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MARY GORDON
Roots of Empathy and
Seeds of Empathy

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THE VISIONARY
Mary Gordon
 ROOTS OF EMPATHY
 AND SEEDS OF EMPATHY



Mary Gordon, founder and president of Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy, has an ethereal and kinetic glow, the kind that radiates from a baby's face when it's being held in her embracing arms. Within the field of early learning education systems, Gordon is the fairy godmother for the empathy movement. Her melodic voice and energy command a warm response from everyone in her presence, from newborns to the aged.

Gordon's programs, which are dedicated to promoting emotional literacy and empathy among children, arrived in Seattle — the only U.S. location for Roots — from her native Canada in the fall of 2007. Today more than 96 schools (45 in the Seattle area) use the Roots and Seeds of Empathy programs as an antidote for bullying, a phenomenon so widespread that the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development calls it a "public health problem."

Roots of Empathy now has a 16-year track record of reducing aggression and increasing empathy and social/emotional competence in schools all across Canada, as well as in New Zealand, Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Germany, Scotland, the Isle of Man and Seattle.

Gordon is collaborating with Andrew Meltzoff, Ph.D., and Pat Kuhl, Ph.D., co-directors of the University of Washington's Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences, to study the influence of the Roots program on kids' emotional regulation. Gordon says they know that kids in the program exhibit less aggressive and bullying behaviors. "We are now going to learn what their brains look like to better influence this behavior," she says.

"If you foster empathy in a child, you have created a gateway to finding the humanity in another person," says Gordon. "That is the core of human relations — the core of parenting. We are all wired to become competent, loving human beings through our key relationships."

—Alayne Sulkin

Personal heroes: My parents, for their wisdom, devotion, big-scale thinking and ability to show me what an ethical life looks like, how to love and the love of learning.

Quality you most admire in others: Empathy.

Best recent read: Howard Gardner's *Five Minds for the Future*.

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