

# Mary Gordon

## Founder/President, Roots of Empathy

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Mary Gordon is recognized internationally as an award-winning social entrepreneur, educator, author, child advocate and parenting expert who has created programs informed by the power of empathy. In 1996 she created the Roots of Empathy program in Ontario. Her not for profit organization of the same name, offers programs in every province of Canada, New Zealand, the USA, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland, Germany and Switzerland. In 2005, Ms. Gordon created the [Seeds of Empathy](#) program for 3 to 5 year olds in child care. She is a Member of the Order of Canada, the Order of Newfoundland and is Canada's first [Ashoka](#) Fellow.

Ms. Gordon is also the founder of Canada's first and largest school-based Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, which she initiated in 1981. They have become public policy in Ontario and have been used as a best practice model internationally. Ms. Gordon speaks and consults to governments, educational organizations, and public institutions. The Nelson Mandela Children's Foundation brought Ms. Gordon to South Africa to share her parenting expertise. Ms. Gordon has also consulted with and presented to the World Health Organization, the Skoll World Forum, and the United Nations, among others.

Ms. Gordon is the recipient of several prestigious awards recognizing her contribution to innovation in education and international social entrepreneurship, including the Manning Innovation Award, an award for being the top social enterprise in Canada. In 2004, she was awarded the Ontario Teachers Federation Lifetime Fellowship Award and in 2009, the Public Education Advocacy Award from the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

As a leading expert on empathy, Ms. Gordon has had three dialogues with His Holiness the Dalai Lama: First in 2006, in Canada, and then in 2008, in the USA, as part of the Seeds of Compassion event, and in 2011 in India. The Dalai Lama has expressed that programs like Roots of Empathy will build world peace.

In 2008, Roots of Empathy was one of three winners in an international competition from Changemakers for programs that help youth at risk. Also in 2008, National Chief Phil Fontaine and the Assembly of First Nations passed a resolution to support Roots of Empathy and Seeds of Empathy in First Nations schools across Canada.

In 2002, Ms. Gordon was named the first female Canadian Ashoka Fellow, recognizing her as a member of an international circle of social entrepreneurs who have the creativity that enables them to envision new and better ways to address persistent social problems and the entrepreneurial skill and determination required to bring their ideas to fruition. In 2011, Ms. Gordon was named an Ashoka Globalizer, joining a select group of Ashoka Fellows supported in extending their message and impact to the global level. She is a member of the Global Executive Board of Directors. Her book, *Roots of Empathy: Changing the World Child by Child*, is a Canadian bestseller.

