



Dear Roots of Empathy Volunteer Families,

How wonderful that you will be volunteering with your baby in the Roots of Empathy program. You and your baby will be bringing joy and hope with every class. Your participation will be supporting deep learning for the children about how babies develop and learn while gaining insights into their own emotions and the emotions of their classmates.

The pandemic has wreaked havoc on everyone's lives, especially children who are vulnerable. We know that anxiety and depression have hit record levels in children across the world, as a result of the pandemic. Roots of Empathy supports children's resilience, giving them opportunities to speak about how they are feeling and to realize they are not alone. Students in the program learn how to ask for help and give help to one another.

Roots of Empathy is based on the loving relationship between a parent and infant which is where empathy develops. The children in the classroom that you will join are going to develop emotional literacy from your baby as they witness their "Tiny Teacher's" emotions during nine monthly visits. A trained Roots of Empathy Instructor will coach the children to read the baby's emotional cues and take the baby's perspective. Through this experiential learning and thoughtful reflection, students will gain insight into how others may feel – even if others do not verbalize their feelings. This process also gives children the tools to help them understand, identify, and talk about their feelings, even their deepest and most troubling – helping them to become emotionally literate and develop empathy.

Research on Roots of Empathy from three continents confirms its impact as an effective Mental Health and Wellbeing program, Social and Emotional Learning program and Bullying Prevention program. Students who participate in Roots of Empathy are proven to be more caring, helpful, inclusive, and kind.

As a family interested in participating in the Roots of Empathy program, here are some details to help you understand your role in the program during the coming year:

- The Roots of Empathy program runs from October through to the end of the school year.
- You and your "Tiny Teacher" will participate by visiting the classroom approximately once a month for a total of nine visits.
- The Roots of Empathy Instructor will be in touch with you prior to each of the nine Themes to let you know what types of information you will be asked to share and the kinds of questions to expect from students. For example, you might be asked to share some reasons that your baby cries and how you soothe them or how it feels as a parent when your baby learns a new skill, like rolling over.
- You will be provided with 3 different sizes of the Roots of Empathy "Tiny Teacher" t-shirts; we ask that you ensure your baby is wearing the t-shirt each time you visit the classroom. This reminds the students that your baby is the "Teacher" and is helping them learn.





- After each lesson, the Instructor will check in to make sure you felt comfortable during the visit and will always be respectful of your wishes when it comes to keeping everyone safe.

As a Roots of Empathy Volunteer Family, you are joining thousands of other families who volunteer with their babies to help children develop empathy. To learn more about Roots of Empathy, we invite you to visit our website [www.rootsofempathy.org](http://www.rootsofempathy.org) and to view these videos [\*Roots of Empathy\*](#), [\*BBC On Roots of Empathy\*](#) and [\*Empathy, more important than ever!\*](#) To see this empathy-building in action, we invite you to visit our website where we have provided videos with relevant information about parenting during these times. To access these videos, please visit <https://rootsofempathy.org/covid-19-resources/>.

Loving relationships are the greatest teachers and we simply could not run our programs without the incredible generosity of our Roots of Empathy families. Thank you for sharing our mission of building caring, peaceful and civil societies through the development of empathy in children and adults.

With gratitude,

*Mary*

Mary Gordon  
Founder and President, Roots of Empathy

