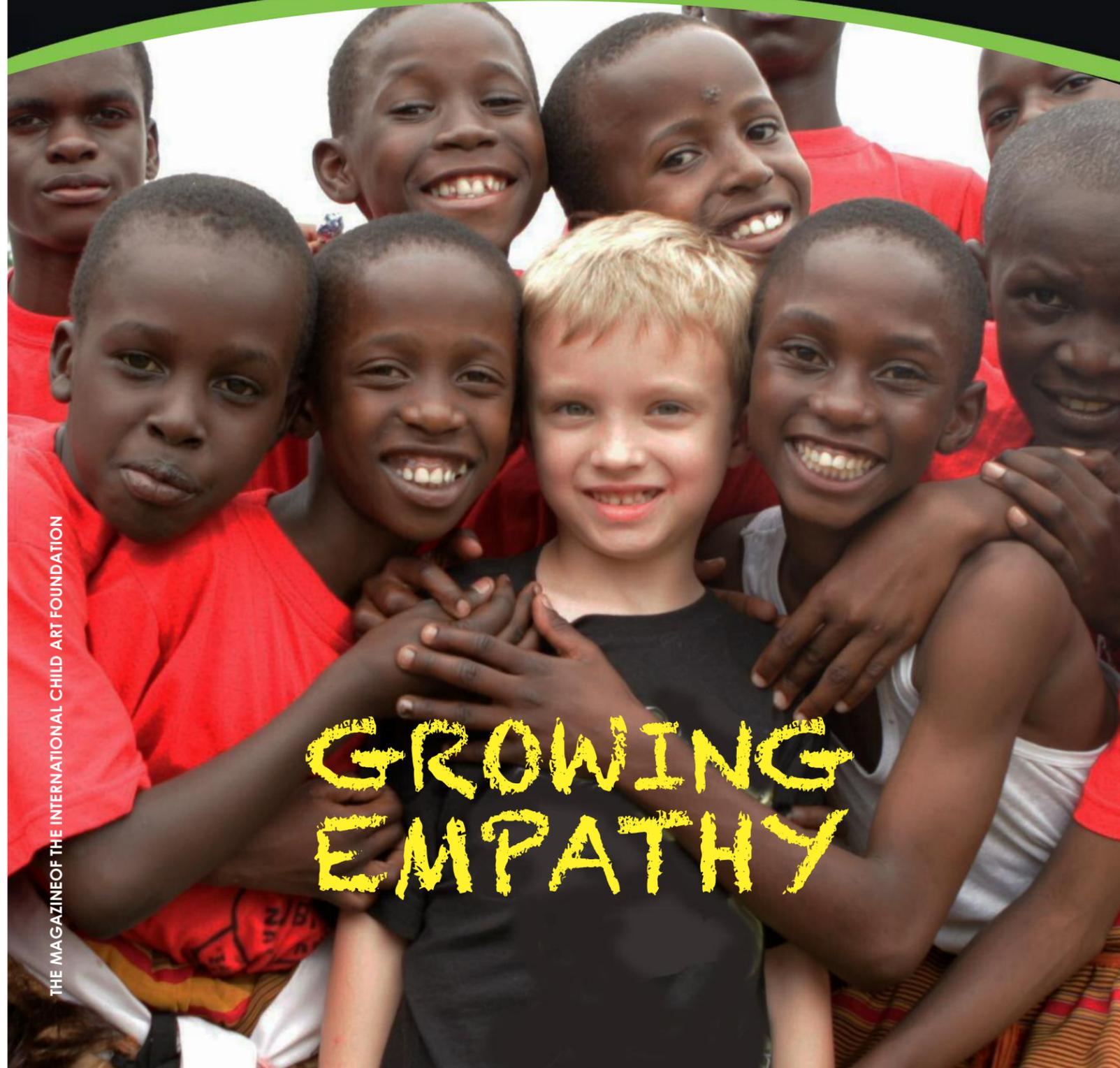


APRIL - JUNE 2019

# ChildArt



THE MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CHILD ART FOUNDATION

GROWING  
EMPATHY

Dear Reader,

This issue of *ChildArt* is path-breaking for two reasons. First, its focus is empathy—mother of all emotions which influences our perspectives and actions. Some never feel empathy or find the need for it, but the world cannot improve without it. We are most grateful to the experts who took the time to contribute to this issue to make you realize the importance of growing your own empathy.

The second reason is that publishing this ad-free magazine since 1998 has been a labor of love. We request that you kindly inform teachers and parents to subscribe to *ChildArt* or to adopt ICAF as their charity this year so they lend support to this worthy publication for young readers.

We are grateful to you and all *ChildArt* subscribers—some who have stayed with us for many years. We don't want this quarterly for a brighter future to become a thing of the past.

Thank you and best wishes.



## Growing Empathy

Volume 19, Issue 2, Number 58

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Back cover: Artwork of Amal Al Hajj, age 11, Yemen

The International Child Art Foundation dedicates this final issue of *ChildArt* quarterly to Dr. Emile Bruneau and his battle against a brain tumor.

## GROWING EMPATHY

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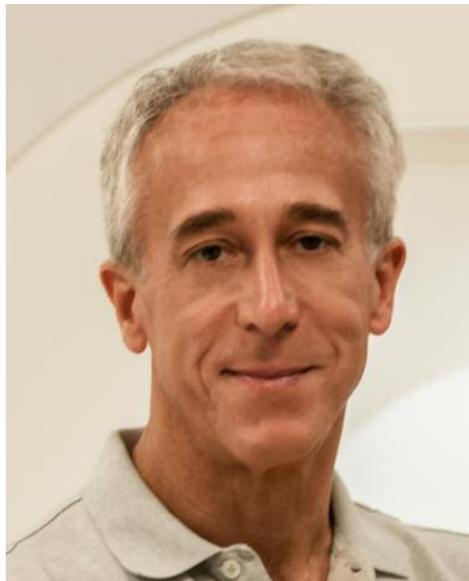
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# Brain, Mind, Soul and Mirror Neurons

Professor Marco Iacoboni talks with **ChildArt**

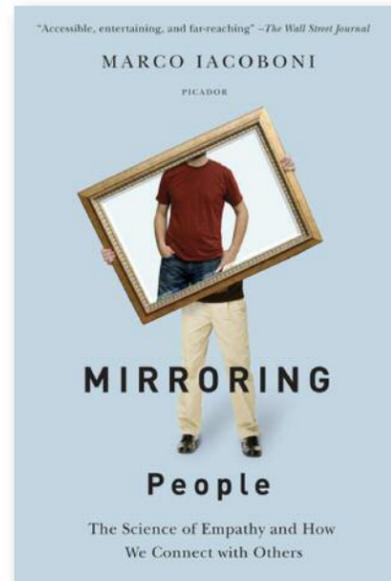


A neurologist and neuroscientist, Marco Iacoboni is an MD and a Ph.D., a professor of psychiatry and bio-behavioral sciences at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, he is also director of the Neuromodulation Lab at UCLA's Brain Mapping Center where he has conducted seminal research on mirror neurons.

**B**orn and raised in a tight-knit family in Rome, Italy, Marco grew up surrounded by his parents, three aunts, and his grandmother. With both his parents working, he spent most days with his grandmother. A strong-willed woman, his grandmother taught him a lot and started him on the path to where he is now. As a child he liked to write, play music, and watch movies, but there was an idea even back then that he would grow up to be a doctor.

When he entered medicine, he immediately fell in love with the human brain as one of the most important organs for decision making and life choices. He became fascinated with how the brain interacts with the rest of the body and the surrounding environment. He says, "These interactions are the basis of who we are and what we do—our mind and soul."

At the UCLA Brain Mapping Center, Dr. Iacoboni and his team study the



brain harmlessly and painlessly by using magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). They record pictures of the brain when people see certain things, do certain things, and experience certain emotions. They can also excite parts of the brain, or prevent them from exciting—called inhibition—and see what the effects are. By exciting or inhibiting specific parts of the brain, he can determine cause-and-effect relationships between the brain and human behavior. And through brain imaging and mapping, he has worked out what parts of the brain contain mirror neurons.

“ I care about the human soul. I believe that the soul is in the mind, and that the mind is a functional process instantiated by the brain with its interactions with the body and the environment. Hence, I study the brain. ”

He became interested in mirror neurons gradually. Dr. Giacomo Rizzolatti, who first discovered mirror neurons, approached him at the UCLA Brain Mapping Center because he wanted to expand the research on mirror neurons using brain imaging in humans. Though he was not entirely convinced about mirror neurons, in 1998 he visited Dr. Rizzolatti at the University of Parma in Italy and realized that the empirical findings were solid. He had an intuition that the discovery of mirror neurons was going to revolutionize the way we think about the brain and ourselves. It took him several years of experimentation to fully grasp the explanatory potential of mirror neurons to validate why humans are social beings.

His generation—he says—was always taught that humans are selfish beings, motivated by self-preservation and self-gain. "Mirror neurons are a whole new realm of hope that people are wired to be selfless and empathetic. The mirror neurons are a really important mechanism in the brain for empathy, for getting into your mental state, your emotional state, for connecting with you. So that tells me that indeed the classical story that humans are selfish beings is completely wrong, we're actually wired for empathy—that's our nature."

Not only has he discovered the connection between mirror neurons and

empathy, and knows where to find the mirror neurons—they are all over the brain!—he now experiments on how to make people empathic. He and his team have stimulated certain brain areas in a laboratory setting and observed people become more empathetic and generous towards others.

Though he has worked primarily on the brain, he says "to be honest, I really don't give a damn about the brain. I care about the human soul. I believe that the soul is in the mind, and that the mind is a functional process instantiated by the brain with its interactions with the body and the environment. Hence, I study the brain."

He has a message for you as well. He says that young people are the future and hope of humanity, so he wants you all "to really try to support each other, to empathize." He hopes that you all lead a life that gives meaning to you and the people in your community. Don't just be empathetic now, but be empathetic toward yourself in the future and future generations. "You want to have a solid education to actively engage with the world and steer it for the better."

He reminds us all that "we really need the younger generation to step up and save humanity because otherwise these nice things that we have on our planet may disappear entirely in a not so distant future." ■



Marco as a table tennis champ.



# Mama's Last Hug

Dr. Frans de Waal

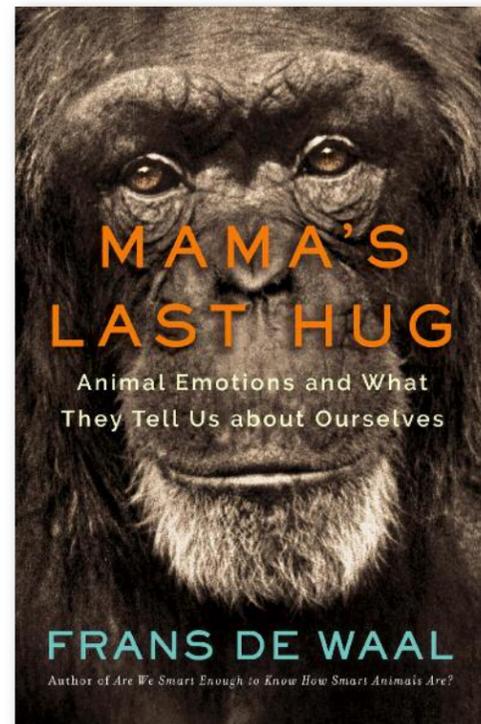


Frans when ten years old

One of the world's best-known primatologists, Dr. Frans de Waal explains in his book "The Age of Empathy" that while economists and politicians model human society on the perpetual struggle they believe exists in nature, in reality many animals survive through cooperation and empathy, which is part of their survival package, as it is for the human society.

**H**ave you ever thought of building your own zoo? That's basically what Franciscus Bernardus Maria "Frans" de Waal did, as a young kid growing up in The Netherlands. "From very young I was interested in animals," he told ChildArt. "Like all the small towns in Holland, my town of Hertogenbosch (which translates as The Forest of the Duke) was surrounded by channels, water-ditches, and a river." On weekends he would ride his bicycle to see what he could catch and would usually bring back aquatic animals, like fish and salamanders. He'd also keep birds and mice and other animals.

He read many books about animals and by the time he entered University to study biology, he had already done a lot of things with animals, in his own amateurish way. "I was disappointed in the first few years of university because everything they wanted me to do was on dead animals or dead plants or microbiology or biochemistry. I barely saw a live animal and, for me, that was the reason I wanted to study biology."



To fulfill his dream, de Waal switched Universities where he studied ethology—the study of animal behavior, usually by biologist. There, he worked primarily with birds and rats. At his third university, he had the opportunity to work with monkeys while completing his dissertation on animal behavior. After completing his Ph.D., he finally transitioned to working with chimpanzees, a type of ape. Apes are different than monkeys because they have no tails. Humans belong to the same small family as apes.

de Waal's initial goal with the chimps was to study their aggressive behavior, because that's what everyone was interested in at the time. But, as he started observing the world's largest

colony of chimpanzees at the Arnhem zoo, he discovered the group of chimps to be quite harmonious, not at all aggressive. This discovery sparked his interest in reconciliation instead, as he documented how the chimps made peace after fights.

A year or so after his initial work with the chimps, a power struggle began to develop between four males in the group. The dominant alpha male began losing his position. All sorts of complex coalitions began to take shape, which de Waal refers to as Chimpanzee Politics, the title of his first book. Since the dominance order is decided by coalitions rather than by who's the biggest or the strongest male, in principle even the smallest male can be the alpha if he has the right supporters, such as that of the alpha female, known as Mama.

In the 1970s, at the time of de Waal's studies, no one talked about the idea of animal cognition. Animals were supposed to be simple. Animals either had inborn instincts or relied on very simple learning. "As soon as you said they had strategies, they think about the future, they have complex tool use, or you claim internal processes like they have feelings, scientists got very upset because this was taboo."

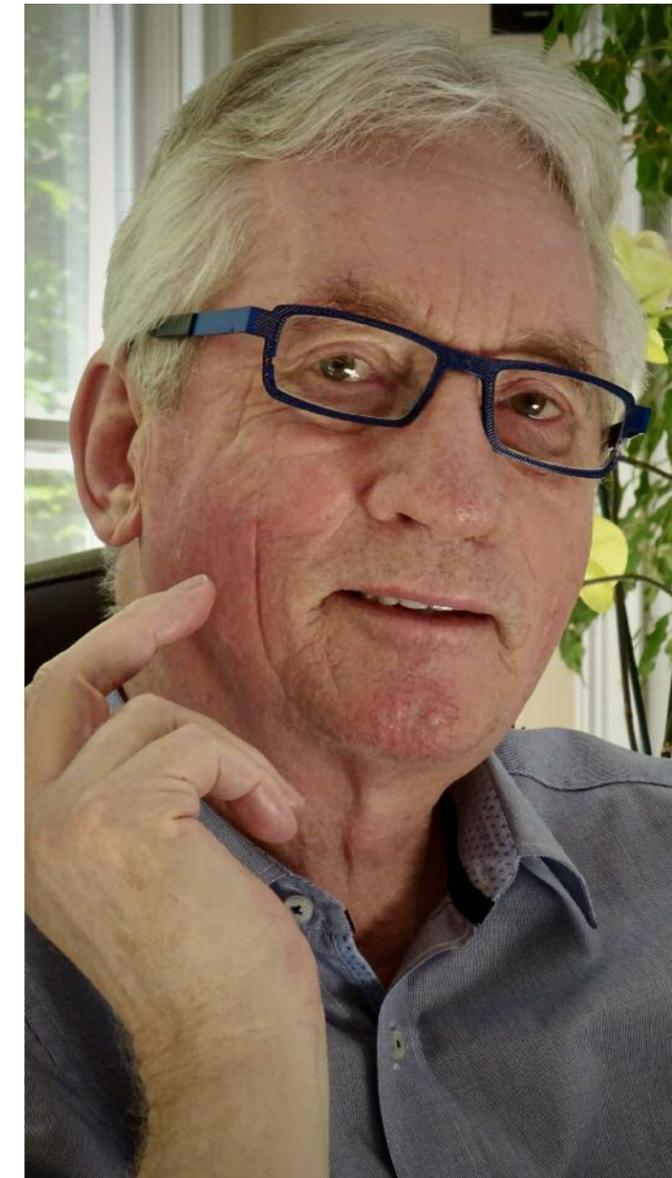
Today, there are all sorts of experiments on animal cognition but since this was not an acceptable topic in the 1970's, de Waal became interested in

cognition through social behavior. When he came to the United States he started conducting non-invasive behavioral experiments where he brought the primates into a room and gave them a computer, for example, to see how they solved a problem presented on a touchscreen. This led to new insights into cognition and the intelligence levels of these animals.

Additional research eventually led to the idea of empathy, of consolation behavior, and the connections between various animals, including humans. Just like the chimps, consolation is a reaction used in humans to test empathy. When a human adult cries in the presence of a young child, the child will touch and kiss them and try to console the hurt person. This is referred to as empathic concern.

The origin of empathy is found in mothers who need to respond to the distress of their offspring which is "important for survival. This is why empathy is more developed in females and why oxytocin, which is involved in maternal care, is part of the empathic reaction. Once this capacity exists, it spreads to other

domains in society. "Empathy is a mammalian characteristic found in all sorts of relationships beyond the mother-child one, such as friendships in both sexes. It may be even older than mammals because there are now studies on birds, which means the capacity may have originated in reptiles.

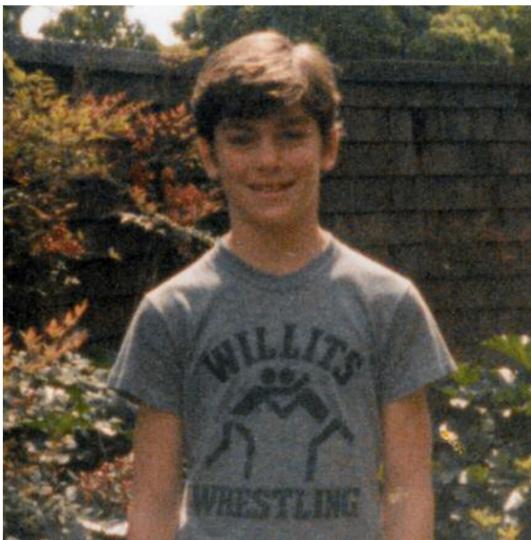


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# Mind and Conflict

Dr. Emile Bruneau talks to **ChildArt**

A neuroscientist at the University of Pennsylvania and director of the Peace and Conflict Neuroscience Lab, Emile researches the biases that drive conflict between groups of people, and focuses on dehumanization and the restoring of empathy and humanity.



Emile when ten.

**B**orn in Northern California to parents who were hippies, Emile was raised in a cooperative community in the Santa Cruz Mountains. He attended an alternative elementary school that had no grades and more than half of the day was devoted to creative play. It was there he made the connection between school and enjoyment, and his love of learning stayed with him. After his bachelor's at Stanford University, he taught science at a high school, obtained his doctorate from the University of Michigan, worked at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and then joined the faculty at the University of Pennsylvania.

His father was a tremendous source of inspiration but in a unique way. "Determined not to influence my growth, he gave me the specific gift of being my own inspiration." Emile learned to enjoy the process of learning through playful family conversations around the dinner table, taking out books to look up things like types of birds and the meanings of different words (what IS the difference between a 'nook' and a 'crannie', anyways?).

He became interested in neuroscience from a young age, because shortly

after he was born his mother developed schizophrenia. "Like many who have loved ones with a mental illness, I became interested in the brain after seeing how mental illness changed my mother." As a high school teacher, he would save up his money during the year and travel in the summers. By chance, his travels took him to regions in the middle of conflicts, including South Africa, Ireland, and Sri Lanka. "I observed that all of these very different conflicts seemed to share eerily similar causes and motivations. These experiences and observations wouldn't let go of me, so I made it my life's work to understand the psychological obstacles to peace and how to overcome them."

The most interesting part of empathy for Emile is the ability to identify and empathize with people with whom we have nothing in common. "For example, how a straight white male could empathize with a friend or coworker who is a gay black woman, who just went through a racist experience." This creative ability to reach far beyond anything we have ever experienced to empathize with people that have little or nothing in common with us is based on theory of mind. "Empathy requires theory of mind,

That's how neuroscience works! You can shape your mind however you want to be, you can become the person you want.

because his definition of empathy is understanding the thoughts, emotions, and feelings of others."

"Think about these farmers and herders in Nigeria. For generations they live in a symbiosis. The farmers have crops, the herders come through and the dung from their cattle and goats fertilize the crops. Everybody is happy. Everybody coexists. Then one year the farmers are given artificial fertilizer. All of a sudden they have no need for the herders. In fact, now the hoofs of the herd might trample their crops. So the farmers put up fences. When the herders come by and for generations they have taken their herd across the land and they see the fence, what do they assume? They assume nefarious thoughts and they think the farmers have put up the fence because they don't like them, and they respond in turn and you get this spiral of conflict between groups that is essentially based on a misconception. It's entirely based on a false meta-perception. This is so common in intergroup conflict and it is correctable."

"Our assumptions about what the other group thinks of our group ('meta-perceptions') are subject to a negativity bias: we think that other groups think worse of us than they actually do, which has enormous potential to drive conflict. The exciting part is that meta-perceptions are correctable! The human brain is naturally biased, but it is also incredibly flexible—so correcting false per-

ceptions and false meta-perceptions can help prevent the worsening of conflicts between groups of people."

Emile explains that there are different forms of empathy with different definitions. Trait empathy is how empathetic somebody is regardless of situation—overall, how much they feel the suffering of others, cry at sad movies, or are compelled to help somebody who's suffering in the street. State empathy is how much empathy you feel under certain circumstances, in a specific real-world situation. Then there is parochial empathy, which is the difference in empathy between in-group and for out-group. "Somebody can have incredible trait empathy, but only toward individuals within their group. And in fact, more empathy toward their own group may actually predict support for violence against other groups, because they believe those other groups are responsible for the pain and suffering of their own group."

One obstacle to addressing conflict between groups, such as Palestinians vs Israelis or Catholics vs Protestants in Ireland, is not only developing empathy, but developing the right kind of empathy. "If a program brings together individuals from both groups to foster and develop trait empathy, research suggests this may do absolutely nothing to resolve the conflict. And if individuals develop more parochial empathy—empathy for their own group members, and hostility or resentment toward the

other group—that will make the situation and conflict worse than before the program started."

Emile feels like his calling is to evaluate programs to make sure they are very clear about what their goals are, because simply improving empathy will not improve outcomes. He believes research, policy, and programs need to be directly related to individual situations, and tailored to individual conflicts. Some programs may work better for some groups, or work for some groups and not others. And if we know which programs work best in which situations, we can make much more progress.

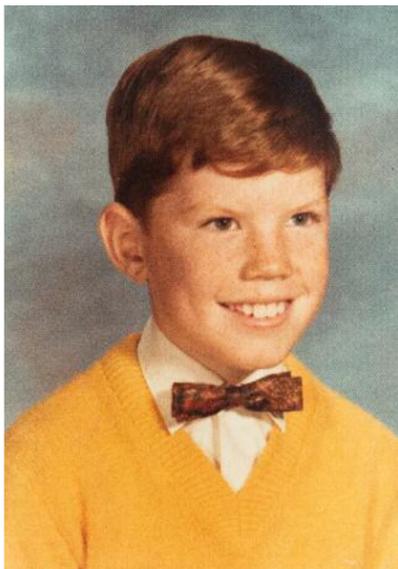
Emile does a lot of work on Islamophobia in both the United States and across Europe—both places where it is extraordinarily high. He's learned that Muslims are openly dehumanized. The more dehumanized they feel, the more aggressive they are toward Americans and Europeans. The more aggressive and hostile they feel, the more radicalized they become. And just like meta-perceptions, Islamophobia is easily correctable because of how flexible the human brain is. "I have found that a one-minute activity addressing Islamophobia can reduce support for anti-Muslim policies for at least a year, and that's incredibly exciting."

After doing all this work and research, Emile is more optimistic than before he became a neuroscientist. "The brain's flexibility and ability to change

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# Art, Empathy, and Medicine

Dr. Michael Flanagan talks to **ChildArt**



*Michael when eleven.*

A physician, professor, and assistant dean at the Penn State College of Medicine University Park Regional Campus located in State College, Pennsylvania, Dr. Michael Flanagan has played a key role in introducing the arts and humanities to the regional campus. There is growing evidence that including the arts in medical education can develop and preserve vitality, resilience, and empathy in medical students and doctors.

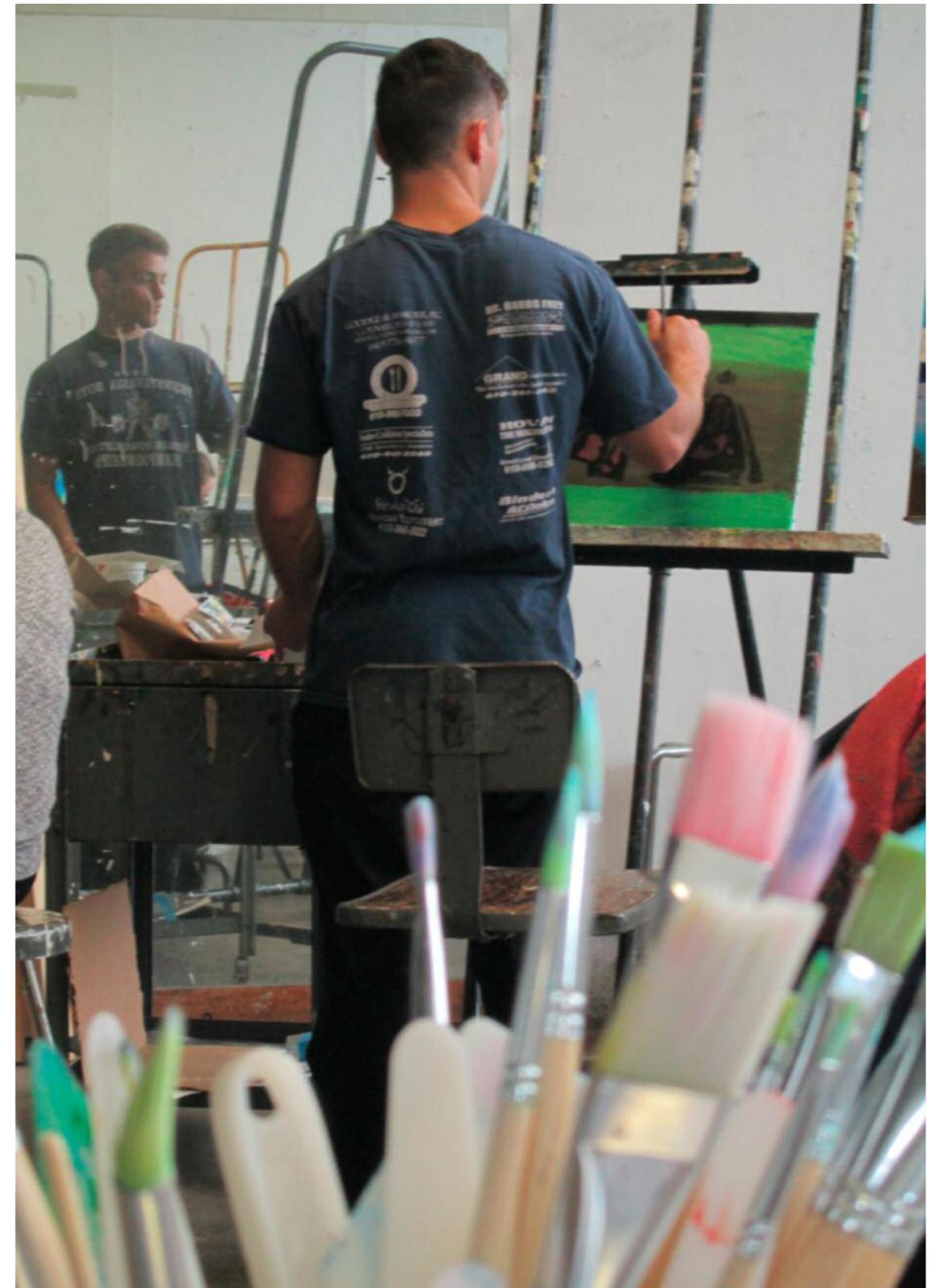
**G**rowing up in rural Maryland, Dr. Flanagan had an interest in both science and the arts, as well as animals and people. He remembers developing his first sense of empathy with the many animals he raised: ducks, geese, chickens, dogs, cats, rabbits, pigs, and even a goat and a pony! He first wanted to be a veterinarian, but decided that he enjoyed interacting and working with people even more, so he chose a career in medicine.

He points to his mother as “always instilling a desire for education and intellectual pursuits.” She was an accomplished writer and published poet, and his paternal grandmother was an oil painter whose work hung in his childhood home. He still follows their example, enjoying reading, writing, and painting, and currently teaches a course in medical communication and impressionist painting to fourth-year medical students.

Dr. Flanagan attended the University of Maryland at College Park as an undergraduate, followed by the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. He remembers receiving a very good medical education, but realizes how dramatically

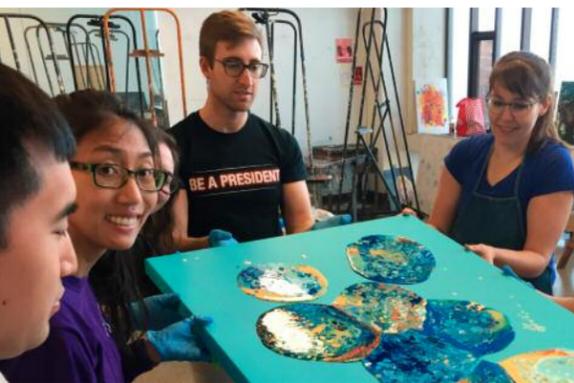
medical training has evolved in the decades since—including the integration of humanities and the arts. Yale, Columbia, Harvard, and Penn State are leaders in the field of medical humanities. The Department of Humanities at Penn State College of Medicine, the first of its kind, influences nearly every aspect of the curriculum. Fourth-year medical students are required to take a humanities elective before graduating, which can include a “subject like photography, creative writing, literature, music, or art.”

One of the most popular humanities electives offered at the College is Jazz and the Art of Medicine taught by Paul Haidet, MD. Dr. Flanagan actually completed this course alongside a cohort of medical students to learn more about developing his own humanities elective. “It was a transformational experience for me to see how the study of jazz music could be related to the practice of medicine, and how we might communicate with patients more effectively by developing an understanding of jazz.” He adds that jazz musicians give each other the space to riff and communicate through music in their own way, while respecting the space of other



musicians when they take the lead. He relates that to giving patients the space to tell their story, their medical history, without being rushed or interrupted.

Though he had a newfound appreciation for jazz, he was passionate about fine arts, particularly the impressionists. He created a course that he called "Impressionism and the Art of Medical Communication." He explains that "studies on a national level suggest that medical students possess a higher level of empathy than their peers, at least when they begin medical school. But by the time they finish medical school they often have significantly less empathy, possibly because of the need to protect themselves from the suffering and death they experience day after day, patient



after patient. Sleep deprivation, high academic pressure, and intense workloads combined with social isolation, financial burden, and a chaotic environment wear away at their capacity for empathy. Now we know that introducing the arts and humanities into medical education can help preserve medical students' empathy, as well as prevent burnout."

The College recognizes that doctors and medical students regularly face

these kinds of pressures during their training, and offers humanities classes to help students maintain their empathy, vitality, and resilience, as well as guard against burnout. Dr. Flanagan's course focuses on four areas to make the connection between impressionist art and empathetic communication. The first is 'Structure and Space'. He has his students role-play doctor and patient during a painting exercise. The physician-painter must paint an unseen image of an impressionist painting held by their student colleague who serves as the patient. The physician-painter takes a "history" from the student-patient by asking closed and open ended questions about the impressionist image they hold. Students observe the differences between rushing in and leading the patient versus giving them the time and space to tell their story—in this case, a description of the impressionist image they hold.

The second area of focus is the 'Art of Observation'. This class is held at the Palmer Museum of Art on the Penn State main campus. It begins with analyzing a single painting for 45 minutes using Visual Thinking Strategies, a technique he learned at the Harvard Macy Institute. During the observational session, the

students share what they see and think about the painting, with the goal of being able to understand it on a deeper level through dialogue, and not just by superficial observation and an assumption. This is compared to how the impressionists observed the world around them differently that other artists of their time, which was reflected in their unique painting style.

The third area of inquiry is on 'Cognitive Bias'. Experts in late 19th

century Paris did not value impressionist art because it did not embrace the lifelike mythical and biblical scenes they considered to be essential. This remote cognitive bias among art critics at the Parisian Salon can be compared effectively to the cognitive biases of our own times, which can be found in most humans to some degree, including medical students. Becoming aware of such biases is the first step toward overcoming them.

The fourth area addressed is, 'The Challenging Patient', whether they be anxious, angry, grieving or manipulative. "This is connected back to the many impressionist artists who dealt with mental health issues, such as Van Gogh. Understanding and developing empathy toward these artists with their individual challenges can be connected with effective approaches to manage challenges presented by difficult patients in the present."

After a long career as a practicing physician and medical educator, Dr. Flanagan had the following guidance to share with young leaders in medicine:

First, do not drown yourself in technology to the point of ignoring your surroundings. The less you connect with people in your life and in the world, the fewer opportunities you may encounter to develop empathy. "One way to promote engagement with the surrounding world is art, and it creates connections on a very personal level. Shared work and shared creation is an exhilarating experience and allows each person to really understand and appreciate others for all of their differences and contributions. When you engage in art together, you connect on a higher level." ■

It was a transformational experience for me to see how the study of jazz music could be related to the practice of medicine.



# How does the World Children's Festival develop empathy?

by Dr. Ashfaq Ishaq

As ICAF founder and chair, Dr. Ishaq organizes the Arts Olympiad in schools across the US and around the world. He has produced the World Children's Festival every four years since 1999 to honor the Arts Olympiad winners. Held at the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the World Children's Festival is a celebration of "Creativity, Diversity, and Unity."

**D**o you know that what makes us human, our creativity and empathy, are key attributes of successful learners and leaders? Creativity can be learned and developed without assistance, but empathy requires a teacher and an enabling environment. Learning and embracing empathy is not simple or easy. This is because we are all born into tribes, and the nature of our heritage is sacrosanct and inviolable. Our traditions lend meaning to

our life, animate our creativity, and mark our destiny. Without our native shell and its familiar trappings, we feel rootless and naked, at risk of becoming adrift in a rapidly evolving, eternally revolving, and evermore complex and confusing world. For reasons that include avoiding conflict with loved ones, we stay in our native abode, in harmony with the tribe. We defer to the tribe's dotty opinions and false narratives about out-groups in a deliberate act of loyalty and solidarity, but also because we do not entertain the perspectives of outsiders whom we are instructed never to trust. When conflict arises with an opposing tribe, we proclaim that history and morality are on our side; and to preserve stability and unity, any compromise is considered treason. In this primitive order, our past stalks the present and scares the future away.

To reduce the intergenerational transmission of prejudice and hatred in our world, the ICAF identifies the world's most creative children—its leading child

artists—through the school-based Arts Olympiad and brings them together at the World Children's Festival (WCF) in Washington, D.C. to imbue their creativity with empathy. The parents and teachers who accompany the Arts Olympiad winners, along with crowds of visitors and attendees—since the three-day celebration is free and open to the public—add a level of diversity and complexity to the WCF.

The seeds of creativity and empathy are planted in schools with the Arts Olympiad. In a typical classroom, students self-segregate into groups they often label as jocks, nerds, techies, or artists. Through structured lesson plans, the Arts Olympiad introduces students to the "Artist-Athlete Ideal" of a creative mind in a healthy body. This new identity awakens the dormant "inner artist" in young athletes and the "inner athlete" in young artists, academics, and intellectuals. The idea is to liberate children's natural tendency toward creativity and good health by linking imagination with embodiment. The program works because it targets students aged 8 to 12—a cohort most vulnerable to the well-documented "fourth grade slump in children's creativity" and to the obesity epidemic. Students' self-images solidify and the class becomes a more integrated community when they depict themselves as "artist-athletes" as part of the Arts Olympiad school art contest.

Developing empathy in kids from different cultural, ethnic, social, religious, or national backgrounds is more problematic than growing mutual empathy in students living in the same neighborhood or attending the

same school. Though learning is a biological activity that causes neurons to create new connections, learning empathy requires unlearning inherited bigotry and prejudice. A tribe's cadets must be separated from its emissaries, even if for a single day before the WCF. The children congregate in one conference room while their parents and teachers convene in another. In both rooms, everyone must walk up to the microphone and introduce themselves, with interpreters assisting where needed. Art therapy follows to alleviate anxieties and ease tensions. Activities for children are specially designed to help them form a tribe of their own—a united tribe of the world's children. Our presentations to parents and teachers explain why creativity and empathy are necessary to advance, or even save, a civilization.

The WCF is curated as an intervention to turn delegates into creative empathes. Workshops and activities are based on STEAMS education to integrate STEM disciplines with the arts to foster imagination, and sports to develop teamwork. This engages the entire body, not just the intellect. Since the brain filters all new information and discards that which challenges ingrained beliefs, encoding empathy requires circumventing the nativist ramparts to activate mirror neurons. Once a brain is convinced that the WCF is enhancing its executive functions and creative potential, it can fully commit to opening up and joining in.

Gaining children's confidence is essential to this process. When kids enter the festival grounds, they are astonished that other kids their age or only slightly older are running the

show. They meet the ICAF Youth Board Members acting as emcees and are amazed to learn that they too could be selected to join the Board and emcee the next WCF. They feel awe to see that all performances on the WCF's "World Stage" are conducted by children, and that some kids are hosting activities while workshops are led by prominent experts. They realize the WCF is truly a children's festival where they are the celebrities and in complete control. This consciousness boosts their confidence and self-esteem—smiles break out and ramparts crumble.

The WCF educational programming begins with "Health & Environment Day" with workshops and activities focused on the children's concerns, and these shared interests develop a sense of community and purpose. Next is the "Creativity & Imagination Day" with workshops and activities about children's own potential and future prospects, so they can come to understand their creativity and learn how to enhance their potential for a successful future. The third and final day is "Peace & Leadership Day," which imparts leadership training and inspires them to become change-makers.

Each WCF has prepared a cadre of creative-empaths, inspired and ready to bring about positive social change in their respective communities. They garner support from each other because they have shared the WCF's transformative experience, and can stay connected with each other virtually throughout their lives. Such a grassroots movement, never possible before, promises a more prosperous and peaceful world. ■





Creativity can be learned and developed without assistance, but empathy requires a teacher.

Though learning is a biological activity that causes neurons to create new connections, learning empathy requires unlearning inherited bigotry and prejudice.



# Fellow Feelings in New York or New Guinea

Dr. Tom Maschio talks with **ChildArt**



*Tom when seven.*

Growing up in an Italian-American working-class family in Brooklyn, Dr. Tom Maschio leveraged his surroundings to develop an interest in anthropology, studied in Canada and did fieldwork in New Guinea, before returning to New York City to help companies understand if and why consumers feel empathy for their products.

Tom grew up the youngest of three other siblings in Bensonhurst Brooklyn. His dad was an electrician in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, putting radar systems in the ships. Growing up he spent a lot of time with his mother attending lifecycle ceremonies like births, baptisms, weddings, wakes, and funerals. Tom would tag along with his mother when she cared for ailing relatives, like his uncle Frankie who lived nearby and had colon cancer. He suffered agonizing pain and she would talk to him and minister him. She was always showing care and concern for the lives of friends and family. "My mother, in a sense, provided my initial introduction to an anthropological way of thinking."

Tom has an ethnic upbringing in an extended family. His grandparents had come from Italy. They were laborers, fisherman, spinners, weavers, one was a priest. Learning was not a priority. His father lived in a family where his father would send the children out as early as 9 or 10 and get whatever job they could get. Whatever money they earned would be kicked back into the family coffers. Children were seen as resources and they would all help to

uphold the material prosperity of the family.

But the 1960s were about making your own way, separate from that older kin-based culture. He attended a public school, which means it was an egalitarian school close to where he lived. There were all sorts of folk who were the same, but also some who were different. "It was a time of great tumult and controversy around bussing and integration. I was going to school with African American kids. White kids and African American kids and Asian kids were rubbing elbows for the first time in the history of the country. It was very tumultuous but groundbreaking time in our country's history."

He reflects and adds, "I think that had an effect on me. You could reach out to other people. You could understand their life ways and become friends with them. You could develop empathy for them. Not that there weren't problems and difficulties. There were many. I remember Italian American teens chasing black kids who came into the neighborhood. I remember going into an African American neighborhood one time



*Carrying a pig home from the forest.*

and having stones thrown at me by some kids. It was a little wild-west. But we worked it out. It gave me a real sense of the difficulties of empathy, but it also taught me it's something you have to work at."

He observes that seeing things from another point of view is so crucial to the development of American culture. "I was a very shy and very withdrawn child. They didn't have a word for it then, but they thought I was on the spectrum a bit because I was so withdrawn and shy. They didn't have the concept of Autism. That turned out not to be the case. I was just quite shy and as my father would say 'over sensitive.' I had a rich inner life." His mother read to him quite a lot. They had a nice library for a working class family. He read the Iliad, the Odyssey at a very young age. Also, Maupassant and Edgar Allan Poe. He read the classics on his own. Books nurtured his imagination. He developed a sense of the poetry of social and cultural life.

His parents wanted him to make the leap from working class to a more white-collared profession. His brother became a lawyer. "They wanted me to do that sort of thing. Become an

engineer, become a lawyer. I did well in school, but in some subjects like mathematics I did quite badly. So that put a crimp in their plans for me."

He did not do well in high school and got into the New School for Liberal Arts at Brooklyn College which had open admissions at that time. The very first year there he got straight A's. A teacher saw that he had potential and with his help he got a transfer to Columbia College.

There he took an anthropology course. Claud Levi Strauss's book *Tristes Tropiques* (Unhappy Tropics) struck a chord with him. He said to himself that this is what he wanted to do, become an anthropologist. "There's a kind of voyaging outside of oneself and one's own culture and seeing the world open up before you. You have to grapple with entirely different ways of being and thinking and feeling. That sense of opening your spirit up to new ways of doing and feeling and looking at the world. It was very appealing to me at the time. It provided an avenue of expression for me."

He graduated from Columbia College

and took a year off, travelled through Europe to Italy and went to a little island called Ischia, where his people came from to find his roots. "It was interesting to see the simplicity of my background. And how people made a living doing simple things like fishing, vineyard tending, small farming, and animal husbandry."

Upon his return he attended New York University and after he obtained his master's degree, he took another year off. "I didn't have a materialistic drive for status and money. The watch word for young people then was "do your own thing." We felt that the world was our oyster. We had time to explore our interests and feelings. We didn't have to follow the hyper-professional track towards white collar-hood. It's quite a different environment for young people now."

For his Ph.D. he went to McMaster University, just north of Niagara Falls in Canada because the graduate



*Tom with his daughter, Claudia.*

“There’s a kind of voyaging outside of oneself and one’s own culture and seeing the world open up before you. You have to grapple with entirely different ways of being and thinking and feeling.”



Tom with the big man, Kienget.

program supported research in Melanesia, especially Papua New Guinea. He had developed a fascination with that country during his studies at NYU, where he made friends with a New Guinean. He won a Fulbright grant to go into the field.

“As an anthropologist you have to establish rapport with people before they’ll talk with you, before they’ll reveal the most intimate secrets of their

religious life with you, to even talk about their sexual life, which is something culturally important. To talk about their kinship and family life. They’re not just going to open up to anyone. You have to show you have sympathy and fellow feelings for their ways of life and their ways of feeling about their lives. You can’t just stand back and just prescriptively write about what you see. You have to write from the inside. You have to live it.”

On defining empathy, Tom says, “empathy implies you getting in touch with a suffering subject, feeling their pain. That’s part of feeling the tragedy and pain and difficulties of other people’s lives. That’s very important to an anthropologist. But people also have joy. They struggle to achieve and experience happiness and joy, and in sometimes quite difficult circumstances. There’s nothing pitiful about that. Empathy implies a more holistic,

“All over the world, people are afraid of difference or are angry about it . . . As an anthropologist, it’s a difficult time and the world needs empathy for other people.”

more complete felt understanding of another’s situation. I think I have the ability to acquire such understanding. My mother gave this to me.”

Anthropologists must have a 360 view of things and understand a people’s joys and pains. He has written a personal essay about his fieldwork in New Guinea, called “New Guinea Fishing Song.” He hadn’t set out to study song poetry. The New Guineans that he lived with had ceremonies and songs for the big trees that they would cut down. Every time they made a garden, they had garden rituals. When they went fishing, they had fishing songs. When they sent the dead on their way, they had ceremonies and songs to honor the deceased. There had songs for children to prompt their growth and their initiation rites were grand ceremonies. The people he lived with, called the Rauto, also had magical songs for women when they were pregnant and there were songs when a child performed an important cultural task like going hunting or fishing for the first time. There would be a ceremony when he or she lost his first tooth or baby hair.

“Each aspect of life had this imaginative element to it. People would compose poetry to honor these cultural moments. And so I put aside all my preconceived notions as to what religion was and what ceremony was.

I just paid attention to these imaginative and feeling moments and tried to really understand them. The songs were the way to their imagination.”

When Tom returned to New York City, he got involved in a project which explored the emotional dimensions of a commodity, a Chevrolet truck. He began exploring the gender dimensions of this outside shell and the way people were projecting all kinds of attitudes on it. The project led to a successful advertising campaign. Anthropology and ethnography became this buzz word in businesses because they needed insights into what people were really doing with their products. This way they could construct their products in ways that were more compelling or useful.

“I had spent most of my adult life up until that point trying to avoid the West and commoditization. Anything to do with business. I was into religious life and religious poetry, and language and culture, and expressive art. And here I was working for fortune 500 companies as an anthropologist. I was looking at airplanes and airline services, I was looking at cars and trucks. I was looking at health food products and pet food.”

Actually, he was doing what he had done in New Guinea: looking at everyday things that are close to the

ground, the everyday activities that gave meaning to life. Just as in New Guinea people in American cities and towns were weaving everyday things into their cultural performances. “I couldn’t dismiss the western culture as I did before as meaningless. Because it was actually quite meaningful to people. I was studying the meaningfulness within the material culture and the meanings people attributed to the materials of the culture. I had to have a certain level of empathy for the subject.” He adds, “I think it’s important to understand where we are in regard to our own materialism. I had to understand what this was all about. In one of my consulting projects I had to understand people’s relationships to their dogs and cats. I tried to decipher an interaction ritual between a person and his or her pet. And I use anthropological theories about ritual to understand consumer thoughts and feelings about their own actions, as well as their preferred products and brands.”

Tom ended our talk with the following observation: “All over the world, people are afraid of difference or are angry about it. It’s fear displacement. And they’re animated by vulgar prejudices against people who are different than them. As an anthropologist, it’s a difficult time and the world needs empathy for other people.” ■



# Learning and Teaching Empathy

by Dr. Carolyn Zahn-Waxler

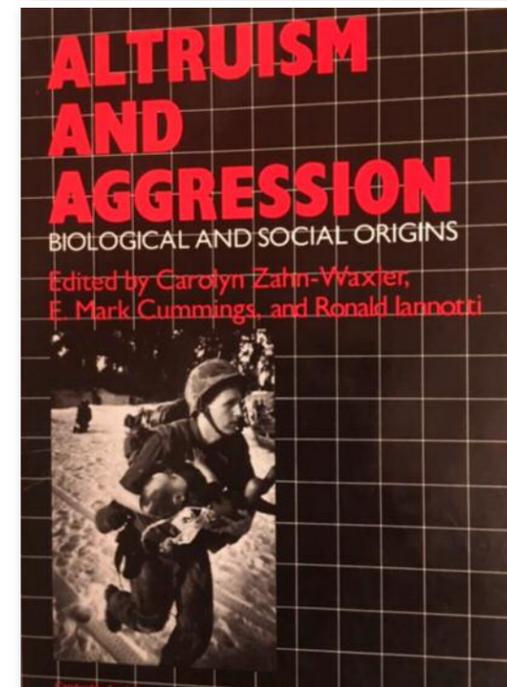
An honorary fellow at the Center for Healthy Minds, University of Wisconsin, Dr. Zahn-Waxler has conducted seminal studies on the origins and development of empathy and caring behaviors beginning in the first years of life. She has written about the intergenerational transmission of depression from mother to daughter from a personal perspective and has worked to de-stigmatize mental illness.



Carolyn at ten.

I grew up in a small town in Wisconsin. I had good friends and we were often playful and silly. In some ways it was a carefree life but less so as I got older. Both my mother and my father lost their mothers when they were very young, and their growing up years were difficult. Both of them developed emotional problems, that carried into their adult lives. Their anger, fear, and sadness were often part of family life. My sister and I felt their emotions and it could be scary. My mother and father would argue a lot, yelling at each other. My mother often was depressed and went to bed for days at a time. My sister and I took care of ourselves and each other. We also had happy times together as a family. So, it was complicated, as families often are. Mother would sometimes say I was an uncaring person, --- that I did not have empathy for her. I learned over time that I was caring, even though I could not help with her emotional problems. Children shouldn't have to do that.

Empathy is the ability to feel what another person feels. It can help us to understand their situation and to care for them. If someone is hurt or sad or frightened, empathy can give us deeper awareness of their troubles.



Ordinarily, this is very useful. If we can feel for their difficulties, we can help and comfort them. We can give them a hug or try to cheer them up when they are sad. We can help them when they are hurt or find an adult who can take care of them. We can share with others in need. We can stand up to bullies and comfort their victims when they are being picked on. There are many ways to show kindness and generosity, and to care for others. But when we get overinvolved in other's strong feelings, this can hurt us. We start to worry so much about the other person that we don't take care of our own needs. My mother was good at helping others outside the family but less so at home. She was insightful about others' problems and I learned a lot of psychology "at her knee". But I did not always personally benefit from it. Later in life we came to get along and to even enjoy each other.

My family experiences created a curiosity that led me to become a child psychologist. I studied how children develop healthy empathy, as well as

both too much empathy or too little. This became a lifetime passion. Sometimes early adversity has positive outcomes. For me it opened up a whole new world of experiences. I went to universities in the Midwest to get the formal training to study these interests. Of course, I didn't realize that's what I was doing then. As a young adult, I just was interested in leaving home and starting my own life.

After college I took a job at the National Institute of Mental Health in Bethesda, MD. I worked with Marian Radke-Yarrow, a psychologist interested in ways children could be taught to care for others in need. We studied how nursery school children were influenced both by (1) how an adult teacher treated them (either warm and kind or aloof and uncaring), and (2) how the teacher treated others in need (either with limited empathy or more expanded empathic concern for others). The most effective condition for learning empathy was when the teacher was both kind to children and taught them many different ways to care for others. This is called generalized altruism, i.e. when we are able to reach out into the world more broadly to care for others. Many decades have passed since then and others have found similar results. Also, we now know that it is easier for some children to show empathy than others. But practice helps.

I continued to study the development of empathy in babies and toddlers. We followed them for several years, observing them at home and in the laboratory. Earlier theories said children do not show caring and concern until they are school age. However, we found that some forms are present in the first years of life, even in some

three-month-old babies. Like all human emotions and behaviors, people vary in how much empathy they show. We learned some of this is determined by our genes. In one study we compared identical twins (who come from one egg and share all their genes) with fraternal twins (who come from separate eggs and share half their genes). Identical twins were more similar in empathy toward others than fraternal twins. But how we are raised also makes a difference in children's desire to care for others. Both nature and nurture matter.



## So how can empathy be developed?

If you are lucky, you have parents who are caring, both to you and to others around them. This is not always true for many children and youth as parents have their own struggles. If there is trouble at home, it can be helpful to seek out other caring relatives and friends (and even our pets!). That's what I did. There are many kind people in our lives if we look for them. They are examples of concern and compassion that we can use to guide us. The world is filled with conflict. Many people want to dominate, hurt,

and control others. This too starts in childhood. When you see bullying, you can look for ways to help. This is another form of empathy. Empathy can lead to the bravery and courage required to stand up for others less fortunate and to resist oppression and cruelty.

Since our early studies, other scientists have tried similar and new ways to increase empathy and caring actions in children, as well as adults. One of the promising new approaches involves meditation and other ways of self-reflection for developing a sense of calm. When we are emotionally stirred up it is hard to settle down, much less care about another's emotional needs. When we are emotionally comfortable with ourselves, we can more easily reach out to others. Being kind to yourself is the best place to start. One form of meditation is called loving-kindness meditation. It starts with sending thoughts of kindness and caring to yourself and later extending it to others in your life and beyond. Scientists at the Center for Healthy Minds in Madison, WI found that loving-kindness meditation increased caring actions in preschool children. This study, like our earlier one, also included a warm adult who taught a variety of ways to care for others. Similar practices also work with older children and adults.

There are many ways to be a caring person. So, take good care of yourself and others. In some ways it sounds simple, but it is not always easy to 'grow' empathy. Some things in life can't be changed, but other things can. It's important to try. It depends on all of us to try to create a more just and peaceful world. Empathy is the "glue" that can bind us together in this effort. ■



# Building Bridges Through Music

By Andrea Green



Andrea with her Dad





Andrea with film maker Harry Nevison

For the past 35 years as a music therapist, Andrea Green has been creating and producing musical theater as a vehicle to bring together diverse groups. She lives in Philadelphia and works across the United States and in several other countries.

**T**here is no time more relevant for children to feel safe, to develop empathy and understanding of differences, and to work together with mutual respect.

Music has always been my passion and an outlet to express what's in my heart. When I was 12 years old, my Dad, a physician, would take me with him on house calls. I also accompanied him to the nursing home where he was the medical director. I would bring my guitar and play and sing for his patients. I would go from room to room making connections with people who desperately needed to be noticed and heard. I listened to their stories, as they coped with emotional and physical challenges. I felt their pain and responded by playing music and creating songs that reflected their experiences.

I remember one woman who was battling crippling arthritis. She called out, "I wanna get my feet a goin, fly on out of here. Standing on my own again." Her determination and courage inspired me to set her words to music and I added the lyrics, "on this my mind is clear." We then collaborated on creating the song "Standing on My Own Again". At an early age, I came to understand the value of music to bring out feelings, to change moods and to heal.

My mother was also a significant musical influence on me. She was a poet and a music teacher. She, like my Dad, nurtured my sensitivity to other peoples' feelings, as she encouraged me to develop my musical talents and skills. My mother reminded me to practice and study. Both of my parents

There is no time more relevant for children to feel safe, to develop empathy and understanding of differences, and to work together with mutual respect.

recognized my skill for helping people through my music. Their unique personalities and perspectives remain important to me.

I studied music therapy at the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Florida, and did my graduate work in the Creative Arts in Therapy Program at Drexel University in Philadelphia. In 1982, I was working as a music therapist at the HMS School for Children with Cerebral Palsy in Philadelphia. While in a meeting, a debate was going on as to whether our students with severe physical disabilities could participate as equal partners with non-disabled youngsters from the nearby Germantown Friends School. As I sat there listening to the discussion, the words "On the Other Side of the Fence" jumped into my mind. I imagined a farm divided by a fence, where the farm animals on the two sides were curious about each other but there was a huge barrier between them. I raised my hand and stated, "I'm going to write a musical that will bring the children together as equal partners!"

Several HMS teachers were worried that our students would be patronized, excluded, or not 'seen' as viable partners. I brainstormed for two weeks, and the musical "On the Other Side of the Fence" was born and became the theatrical framework for music to build bridges. As youngsters act out the story and sing the songs (with themes of empathy and acceptance), they begin to build friendship and take down their own fences of fear about differences. In 2014, "On the Other Side of the Fence" became a documentary that was aired nationally on Public Television. The film received a Mid-Atlantic Emmy, a Public Service Bronze award from the United Nations and a Gold Medal from the New York International Film Festival. It became clear to me from the response from viewers that my musicals have universal appeal to explore the themes of acceptance of others as well as ourselves.

In recent years, I produced and directed my musical 'The Same Sky' at the Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts in Fairfield,

Iowa and at the St. John School of the Arts in the US Virgin Islands. I used the story about diverse fabric characters that come to life in a fabric shop to help kids like you embrace differences and build bridges to each other.

It is my mission to make the world a more inclusive, understanding, respectful, and peaceful place.

"Everybody is One of a Kind. Everybody is One of a Kind. Everybody has something to say, in this great big world we've got."

Everybody is one of a kind, and we all have a part to play. In this great big world. This great big melting pot."

For more information, visit [www.andreagreenmusic.com](http://www.andreagreenmusic.com)



# Be Synchronized and Seek Serendipity

Dr. Ryszard Praszkiar talks with **ChildArt**

A researcher emeritus at University of Warsaw's Institute for Social Studies, Dr. Ryszard Praszkiar studies the dynamics of social change and what makes change durable and irreversible. For more than 20 years he has worked to empower social innovators around the world and has written books on entrepreneurship and social change.

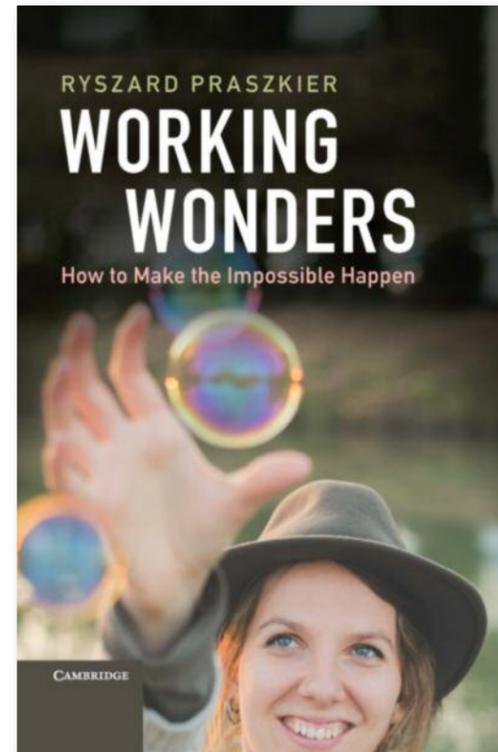


*Horse-riding adventurer since early childhood*

**D**r. Praszkiar grew up right after the World War II in Warsaw when the city lay in ruins. He used his imagination and played games to make this ugly world turn into something unseen. His mother took him tracking in the mountains to show him plants and trees. His father was positive and resourceful: "Don't worry, you have a future."

Synchronizing is something he learned as a boy scout. Being a lone ranger doesn't work. You have to tune in with the group, dig holes together, play in the forest together. He thinks dancing is a great example of synchronicity. When you are dancing, you have to tune in, to synchronize on emotional, cognitive, and kinesthetic levels. Dancing activates your entire body: mind, emotions, movement. "The more you are synchronized with others, the better you perform."

In the 1980's he joined the underground peaceful freedom movement called Solidarity. On the surface he was the director for a community mental health clinic for children and



youth. Under the surface, he was illegally active in this freedom movement, organizing discussions and actions, candles in the windows, etc. "Even in the worst conditions ever, if you are empathetic, and synchronized with others, you can survive with your own values as a group, as a society. Instead of confronting or attacking the oppressors, just pursue your own vision, regardless, and build a strong civil society bottom-up."

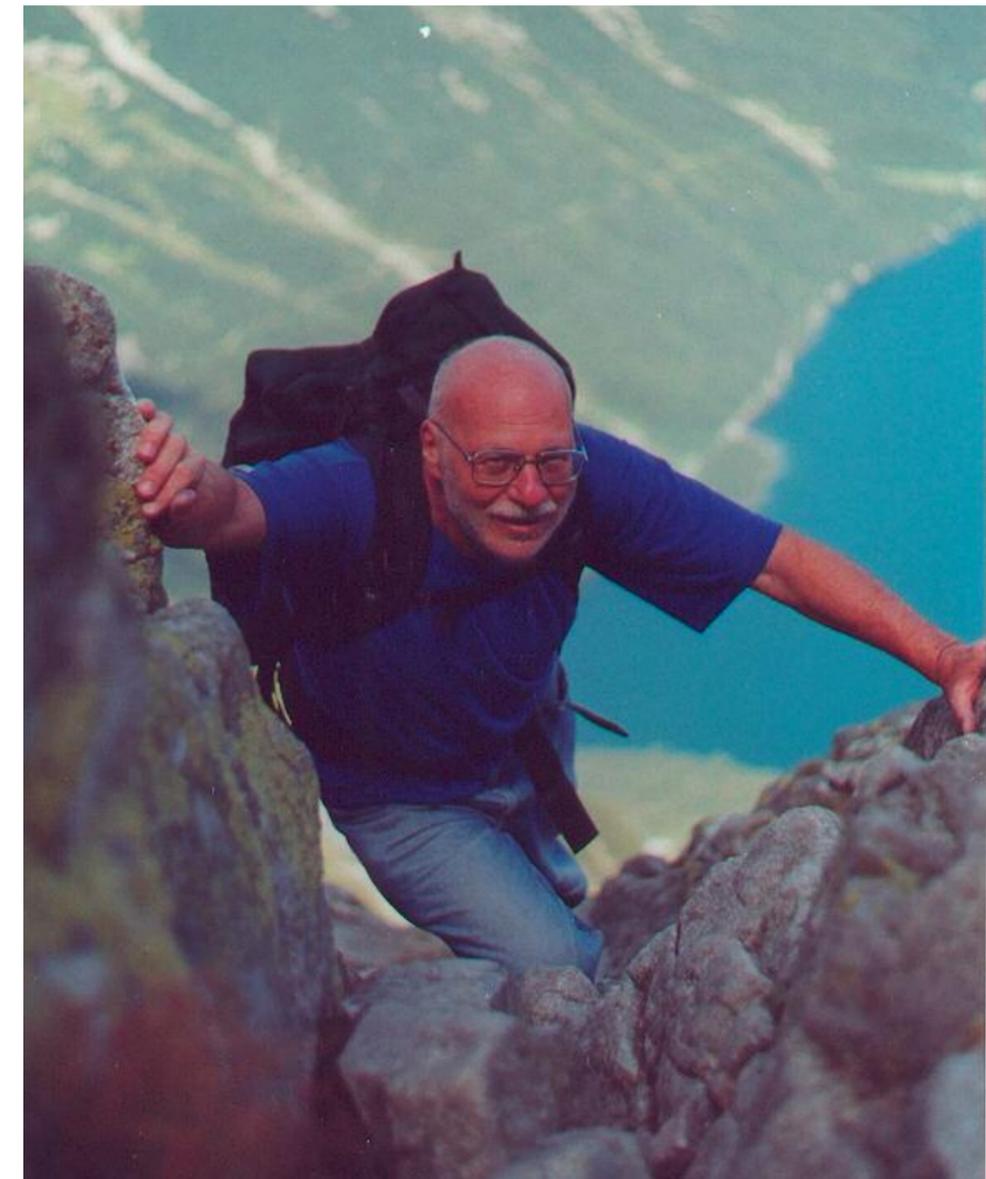
In 1989, the oppressors became helpless and gave up and Solidarity took over. The many underground initia-

“Serendipity is having unexpected ideas come into your brain. Some of the most important human discoveries were serendipitous, from penicillin to mirror neurons. It's a royal gateway to boosting creativity.”

tives became legal and became associations and foundations. He was now part of the legalized civil society. He started developing social entrepreneurship in Poland and conducting research on the commonalities in individuals who spark a change and how this change becomes enduring and irreversible. "Now I travel all over the world. I meet the best of the best people. I just returned from Nigeria and next I go to Colombia."

Serendipity, he thinks, is a most important issue now for the world. "How to modify the environment to increase serendipity?" Serendipity is having unexpected ideas come into your brain. Some of the most important human discoveries were serendipitous, from penicillin to mirror neurons. "It's a royal gateway to boosting creativity."

His message for you: "Try to do things with joy. That's the first thing. Because when you do everything seriously and struggling, you lose your ability to be creative. Joy boosts creativity. When you do things with joy, and when you are joyful, when you work with joy, it's better for your life. Also, never confront things directly if you find things that are difficult. Don't get overwhelmed with the problem. Step away. Build distance through singing, dancing, some simulated action. Distance also boosts creativity." ■



*Trekking in the Polish Tatra Mountains*

# Compassion's Benefits

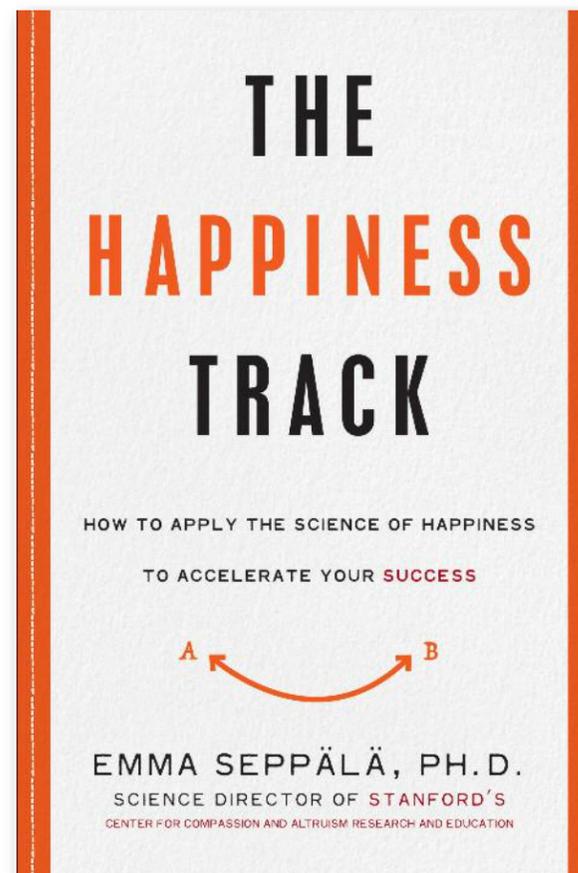
by Dr. Emma Seppälä



Compassion may have ensured our survival 'because of its tremendous benefits for both physical and mental health and overall well-being. Research shows that connecting with others in a meaningful way helps us enjoy better mental and physical health and speeds up recovery from disease. It can also lengthen our life spans.

The reason a compassionate lifestyle leads to greater psychological well-being can be explained by the fact that the act of giving appears to be as pleasurable, if not more so, as the act of receiving. A brain-imaging study headed by neuroscientist Jordan Grafman from the National Institutes of Health showed that the "pleasure centers" in the brain, i.e., the parts of the brain that are active when we experience pleasure (like dessert, money, and sex), are equally active when we observe someone giving money to charity as when we receive money ourselves! Giving to others even increases well-being above and beyond what we experience when we spend money on ourselves.

As a graduate student at Stanford University, Emma was amazed by the beauty of the campus and dismayed at how miserable and anxious many students were. So she started a science of happiness class. Today, she is science director of the Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford. Originally from Paris, France, she speaks five languages: French, English, German, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese



In a revealing experiment by Elizabeth Dunn, at the University of British Columbia, participants received a sum of money and half of the participants were instructed to spend the money on themselves; the other half was told to spend the money on others. At the end of the study, participants who had spent money on others felt significantly happier than those who had spent money on themselves.

“Social connectedness therefore generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional, and physical well-being.”

## Why Compassion is Good?

Why does compassion lead to health benefits in particular? A clue to this question rests in a fascinating new study by Steve Cole at the University of California, Los Angeles, and APS Fellow Barbara Fredrickson at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The results were reported at Stanford Medical School's Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education's (CCARE) inaugural Science of Compassion conference in 2012. Their study evaluated the levels of cellular inflammation in people who describe themselves as "very happy." Inflammation is at the root of cancer and other diseases and is generally high in people who live under a lot of stress. We might expect that inflammation would be lower for people with higher levels of happiness. Cole and Fredrickson found that this was only the case for certain "very happy" people. They found that people who were happy because they lived the "good life" (sometimes also known as "hedonic happiness") had high inflammation levels but that, on the other hand, people who were happy because they lived a life of purpose or meaning (sometimes also known as "eudaimonic happiness") had low inflammation levels. A life of meaning and purpose is one focused less on satisfying oneself and more on others. It is a life rich in compassion, altruism, and greater meaning.

## How to live longer?

Another way in which a compassionate lifestyle may improve longevity is that it may serve as a buffer against

stress. A new study conducted on a large population (more than 800 people) and spearheaded by the University at Buffalo's Michael Poulin found that stress did not predict mortality in those who helped others, but that it did in those who did not. One of the reasons that compassion may protect against stress is the very fact that it is so pleasurable. Motivation, however, seems to play an important role in predicting whether a compassionate lifestyle exerts a beneficial impact on health. Sara Konrath, at the University of Michigan, discovered that people who engaged in volunteerism lived longer than their non-volunteering peers — but only if their reasons for volunteering were altruistic rather than self-serving.

Another reason compassion may boost our well-being is that it can help broaden our perspective beyond ourselves. Research shows that depression and anxiety are linked to a state of self-focus, a preoccupation with "me, myself, and I." When you do something for someone else, however, that state of self-focus shifts to a state of other-focus. If you recall a time you were feeling blue and suddenly a close friend or relative calls you for urgent help with a problem, you may remember that as your attention shifts to helping them, your mood lifts. Rather than feeling blue, you may have felt energized to help; before you knew it, you may even have felt better and gained some "perspective on your own situation as well.

## Social Connection

Finally, one additional way in which compassion may boost our well-being is by increasing a sense of connection to others. One telling study showed that lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking, and high blood pressure. On the flip side, strong social connection leads to a 50 percent increased chance of longevity. Social connection strengthens our immune system (research by Cole shows that genes impacted by social connection also code for immune function and inflammation), helps us recover from disease faster, and may even lengthen our life. People who feel more connected to others have lower rates of anxiety and depression. Moreover, studies show that they also have higher self-esteem, are more empathic to others, more trusting and cooperation as a consequence, others are more open to trusting and cooperating with them. Social connectedness therefore generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional, and physical well-being.

Unfortunately, the opposite is also true for those who lack social connectedness. Low social connection has been generally associated with declines in physical and psychological health, as well as a higher propensity for antisocial behavior that leads to further isolation. Adopting a compassionate lifestyle or cultivating compassion may help boost social connection and improve physical and psychological health. ■

# Gaming with Empathy

Dr. Karen Schrier talks with **ChildArt**.

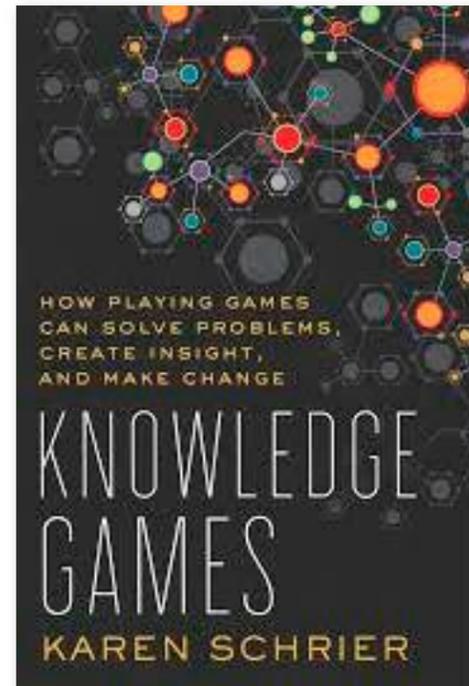


*Karen at thirteen with her brother*

Associate Professor of Media Arts and Director of the Games and Emerging Media program at Marist College, she is also Director of the Play Innovation Lab at Marist, where her team studies play to teach, help, heal, and understand humanity. This year she is a Belfer Fellow at ADL's Center for Technology & Society.

Dr. Schrier grew up with her parents and brother in a small town called Setauket on Long Island in New York state. She was always interested in combining writing and art with science and technology. In the elementary school honors program, she was particularly inspired by a field trip where they needed to work in teams to build an imaginary civilization—which they called “Metallica” after band, Metallica. They decided everything from where the people lived to what they ate and how they ate, and they even designed their houses. They then buried artifacts of their civilization for other teams to unearth and study it as if they were anthropologists. Later, in high school, she built bridges and other contraptions, and tried to protect an egg from breaking when it was dropped. When 16, she started working in a biochemistry lab at Stony Brook University—conducting real-world scientific experiments, which was super exciting!

A writer at heart, she enjoyed Amherst College because instead of



just multiple choice tests, students got to write essays explaining what and why—even in science classes. Though she loved science, her biology professors discouraged her from studying biology because she wasn't interested in being a doctor—she wanted to be a researcher. Had she attended another college, she might have continued with biology. But she was glad that she could combine her interests in art, writing, science, and technology. This led her to a master's, then a doctorate, and now as director of a games program.

Just like a film, a book, or a momentous event in your life, games are another meaningful experience where you could experience empathy.

Everyone played video games when she was a kid. “We had a Nintendo, then a Super Nintendo, and I actually had an Atari 2600 growing up—it was just how we spent our time. It was another way of immersing ourselves in stories and participating in play. It was great!” When she was at MIT, she became interested in the different ways one could teach and support student engagement and learning through games. “Now I get to combine all my interests, dreams, and passions to create and research games.”

Her book *Knowledge Games* explores how one can use games to help all different people of all different ages work together to solve problems. “Maybe we could use games to show us how to solve bullying problems, and answer other open questions that require different perspectives.”

What about empathy? “Like a film, a book, or a momentous event in your life, games are another meaningful experience where you could experience empathy. It's possible through

powerful storytelling alone, but games also have another layer that you're performing in that story. You're interacting with some of those characters, affecting how other characters respond, and whether they meet their goals. In a way, you're responsible for some characters, and that responsibility might help you to engage more and care about them—to empathize with them.”

In some games you are making choices and seeing the consequences of those choices. Through seeing that those choices matter, and that what you do matters, you may begin caring about the outcomes of your actions and practicing skills related to empathy. Games can grow empathy by helping you express your thoughts, emotions, or identity. They might even help you experiment with different responses or identities. Not every game is going to affect you in these ways, but some may be meaningful experiences that grow empathy.

She thinks of games as another form of human expression, another place



people can interact and be part of a community. Just like anything, there are good ways you can use it to support your growth, and there's a dark side as well. Sometimes people are practicing empathy, and sometimes they're practicing cruelty. All those shades are part of humanity, so you have to think about encouraging positive behavior without ignoring the darker side of humanity as well.

As a recommendation, she says to think about a game that is meaningful to you—and personal to you—and share that game with others. “Also, make games for other people, think about what may be exciting or meaningful for them.” Sometimes simply making things for other people can grow your empathy. ■



# Listen to Your Heart

Judith Orloff, MD talks to **ChildArt**

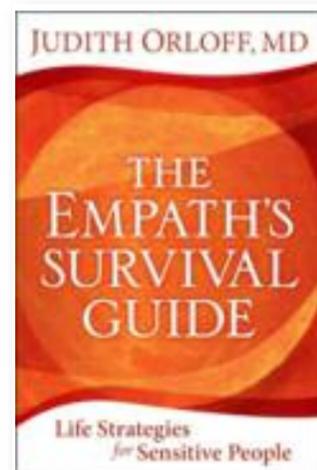


Judith at six

A New York Times best-selling author, empath, and psychiatrist in Los Angeles, California, Judith is on the clinical psychiatric staff at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA), and specializes in treating empaths and sensitive people through her private practice. Her latest book, *The Empath's Survival Guide*, helps sensitive people embrace empathy and avoid burning out because of it.

**B**orn in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and raised in Beverly Hills, California, both of Judith's parents were doctors. She was an "emotional sponge" growing up, taking on other people's emotions without knowing what to do because her parents did not understand the intensity of empathy she possessed. She tried to run away from her empathic abilities as a teenager, and engaged in substance abuse in an effort to numb herself from others' emotions. It was only after a horrible car accident that she sought help from a psychiatrist. She came to understand that she had to incorporate empathy and intuition into her life to be happy and whole. She describes the psychiatrist as "an angel in my life."

Empathy to Judith is "the ability for our hearts to reach out to other people and feel what they're feeling, in joy and in pain." Being an empath is going even deeper and taking on the emotions of others. Although it's a precious trait in both children and adults, if left unchecked it can lead to



exhaustion, anxiety, and depression. Existing alongside empathy is intuition, which she describes as first impressions and gut feelings, as well as sudden revelations. "Intuition starts biologically with the nerves literally in our guts, similar to the nerves in our brains, and can provide powerful information."

She adds that "while the brain is responsible for certain things like reasoning, logic, and analysis, the heart is what allows you to fall in love and get over heartache, so you want to use the best of both." She emphasizes being loving to ourselves and loving to other people, being kind, and having mercy. But she also wants to remind us that is safe and healthy to set clear boundaries and say no sometimes.

Intuition starts biologically with the nerves literally in our guts, similar to the nerves in our brains, and can provide powerful information.



She offers three beginning steps from her book to embrace empathy:

1. Begin to listen to your heart and see things from the other point of view, even if you don't agree with them.
2. Allow yourself to feel where someone else is coming from so you can walk in their shoes.

3. Be a good listener, don't cut people off—they are doing the best they can, and you want to listen so you can have a conversation with them.

Similar to other experts, she believes that empathy is innate, that we're designed to be empathetic. She's fascinated by mirror neurons, and suspects they are hyperactive in empathic people—always feeling for everyone and everything around them. ■

## What is Your Empathy Quotient?

Just as intelligence can be measured with an IQ, empathy can also be assessed with an Empathy Quotient (EQ). Empathy is when you care about others in both sadness and joy. It is a skill that can be developed through mindful awareness. The world needs more empathic leaders, parents and people in every profession. Empathy allows you to understand where another person is coming from even if you don't agree with them. It bridges differences and opens communication with others.

Take the following quiz to determine your EQ:

## What is Your Empathy Quotient (EQ)?

1. Are you sensitive to others, care about them, and want to help?
2. Do you listen with your heart not just your head?
3. Can you hold space for others to express their emotions?
4. Can you listen without needing to fix someone's problem immediately?
5. Are you capable of the give and take of intimate relationships?
6. Are you intuitive and sensitive to other's needs?
7. Do you care about the greater good, and the wellbeing of Earth?

- If you answered "yes" to six to seven questions you have an extremely high EQ
- Responding "yes" to four to five questions you have a high EQ
- Responding "yes" to two to three questions you have a moderate EQ
- Responding "yes" to zero to one questions you have a lower EQ

"No matter what your EQ is at this point, it's always possible to develop more empathy," says Judith Orloff, MD. This quiz is adapted from her book, *The Empath's Survival Guide: Life Strategies for Sensitive People*.

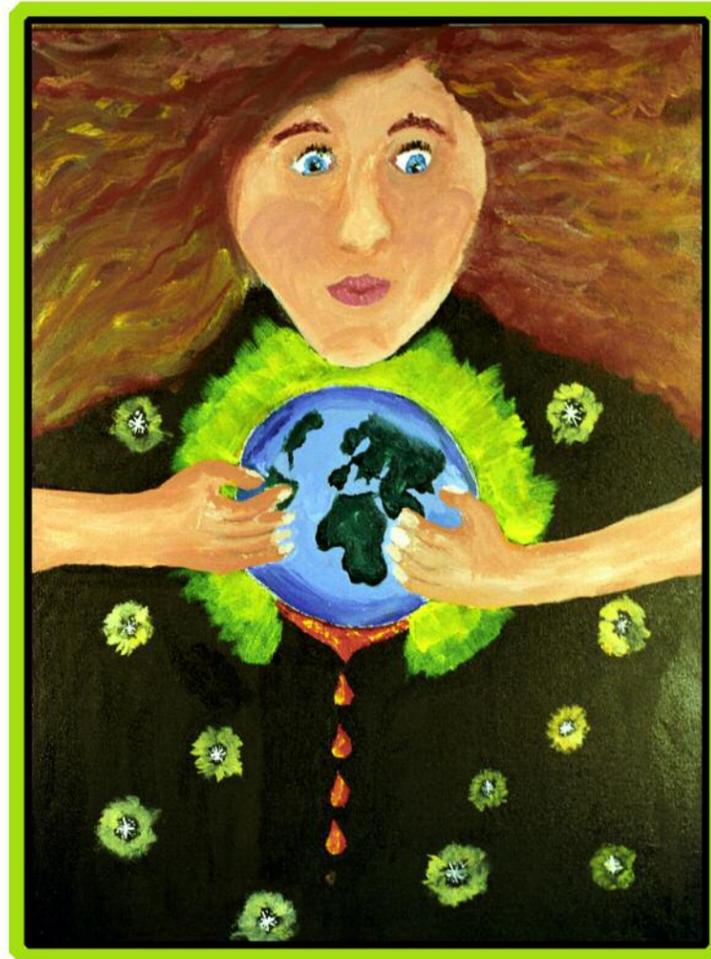
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“Empathy is a mammalian characteristic found in all sorts of relationships beyond the mother-child one, such as friendships in both sexes.”

Empathy is a biased mechanism which normally helps animals take care of those close to them, however, it has restrictions which pose a problem in the human world. This means empathy is more developed for individuals who are similar and familiar. This also means we have trouble with empathy for individuals who are different or unfamiliar. Human societies are very big compared to primate groups—thousands even millions compared to about a hundred. Our societies are far more complex and while there is a ton of empathy in them, there is also a greater lack of empathy for certain things and certain people.

This lack of empathy can lead to hatred between groups, such as racism. The more exposure we have to people different from us, the sooner we can overcome such hatred. By mixing racial relationships as we do in sports, we address fears and ignorance to move beyond our hate. That's why sports are so important, because sports mix races freely. This has a tremendous positive effect because from exposure we build understanding and from understanding we build empathy.

De Waal's advice to young people is that you should be open to those different from you and get to know them. Familiarity is the best weapon you can have against hatred. You can learn more about the emotions in the



Ella Gordon-Latty, age 12, New Zealand

lives of animals, which is often underestimated, in de Waal's new book called "Mama's Last Hug". It's about Mama and her importance in the social group of chimpanzees but also about the rich emotional lives of animals, especially primates. "I've studied facial expressions all my life and facial expression of primates are very similar to ours. You cannot really study facial expressions without

thinking about the emotions behind them. I've always been familiar with emotions and in my book I explain how we study emotions and how developed they really are."

Frans de Waal believes the world is full of empathy. From his own small "zoo" to chimpanzees, he believes that empathy is a survival value in a cooperative society. ■

Continued from page 6

“It's entirely up to you. The patterns of thought you develop become who you are as a person.”



Emile with his wife and kids

mer white supremacists fighting against the same groups they used to be a part of, and I have been impressed, to say the least."

Emile's message for you is that you have an extraordinary amount of

control over the type of person you become. "It's entirely up to you. The patterns of thought you develop become who you are as a person." He recites a Buddhist quote that says *'the thought becomes the word, the word becomes the deed, the deed*

*becomes habit, and the habit hardens into character.'*

"That's how neuroscience works! You can shape your mind however you want to be, you can become the person you want." ■

“We live in a culture that discourages empathy. A culture that too often tells us our principal goal in life is to be rich, thin, young, famous, safe, and entertained. A culture where those in power too often encourage these selfish impulses.”

—Northwestern University 2006 commencement address by then-Senator Barack Obama



“Someone always gets hurt when masses of individuals do what is only in their own self-interest. Freedom is liberty coupled with responsibility to something bigger or higher than the self. It is a selfless freedom. It is sacrificial freedom. It is the pursuit of our dreams with an eye towards the common good.”

— Heritage Foundation speech in 2005 by then-Senator Rick Santorum



Amal al Hajj, age 11, Yemen

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