

Facilitating the Formation of Compassion in a Culture of Abundance



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Abundance in America

- **World's richest 20% consume 77% of the world's goods in 2005**
 - World Bank Developmental Indicators, 2008
- **Pet foods in Europe and the United States \$17 billion**
 - United National Development Report 1998, Chapter 1, p.37
- **3.6 billion toys costing \$29.4 billion 2000**
 - Toys of Misery, *National Labor Committee*, December 2001



Challenges in North American Culture

- Competitive, consumptive value systems
- Undesirable role models
- Changing definitions of ‘acceptable’ behavior
- Instantaneous gratification
- Overscheduling
- Reward-based society
- Geographical dispersion of extended family



Principles:

Socially responsible societies respond to the world's children with acts of compassion.

Children can recognize, respond and reflect upon this principle as children; and

It is our responsibility as significant adults in their lives to allow them to do so now.



But a critical question:



Is it enough to have an asymmetrical compassion?



Forming ***compassion*** is about
experience through ***relationships***



My Study

- 36 children, ages 6 – 11; 17 girls; 16 boys
 - Focus Groups
 - Individual Interviews
- 14 parents, 11 mothers, 3 fathers
 - Focus Group
 - Interviews
- 13 teachers
 - Focus Group
- 3 communities in North America
 - 2 rural
 - 1 urban



Theoretical Foundations

- Anthropology
 - Vygotsky
 - Turiel
- Pedagogy
 - Patricia Wolfe
 - Antonio Damasio and Mary Helen Immordino-Yang
- Psychology
 - Nancy Eisenberg
 - Ross Thompson
 - Melanie Killen
- Spirituality and Theology
 - David Hay, Rebecca Nye
 - Pamela E. King
 - Henri Nouwen
 - John Wesley



Brain research suggests...

- We gather information through our senses and possibly through thoughts
 - » Jeffrey Schwartz, 2008



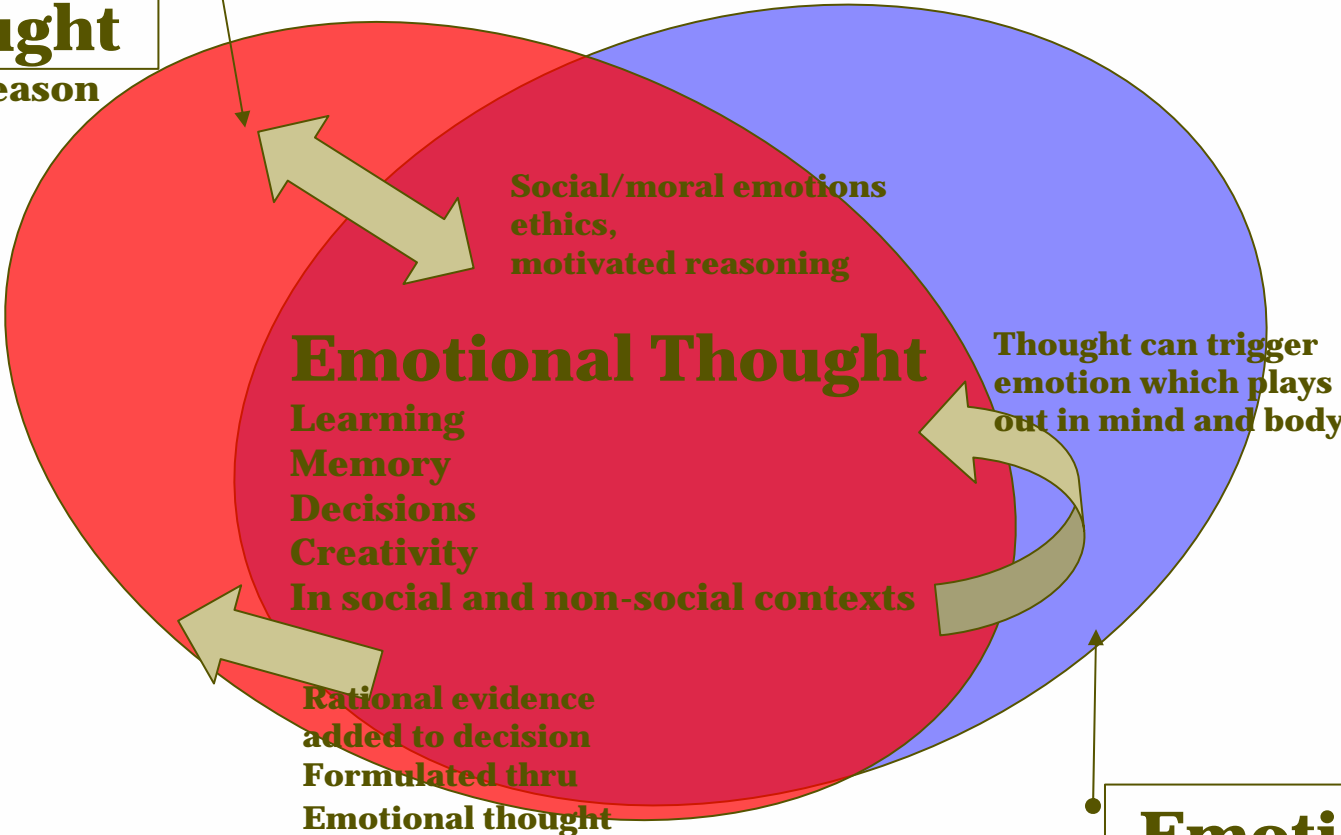
Brain research suggests...

- **Thought is emotional.**
 - » Damasio and Immordino-Yang, 2007

Emotional Thought



Rational Thought
High reason



Emotion
body processes

• Immordino-Yang and Damasio, 2007



If thought is emotional, then we facilitate learning by helping children:

- Recognize
- Respond

» Damasio and Immordino-Yang, 2007

- Reflect/Rehearse

» Patricia Wolfe, 2007



Children Are Motivated to Act

- Sadness related to
 - Hurt
 - Poor
 - Lonely
- Anger related to
 - Injustice
- Fear related to
 - Loss
 - Retribution
- Joy related to
 - Helping someone in need
 - Fun of problem solving
 - Sense of goodness and justice
- Righteous Disgust related to
 - Injustice
 - Disparity of wealth
 - Vulnerability of children
- Hope
 - They have the power to change things

**Emotional
Thought**

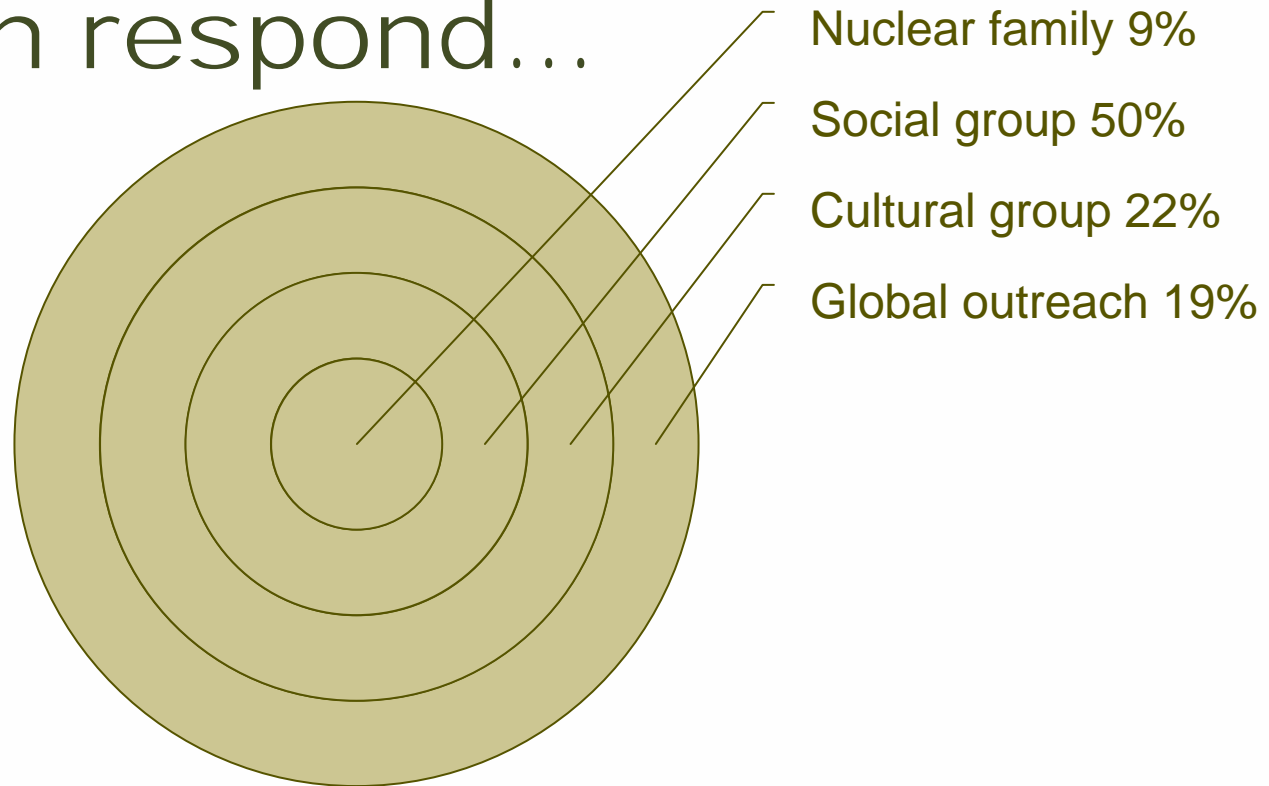


Children Perform Acts of Compassion

- 41% Giving
- 26% Helping
- 15% Caring
- 9% Praying
- 3% Integrating
 - 58 total acts reported by the children, their parents, teachers and peers



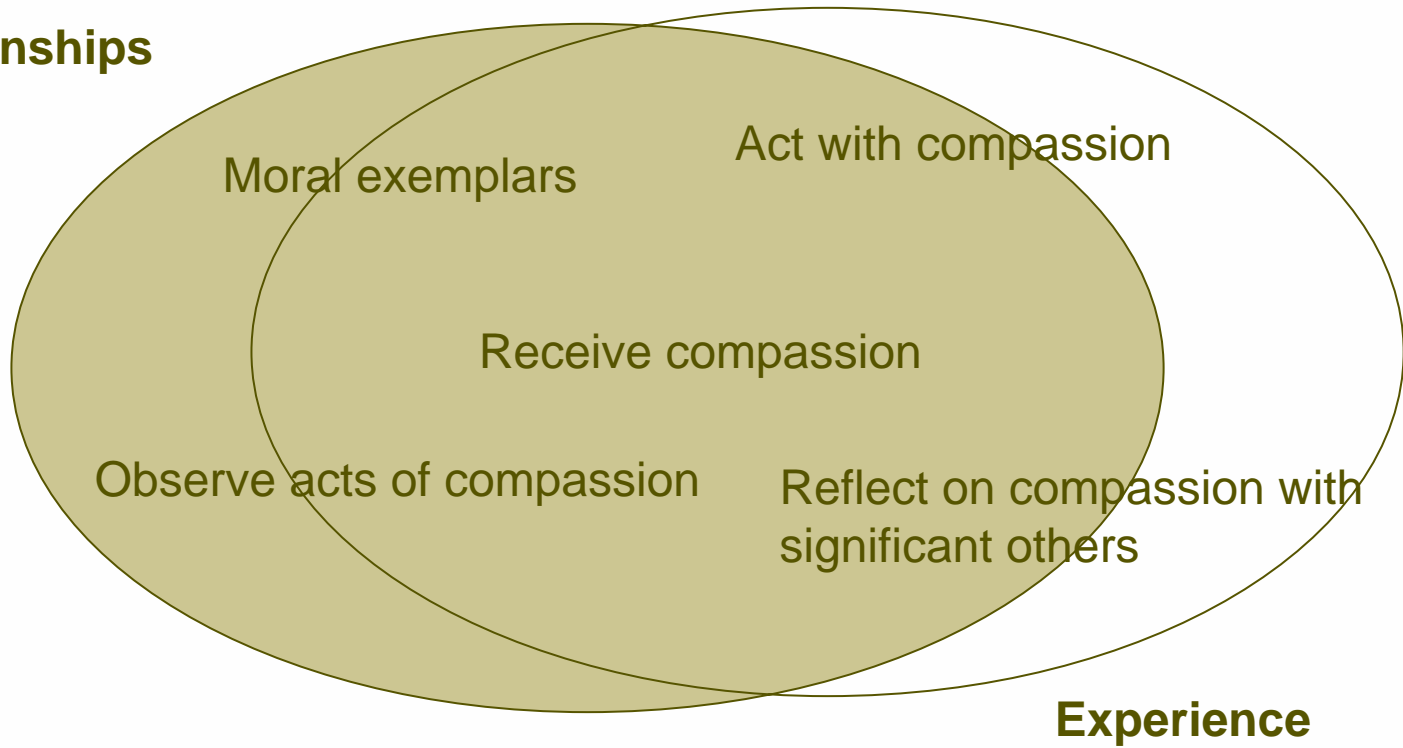
Children respond...



Borrowing almost entirely from the concept of Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development



Relationships

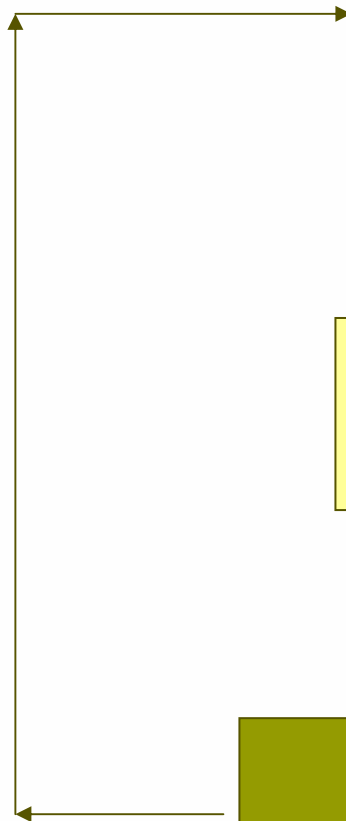




Recognize
Exemplars, Observe, Receive, Perceive

Respond:
Assimilate, Synthesize, Create, Perform

Reflect
Recall, Reflect, Rehearse, Refine, Expand



How Children Learn Compassion





How children perceive they learn compassion

64% Respected role models

24% Direct Instruction/Inspiration

6% Receive compassion

3% Cultural expectation

3% Resultant feelings

38% parents
25% other

38% Parents
25% Teachers
25% Holy Spirit/Prayer
13% Church Teachers



Parents' Perceptions of Formation

- Parental role models/home environment
 - Compassion and absence of
- Genetics/temperament
- Seasons of compassionate activity in a child's life
- Development over time
- Community influences
- Spiritual influences



Parental Strategies: Recognize

- Awareness
- Respectful home environment
- Coaching perspective taking
- Involved in children's activities
- Modeling



Parental Strategies: Respond

- Respect for those in need
- Coaching strategies
- Service learning projects
- Incidental activities or indirect teaching



Parental Strategies: Reflect

- Monitoring
- Reflection
- Accountability and respect



Teacher Hypotheses on Formation

- Genetics/temperament/pre-disposition
- Parental modeling
- Teaching strategies
- Receiving compassion
- Receiving love



Teacher Strategies

- School learning climate
 - Time/class size
 - Professional Respect for teachers
 - Parent/Teacher Relationships
 - Passionate Teachers
 - Work in Small Groups-Teamwork



Teacher Strategies: Recognize

- Prosocial, emotional development
- Use the “teachable moment”
- Model acts of compassion
- Have conversations about compassion
- See through God’s eyes



Teacher Strategies: Respond

- Service Learning
- Narratives
- Role Play



Teacher Strategies: Reflect

- Validate Acts of Compassion
- Reflect on the Role Play



Facilitating Comp

- Form meaningful relationships with family and friends, helping meet needs and opportunities

U.N. Convention on Rights of the Child, *Compasito Handbook*, Illil Keren's Voice Counts

Minister Tatjana Koke's Learning guidelines

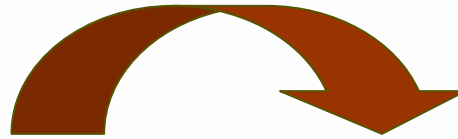
their families and experiences with compassion groups, cultural groups and g

- Build reflection, refinement, re practices within children, their family and friends

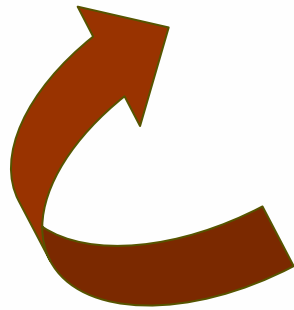
Bonnie Neugebauer's "pause"; The need for education and social change to be aligned



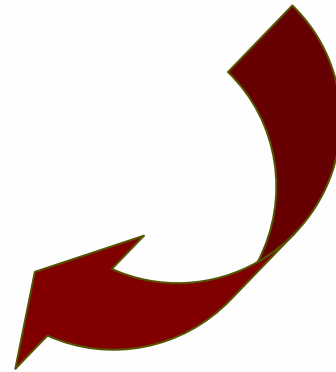
Recognize



Respond



Reflect





From a perspective of rights, respect and responsibility...

- Will children express asymmetrical compassion
 - Feeling power over the person in need...
- Or symmetrical compassion?
 - We are all vulnerable, we must help each other

When I was in Grade One and we had brought our Loonies and Twonies for a Lenten Project, our teacher said children in Africa had to walk 5000 steps for water...I remembered I counted it out and I had to walk 10 steps to drinking fountain... I didn't want to live in a world like that

-Ryan Hreljac, Ryan's Well Foundation

