



Seeds of Empathy

Semailles de l'empathie



Imagine an Early Childhood setting. There is a hush of expectation in the room as the children gather around a lavender blanket in anticipation of Baby Jack's arrival. Their eyes light up as Jack, just four months old, and his mom appear in the doorway. This is his second visit and he is wriggling with excitement. Without prompting, the children break out into a welcoming song: "Hello Baby Jack, how are you? How are you? How are you? Hello, Baby Jack, how are you? How are you today?" Jack and his mother walk around the lavender blanket greeting each child in turn. Mom sits down and places Jack on his back; the children wait eagerly to see what he will do.

Welcome to Seeds of Empathy (SOE)! This program teaches preschool children aged three to five years about feelings—their own feelings and the feelings of others. In SOE, the baby is the teacher. With each family visit (10 in all), a trained Family Guide leads the children in noticing how the baby is growing and changing over the course of his or her first year of life. The children also watch the loving relationship between the parent and baby; this is a lever to the children's development of emotional literacy. By understanding the perspective of the baby and learning to label the baby's feelings, the children become literate in describing their own feelings and understanding those of others – **empathy**.

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

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Now, imagine a small group of preschoolers sitting around a circular lavender blanket engrossed in a story. In Seeds of Empathy, we use stories to help children explore their own feelings and take the perspective of others. Attitudes to reading are formed

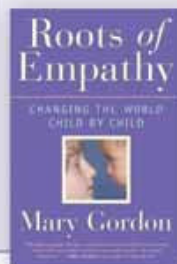
early through trusting relationships, which is what makes Early Childhood Educators powerful role models. In SOE, two trained Literacy Coaches facilitate these early literacy learning circles, which are supported by curriculum and two books per theme. Through the curriculum the books and family visits are connected by theme.

Why do we need Seeds of Empathy?

Today, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of children's social and emotional learning in the early years. This type of learning protects children against the daily exposure to violence and aggression they see in TV shows and videos. Seeds of Empathy is a program that fosters social and emotional competencies and early literacy skills and attitudes in the crucial preschool years. In SOE, children learn how to build positive relationships by understanding their own emotions and those of others. When children know how others feel, they are less likely to use aggression to solve problems and hurt each other through bullying. Watching the interaction between a parent and baby makes these lessons of caring very real. Lessons learned from the baby are helping to change the world, child by child.

Seeds of Empathy is the younger sibling of the Roots of Empathy program. The Seeds of Empathy program brings the messages of Roots of Empathy to Early Childhood settings.

Roots of Empathy CHANGING THE WORLD CHILD BY CHILD
by Mary Gordon



Mary Gordon chronicles the creation of her award-winning classroom program and shares her vision of a society of compassionate and caring children who will pass on their legacy of empathy to their own children.

Purchase your copy of *Roots of Empathy* at www.indigo.ca or www.amazon.ca

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