

Roots of Empathy

MENTORING MESSAGES FROM MARY



LETTER 1

Dear Roots of Empathy Instructors,

It is an exciting time of year as you are preparing to begin your Roots of Empathy program, which will change the world, child by child. Soon, Roots of Empathy blankets will be laid out on thousands of classroom floors across Canada and around the world.

Questions You Might Ask Your Mentor



One of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of being a Roots of Empathy Instructor is playing the conductor role in a symphony of relationships. Working with the orchestra members—the Roots of Empathy Family, the Mentor, the Classroom Teacher, the Principal, and the Local Coordinator (Key Point Person)—requires a lot of coordination and many questions may arise, such as:

- My school hasn't found a baby aged 2-4 months for me. What do I do?
- I don't have the Roots of Empathy Program Information Booklet for Parents and Schools, and I need it for meeting with the Principal, Classroom Teacher and Roots of Empathy Family before I start my class. What do I do?
- I've just met with my Classroom Teacher and s/he asked if I would include students with special needs from another class in her/his Roots of Empathy program. What do I do?
- My Classroom Teacher wants to know why we are collecting information on a general profile of the classroom for the Classroom Information Form (CIF). What do I say?
- When should I send home the Roots of Empathy Permission Release Forms for Photos, Videos and Artwork to the students in my class?

If you don't know the answer to these questions or if you have other questions please contact your Roots of Empathy Mentor for support and guidance.

From the Green Blanket



Baby Exercises

At this time of year, your Roots of Empathy baby will be quite young. It is an opportune time to introduce baby exercises to them and to the children in the class.

Baby exercises help babies to relax. The exercises allow children to:

- Get to know the baby by noticing the baby's reactions to the exercises.
- Gain insight into the baby's temperament (e.g., First Reaction).

- Observe the attachment and attunement between the baby and the parent. Please make sure ahead of time that the parent is comfortable doing exercises with the baby in front of the children.
- Observe the baby's reaction to you, the Roots of Empathy Instructor, doing the exercises compared to the parent. Through guided observation, you can ask questions such as, "How did the baby react differently to me compared to their parent?" (facial expressions, body language, vocalizations). This helps children observe the power of the attachment and attunement relationship between the parent and the infant.

Always ask the baby's permission to do exercises. Have the children watch for the baby's consent (smiles, eye contact, loose limbs, open hands). By doing this you are reading the baby's cues. As young as 2 months, the baby is able to communicate "no". The baby tells us "no" with their facial expressions by looking away, stiffening up body and limbs or by making unhappy sounds. If at any point the baby is resistant or displays signs that they are not enjoying the exercises, you should stop. This communication lets the children know the baby is telling us "no". We respect this and move onto something different. By respecting the wishes of an infant, we communicate that we will listen and respect children too. It sends a message that a child is a person with rights, just like the Roots of Empathy baby.

When doing exercises with the baby, it is important to be attuned to the baby's preferences. Some babies prefer smooth, gentle touch, sound and movement while others prefer bouncy, more active and intense touch, sound and movement.

For more information on doing exercises with babies, refer to this section of your Roots of Empathy Instructor's Resource Manual.

Empathy is the ability to understand how another person feels.

Empathy Action

Roots of Empathy takes a universal approach. We engage all the children in the classroom, including onlookers and bystanders, rather than targeting and isolating bullies, aggressive children or the victims of bullies. Regardless of where the Roots of Empathy program is taught, children are empowered to advocate for fairness and challenge injustice, such as bullying. Tabassum's artwork shows how children who are bystanders and onlookers can bravely stand up for fairness and challenging cruelty and injustice.

With respect,

Mary Gordon

Mary Gordon

Founder/President, Roots of Empathy



Roots of Empathy
Racines de l'empathie