Speakers Agenda

Wednesday April 26, 2017
Design Exchange,
234 Bay Street, Toronto
7:45 AM – 4:15 PM

7:45 – 8:30 AM  Registration & Breakfast

8:30 AM  Welcome & Opening Remarks

Mary Gordon
Founder/President,
Roots of Empathy

9:00 – 10:30 AM  Keynote Address
An Interpersonal Neurobiology Approach to Resilience and the Development of Empathy

Dan Siegel, MD
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine
Founding co-director of the Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA

ABSTRACT. A child’s connections with a caregiver create the growth of integrative fibers in the brain that are the neural source of resilience. Trauma is a direct assault to the development of integration in the brain and challenges the capacity for flexible self-regulation. By focusing on the inner state of another, with empathic attunement, a child experiences "feeling felt" and being understood. With these interpersonal experiences, a sense of coherence of self and a feeling of inner security develops that are at the heart of a resilient mind. This talk will review these important findings and how programs like the Roots of Empathy support the development of resilience in children.

10:30 – 10:45 AM  Morning Break – Coffee, tea, and snacks provided
**10:45 – 12:30 PM**  
**Intersection of Business, Government, Philanthropy and Journalism in tackling Social Problems**

Panel Discussion moderated by Mary Ito, former host of CBC Radio’s Fresh Air

**David Bornstein**  
*Co-founder of the Solutions Journalism Network*  
*Co-author, “Fixes” column in The New York Times*

**Paul MacMillan**  
*Strategy and Operations Consulting Leader for Deloitte Canada*

**Richard Steele**  
*Principal at SYPartners*

**Sharon Avery**  
*President and CEO of Toronto Foundation*

**12:30 – 1:15 PM**  
**Lunch provided**

**1:15 – 2:30 PM**  
**The Social Ecology of Resilience: Families, Schools, and Communities**

**Michael Ungar, PhD**  
*Canada Research Chair in Child, Family and Community Resilience*  
*Director, Resilience Research Centre*

**ABSTRACT.** Resilience is not just a child’s capacity to overcome adversity. It is also the result of how well children, their families and communities work together to help vulnerable individuals navigate their way to the resources they need for wellbeing, and whether those resources are made available in ways that young people say are meaningful to them. Dr. Ungar will use examples from his clinical practice and research collaborations on six continents to explore the nature of children’s resilience. His work suggests the need for an ecological, culturally sensitive interpretation of what resilience means to young people who are experiencing great adversity. His work challenges us to think about resilience as something nurtured rather than something innate. In this story-filled presentation, Dr. Ungar will provide nine practical strategies parents, caregivers and educators need to help young people of all ages heal, no matter a child’s emotional, psychological or behavioural problems. Based on material from his new book, *I Still Love You*, his clinical practice and his research, Dr. Ungar will share what families and schools have taught him about why a supportive environment is essential to improving young people’s resilience.

**2:30 – 2:45 PM**  
**Afternoon Break – Coffee, tea and snacks provided**
Training Rats to Save Human Lives, and Training Humans to Save Humanity

Bart Weetjens
Founder of APOPO

ABSTRACT. In this talk, Bart shares how he developed detection rats technology together with a team of researchers at Antwerp University in Belgium and Sokoine University in Tanzania, and how this research effort developed into a global humanitarian operation. He provides an overview of the lifesaving actions of the so-called HeroRATs, how they are trained and what impact they had so far in supporting vulnerable communities affected by humanitarian detection challenges, to tackle these problems more independently. Bart also shares why and how he then got involved in the Wellbeing Project, and shares some significant findings of the Wellbeing Project's research and what the social change sector can learn from this.

Closing Remarks
8:15 - 9:00 AM  Registration open & Breakfast provided

9:00 AM  Opening Remarks

9:15 - 10:25 AM  Brain and Gender in Infant Social Development

Lise Eliot, PhD  
Professor of Neuroscience  
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine & Science  
Chicago medical School

**ABSTRACT.** People are not objects. Babies know this instinctively, through dedicated face-processing circuitry that drives their brains to seek out and learn from human interaction at every turn. This lecture will review infants’ remarkable attunement to social stimuli, from faces and voices to emotional expressions and intentions. This attunement sets the stage for early interaction to critically shape all other types of learning, especially for language and interpersonal skills. In this talk, Eliot will also challenge the notion that boys are innately less socially-attuned than girls. Rather, it appears that gender expectations and subtle differences in the social environment drive boys and girls toward diverging patterns of interpersonal and communicative behavior. Based on everything we understand about the heightened plasticity of young brains, there is ample room to reduce gender disparities in social-emotional growth through early social immersion.

10:25 - 10:40 AM  Morning Break – Coffee, tea, and snacks provided

10:40 – 11:50 AM  Improving Outcomes: Reflections from Northern Ireland

Mary Black,  
CBE, HMFPH, MA, BSc (hons), Dip H.Ed, Cert H. Econ  
Assistant Director of Health and Social Wellbeing  
Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland
Maurice Meehan, MSW  
Head of Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement  
Public Health Agency, Northern Ireland

ABSTRACT. The experience of Northern Ireland in adopting a Public Health approach to improving early childhood development will be outlined, including the transferable learning and research undertaken by Queens University Belfast, as well as the benefits to the social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. The presentation will include reference to the emerging Outcomes Based Accountability approach that has been agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive and adopted by Government Departments as part of the new Program for Government. This approach is designed to achieve co-operation across all parts of the system in order to achieve specific improvements through the use of agreed indicators and the representation of progress made through an Outcomes Framework. Progress made to introduce effective programs, the development and implementation of a Northern Ireland Infant Mental Health Plan, modeling of new family support, parenting support programs and Roots of Empathy will be considered and their implications for the future.

11:50 – 12:50 PM  Lunch provided

12:50 – 1:40 PM  Roots of Empathy Reflections: Perspectives from the Classroom

1:40 – 2:50 PM  The Elevation Education: The Art and Science of Helping Children Become Smarter, Nicer, and Happier

Joshua Aronson, PhD  
Associate Professor, Department of Applied Psychology  
Director, Metro Center for Achievement Research and Evaluation  
NYU Steinhardt, New York University

ABSTRACT. Experts disagree on the best approach to educating poor children, as can be seen in the variety of charter school approaches all aiming to nurture character and academic excellence. My research for 25 years examines intelligence, and how it can be nurtured or impaired by social conditions, including poverty and prejudice. I discuss this work and use it to understand how schools can better educate poor children—not only making them smarter, but nicer and happier too. The secret is in creating a culture that focuses on character and relationships first. When schools manifest love for children, pay attention to their individual social and academic needs, and engage them in what I call a four-dimensional curriculum, astonishing things can happen. Four-dimensional curriculum develops their intellect, self-regulation ability, social skills, STEM Skills, and civic engagement. I present a variety of data to make the case that done right, schools can be elevating places, where people—students, parents, teachers, and observers—want to be and where brains and communities grow in the process.

2:50 – 3:00 PM  Closing Remarks