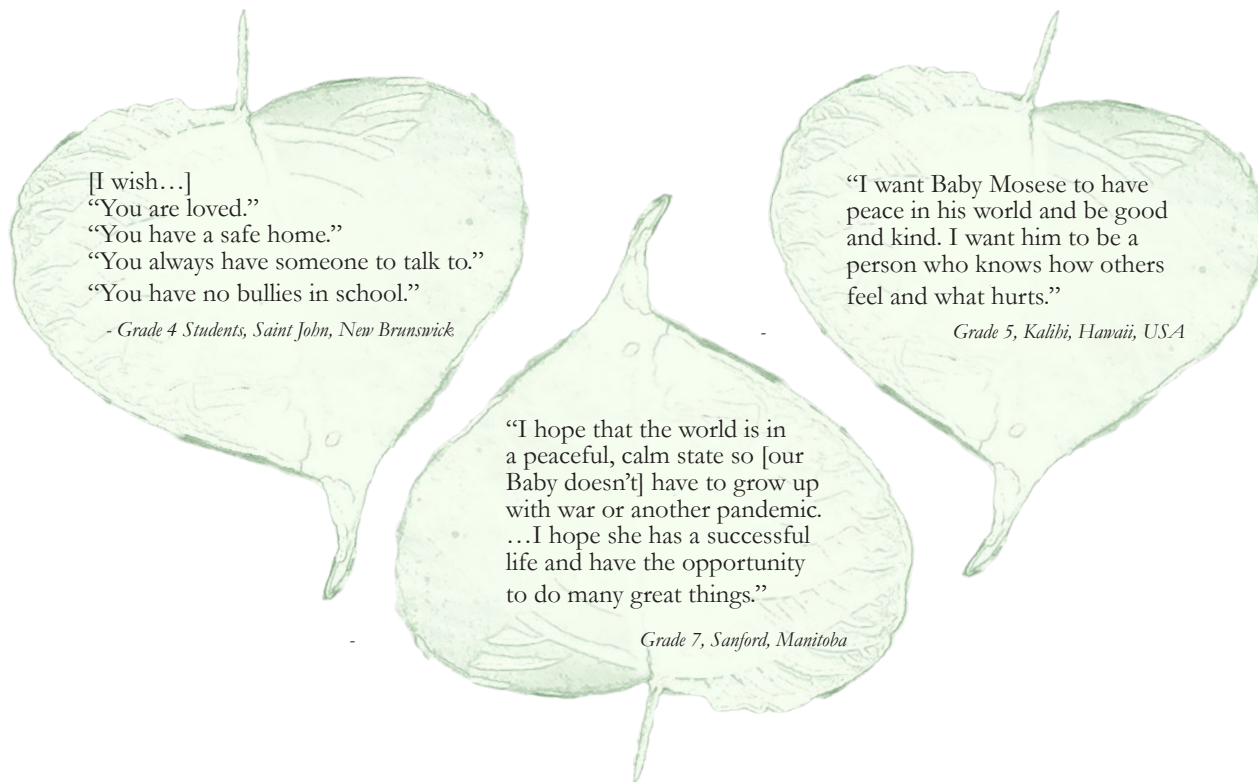
- 9 visits total
- Roots of Empathy Instructor, parent(s), and baby
- Approximately 30 to 40 minutes in length
- Roots of Empathy Instructor guides students' observations of the baby's feelings, intentions, and the attachment relationship
- Roots of Empathy Instructor demonstrates the baby's physical and emotional development and temperament, and interacts with the baby through music (i.e., singing songs) and early learning games (e.g., peek-a-boo).
- Students ask parent(s) questions about the baby

The Post Family Visit

- 9 visits total
- Roots of Empathy Instructor without family
- Each is 30 to 40 minutes in length
- Students reflect on their own feelings and focus on understanding the feelings of others (empathy)
- Children's literature and art/writing are used to foster perspective-taking, the cognitive aspect of empathy

WISHES FOR THE ROOTS OF EMPATHY BABY FROM THE WISHING TREE

The Roots of Empathy “Wishing Tree” gives children the opportunity to wish altruistically for their Roots of Empathy baby. Children are encouraged to dream about what the world could and should be like for their baby when that baby reaches their age. Wishes like these, encourage us to believe in a more loving world.



WHAT OTHER PARENTS SAY ABOUT THE PROGRAM

“The moments for me that solidified how important our ROE experience was for Bennett and me happened outside the classroom. Seeing his ‘grade 3 friends’ in our community and having the recognition and excitement between the children and the baby was so heartwarming. This wasn’t a class lesson to be forgotten each month, this was a progressing, meaningful, and lasting relationship between them.”

- Grade 3 Volunteer Parent, C.J. Schurter Elementary School,
Slave Lake, Alberta

“It made me feel appreciated and seen as a parent.”

- Hannah, Grade 2 Volunteer Parent, New Liskeard Public School,
New Liskeard, Ontario

“I bet years and years from now the kids will remember how baby John came to visit them in their second grade class. Such a special experience for us and for them! On our last day, we were singing our goodbye song and I saw one of the students looking towards the ground as we approached her in the circle. She touched baby John’s lil feet while she was singing and I saw some tears running down her sweet cheeks. Such a tender sight to see how the students had made in their own way a connection and bond with baby John.”

- Malia, Grade 2 Volunteer Parent, Cordata Elementary School,
Bellingham, United States

“With everything going on in the world currently, we worry what kind of world our baby will have to grow up in. Roots of Empathy showed us that despite the decisions that adults are currently making, children are still good and kind. Being in Roots of Empathy gave me hope that maybe the next generation will be one that is kind and inclusive.”

- Tanis, Grade 1/2 Volunteer Parent, Oliver Elementary School,
Oliver, British Columbia

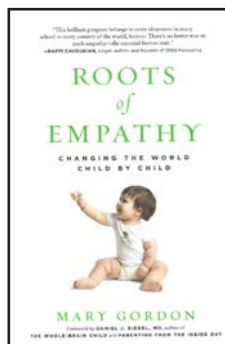
ROOTS OF EMPATHY FOUNDER/PRESIDENT MARY GORDON



Internationally recognized social entrepreneur, educator, best-selling author and child advocate Mary Gordon has created innovative programs informed by the power of empathy. In 1981, she initiated Canada’s first school-based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, which today serve as a best-practice model, and are public policy in Ontario. She

founded Roots of Empathy in 1996, and the program has expanded to many countries. In 2005, she created Seeds of Empathy for early childhood settings.

Gordon speaks internationally and consults to organizations such as The World Health Organization, the United Nations, The Judicial Council of California and the Nelson Mandela Foundation. She is featured in several TedEx Talks. Gordon was elected an Ashoka Fellow in 2002 and an Ashoka Globalizer in 2011. She is a member of the Order of Canada (2006), the Order of Newfoundland & Labrador (2012), and the Order of Ontario (2020). In 2018, Gordon was honoured with the Governor General’s Innovation Award for ‘trailblazers and creators’ who contribute to Canada’s success.



In *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child*, Mary Gordon chronicles the creation of her groundbreaking classroom program and shares her vision of a society of caring children who will pass on their legacy of empathy to their own children.

Purchase your copy at indigo.ca or amazon.com or .ca

“Mary Gordon has created a brilliant strategy for teaching young children the essential skills to see the mind within each person... Empathy in all its forms is encouraged and cultivated in this science-based, emotion-inspiring, life-changing immersion in the inner world of human development.” ~ *Daniel J. Siegel, MD*

“Mary Gordon’s Roots of Empathy is a simple, brilliant and powerful example of how developing children’s empathy can be a priority, and can be accomplished with amazing results. The heart is the way to the mind, but they have to be explicitly linked. Roots of Empathy is a model of social and academic inclusion.”
~ *Michael Fullan, Professor Emeritus, OISE/University of Toronto*

INFORMATION FORM FOR BABY’S PARENTS

If you or your baby get sick or are otherwise unable to attend your Family Visit, please call your Roots of Empathy Instructor. If you cannot reach the Instructor, please call the school.

Instructor’s Name:		Instructor’s Phone Number(s):	
Instructor’s Email:			
School Name:		School Address:	
School Phone Number:		Teacher’s Name:	
Age of Students:	Room #:	Principal’s Name:	



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