



# Roots of Empathy: Changing the World, Child by Child

*Mary Gordon*

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*Roots of Empathy* — an evidence-based program developed in 1996 by longtime educator and social entrepreneur Mary Gordon — has already reached more than 270,000 children in Canada, the U.S., Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere.

Now, as *The New York Times* reports that "empathy lessons are spreading everywhere amid concerns over the pressure on students from high-stakes tests and a race to college that starts in kindergarten", Mary Gordon explains the value of and how best to nurture empathy and social and emotional literacy in all children — and thereby reduce aggression, antisocial behavior, and bullying.

## Roots of Empathy: Changing the World, Child by Child Details

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Author : Mary Gordon

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# **From Reader Review Roots of Empathy: Changing the World, Child by Child for online ebook**

## **Janet says**

Babies as parent educators. Brilliant! Wish this was more popular in the US. (Canada seems to get all the good government programs.)

### **Memorable Quotations:**

"Children don't need protection from the truth, but they do need a supportive adult to help them make sense of events that can be frightening" (page 185).

"There is a body of thought that pushes for more structure in education, foisting more and more formal instruction on younger children. This is based on the faulty premise that beginning such instruction early trains children to absorb learning at a greater rate as they get older. It flies in the face of all the research about how children learn. Classroom teachers, particularly at the kindergarten level, often feel they are violating their own values and belief system when they are pushed to substitute instruction for the play-based problem-solving that they know is the foundation of a child's competencies. They worry that play has become a four-letter word and that children's natural learning style, their curiosity and imagination, have been sold out to political decisions based on rhetoric rather than research (page 195).

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## **Liz D'Onofrio says**

This book outlines an incredible program out of Canada that highlights the parent-baby bond as a way to teach schoolchildren the concept of empathy. Wow! What an incredibly creative way to help children develop social skills, strengthen community bonds, and identify a stronger emotional life within their own identities. I hope this program is implemented in more places, and I hope one day that I get to be a small part of it. For anyone in the fields of social work, education, child development, or community advocacy, this is a must read.

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## **Flavia says**

I was frequently bored because mostly it is broad general description of the program. I was expecting more details about empathy and its development from the scientific perspective.

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## **Joyce L says**

A lovely idea about how we can bring empathy into classrooms. Although we sometimes take on too many social issues in schools, this program is worthy of consideration.

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### **Zaakiyyah Jeena says**

While I found some good points in this book I am disappointed that 90% of the content is dedicated to promoting a course on empathy that's not readily available to most people. Basically a really long advertorial with nothing conclusive unless you buy the course.

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### **Susan Waldo says**

What a world we might have, instead of budget cuts to our schools, to include programs such as this to promote humanity and ethics, incorporating into our curriculum with writing, arts etc. and making this world and our children so much better. A must-read for anyone who deals with children, not only educators, but mommies, daddies, grannies and gramps.....

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### **Apzmarshl says**

There were some really important core features about attachment and empathy, but most of the book felt like an infomercial at 2 am. I didn't enjoy being sold the program. I do believe it's value, I just don't see it being implemented anywhere near us. Public school is extremely focused on testing, not teaching children about life.

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### **Deanna says**

So I'm in the middle of doing the Roots of Empathy program in a grade one class with my baby. I was/am excited to do this program but felt confused about the anti-bullying effect it is supposed to have... So my coordinator lent me her copy of this book to read.

So now I get that what we are really teaching is emotional literacy. It's brilliant really and so important. I am very NOT emotionally literate so I think it's a great idea. The students in our class are learning about my baby's feelings and then how to name their own. It makes sense really. Genius.

What doesn't really make sense to me is how one class of kids observing the baby for about 9 hours over the course of one year is going to truly change anything in that school. I think that Mary Gordon (author, founder) is a complete optimist. Good for her. She has all these amazing cute stories of kids standing up for each other because of what their "Roots Baby" has taught them... But does it stick? Truly? Are these kids forever going to never bully and never be a silent bystander to bullying? I just don't think it's the answer to bullying and I don't think it should be touted as such.

With that being said I did copy out several passages from the book to keep for myself and re-read.

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### **Leanne says**

This book details a program that has spread in Canada as well as other countries to teach children empathy. It

is beautiful and powerful--something I think would have helped my own adopted son. With so many children in America struggling with abusive,absent, or dismissive parents, this is program that could make a true difference in our society.

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### **Sara says**

This book had some interesting information, but for the most part, it read like a rant about bullying in schools (preaching to the choir, here) and an infomercial for the Roots of Empathy program. Short of petitioning to have Roots of Empathy in my kid's classroom, there wasn't much in the way of actionable things I could do, personally, to help him develop more empathy. So it's a really good book if you're looking to find out what Roots of Empathy can do for your school/kids, but only an okay book if you're looking for ways to help develop empathy without the program.

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### **Dorothy Greco says**

If only hospitals gave away this book instead of free diapers... If only schools valued EQ along with IQ and purposed to teach students what it means to care for each other... If only we could grasp how empathy changes everything, the world would be a different place.

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### **Louise says**

Long story short: every child in the classroom could benefit from completing the Roots of Empathy (RoE) program. As a teacher of 20-something adults, I wholly see the benefits of both the RoE program and this book, and highly recommend this book for anyone involved in or interested in education, and also every parent (of children of any age).

This moving, informative, and inspiring book talks about where the RoE program comes from, what empathy is and why it matters, all the way through to some of the learnings provided by the program (the chapter on Temperament is fascinating!), building the First Relationship (between baby and parent(s)), emotional literacy, authentic communication, and social inclusion. It then concludes with how Mary Gordon sees Roots of Empathy impacting society, as well as providing test results in the appendix of the book.

It's easy to read and includes lots of stories (and artwork) from the children themselves which are very touching. A great reminder that our future is our children, and that we can help shape the world to become a better place.

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### **Tiffany says**

The review of current knowledge of child development that is included in this book is comprehensive, and the model she provides for teaching empathy (by bringing a baby into the classroom each month) is fascinating and well-researched. I just keep wondering what kind of parents would be willing to bring their newborn into a kindergarten classroom!

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**Lynda Schmidt says**

Love the concept of this book and have enjoyed seeing elements of this program in action in our school. At times it felt a little too perfect in terms of working so beautifully. Still, how much better at teaching our children about peace through babies as opposed to lectures about bullying! Think all who work directly w/ children would benefit from reading it.

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**Gloria Denoon says**

A good read, though much of the book is devoted to the promotion of the Roots of Empathy program.

Ms. Gordon is proposing a social change from the heart, child by child, and then family, community, and the world.

The action effort- originated from empathy- is admirable and could be applied to our daily parenting.

The following paragraph is my favorite:

What we say to them is important, but more crucial still is how we say it and what we are conveying about our respect for them as individuals. Brazelton & Greenspan express it well: "Empathy is taught not by telling children to be nice to others or to try to understand others, but by parents' having the patience to listen to children and children's feeling understood. Once they understand what empathy feels like, they can create it in their relationships."

(p.131)

This is the hope.

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