



The Pennsylvania State University

**Prevention Research Center**  
FOR THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

# Watering the Seeds of Compassion

**Mindfulness Schools, Families and  
Communities Conference**

**Seattle, WA - April 2017**

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# Good Evening!





# My Awakening to Mindfulness

## University of Washington – 1970's

### Meditation and Psychotherapy

(Alan Marlatt and Judith Gordon)

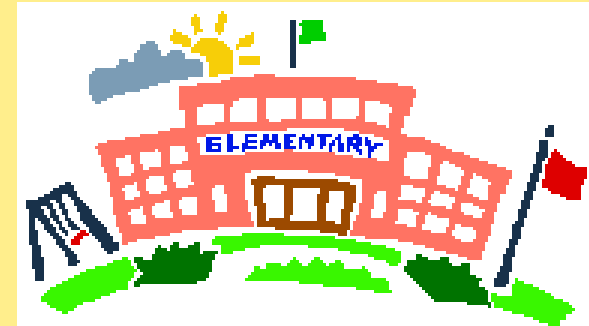


How can Life-span Developmental Psychology make greater contributions to building a compassionate world society?

This calls for a broad agenda to create comprehensive models and research on the development and promotion of emotional awareness, caring, and compassion.

# The Roadmap

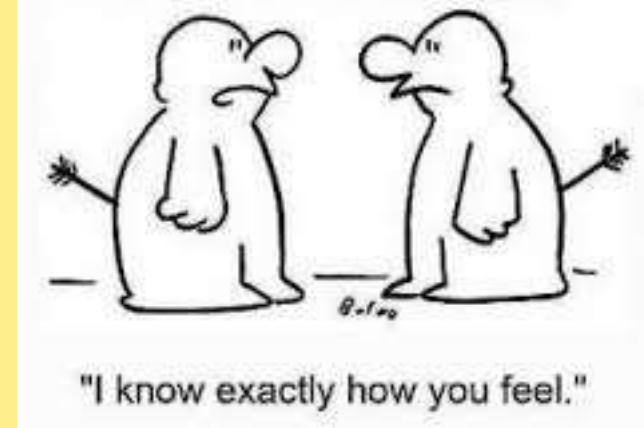
- What is Compassion?
- Compassion, Kindness, Prosocial Behavior, and Sympathy/Empathy
- How Do They Develop?
- What Can Families, Schools, and Communities do to Nurture These Qualities?







# What is Empathy?



An Affective Response that is Experienced  
as Similar to what Another Person  
is Feeling or Might Feel

Decety & Jackson , 2006

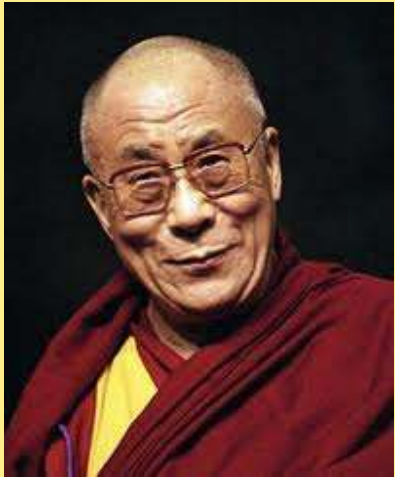
# What is Sympathy?

An Affective Response of Feelings of Sorrow or Concern that is Experienced When Apprehending Another Person's Experiences Feelings of Trouble or Misfortune

Eisenberg



# What is Compassion?



## Definition:

“...a *sensitivity* to the suffering of self and others , with a deep commitment to try to relieve it.”

The Dalai Lama (1995)

## Different Aspects of Compassion as a Construct

1. Intention (Cognition/Attitude)
2. Feeling (State of Emotion)
3. Behavior

# Development of Compassion

Emotional  
Contagion



Empathy/  
Sympathy

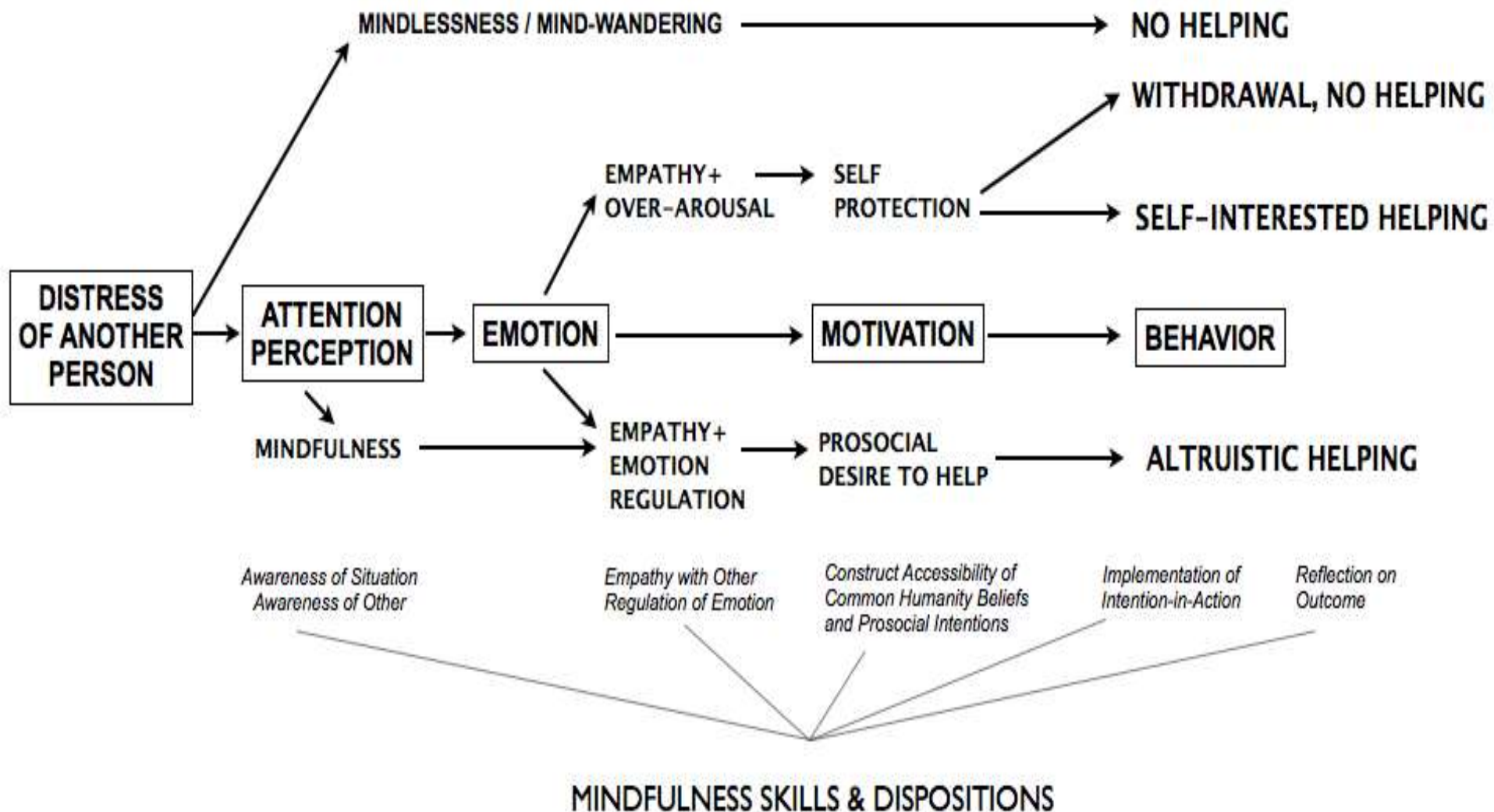


Compassion



Relation to Altruism??

# Compassion in Action



# Theories of the Human Condition

- Predominant Western philosophical stance that there is self-interest in every action
- Recent recognition that there is a caring instinct and even young children show empathy in action
- So both self interest and caring are both fundamental of our nature-
- Competition and cooperation are both powerful in explaining human evolution
- Compassion and benevolence are an evolved part of human nature, rooted in biology, and ready to be cultivated



# Broad Agenda

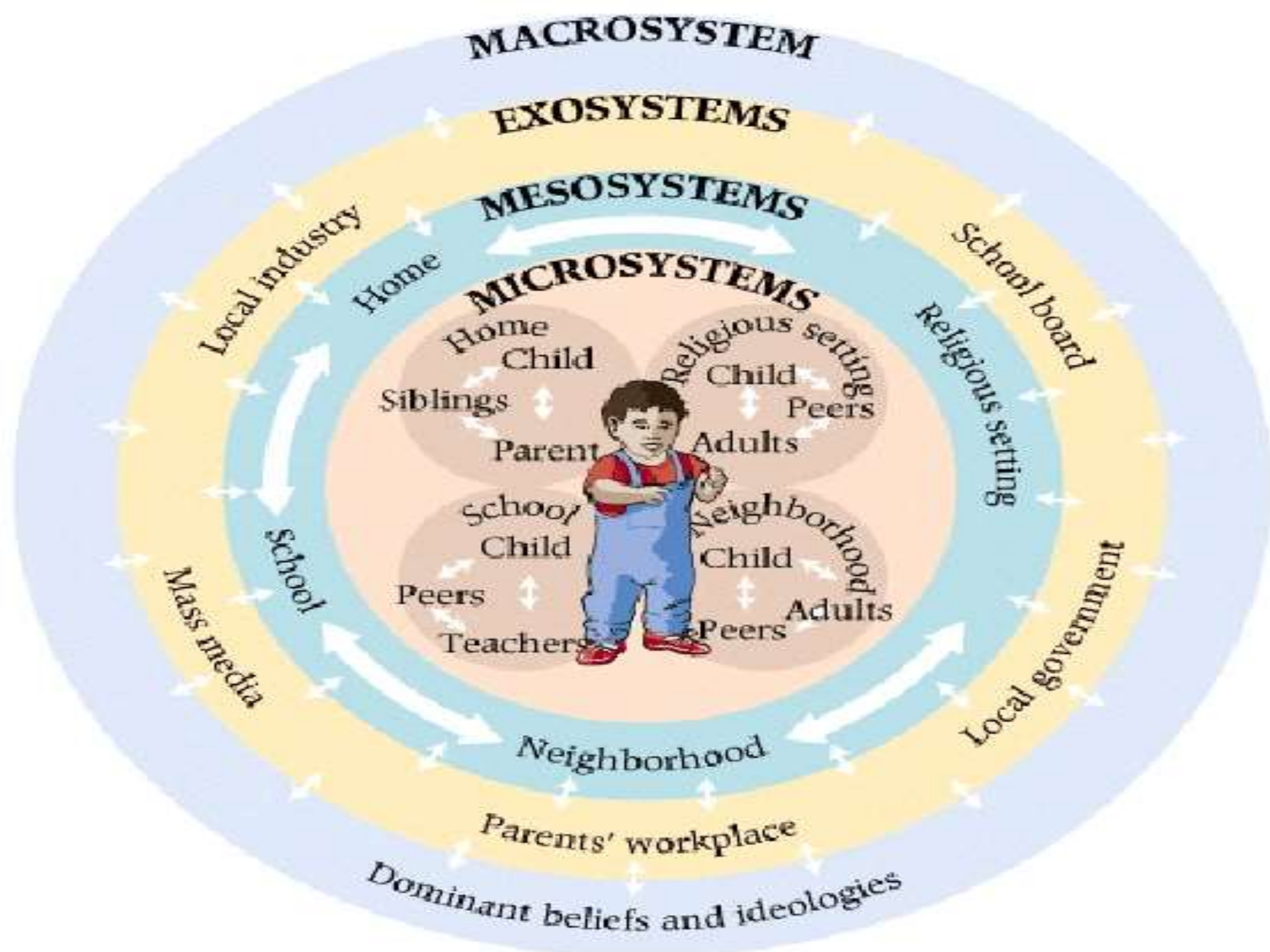
- The practical outcome of such a comprehensive program would include
  - ✓ Clearer developmental/ecological models of the growth of caring, and compassion
  - ✓ Effective policies, programs and practices that support the development of caring, compassion, and service to others in our schools and communities,
  - ✓ Children, youth and adults who show greater service to others as well as caring about the preservation of the earth's ecology



# Global Context of 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- Increasing Global Interdependence
- Need to focus on “Modern Narratives of:
  - ❖ Global Warming
  - ❖ Environmental Degradation (Forests, Water)
  - ❖ Terrorism









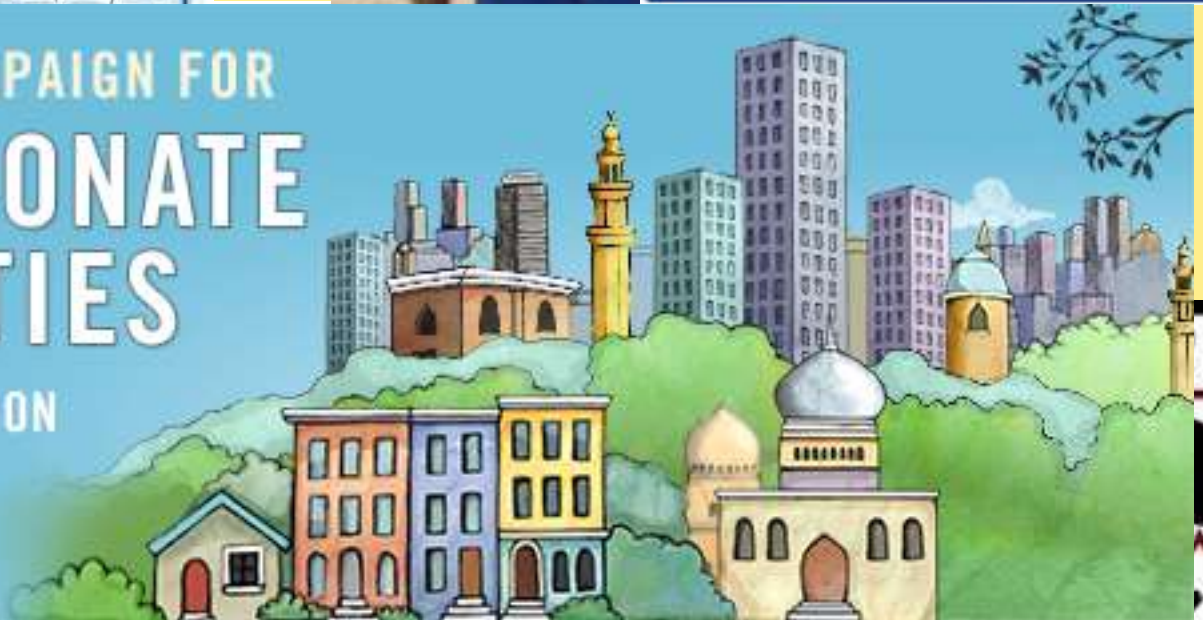
Greater  
Good  
Science  
Center



THE CITY MARKETPLACE

# INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR COMPASSIONATE COMMUNITIES

CHARTER FOR COMPASSION  
International



Survival of the Kindest

COMPASSION



# My Conviction



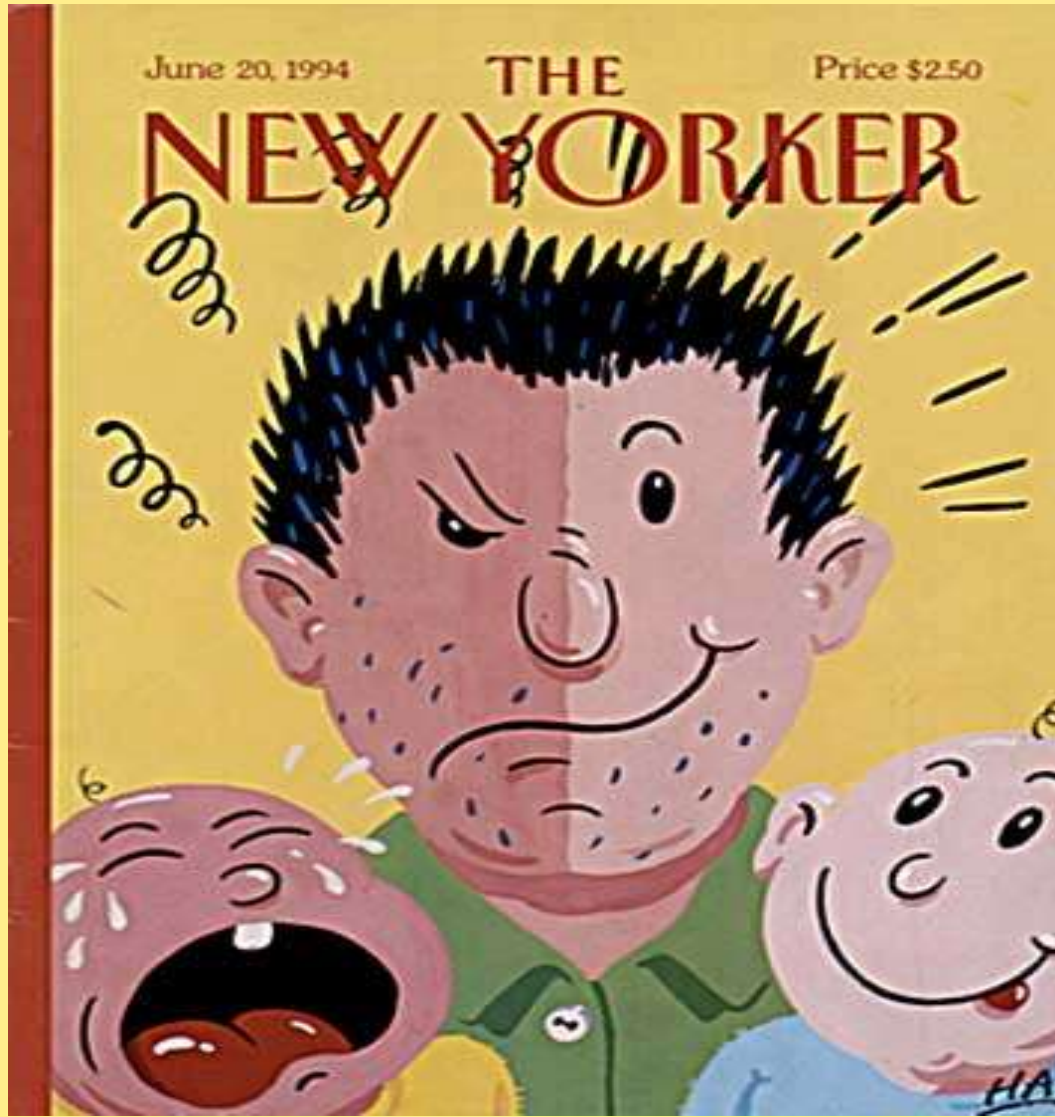
- Awareness, Sympathy and Compassion Are the Core Dimensions of Human Nature that Can be Nurtured
- When Nurtured they Enhance
  - ◆ One's Personal Health and Well-being
  - ◆ Connection to Others
  - ◆ Well-being of Others
  - ◆ Quality of the Natural, Physical Environment

# Contexts that Support Kindness and Compassion

- Early Childhood Attachments to Parents and Caregivers
- What Children See Adults Do and Why?
- What Values are Promoted (world view) at Home, at School, in the Community?
- What Skills Children Learn and Have the Opportunity to Practice?

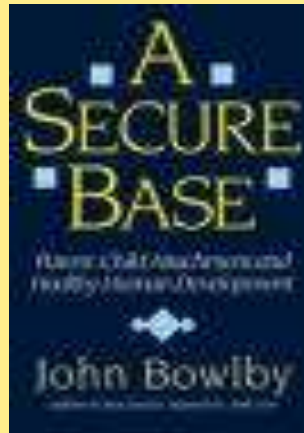


# It Begins with Parenting



# Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory

- Developed by John Bowlby, a British psychiatrist, to explain why “maternal deprivation” so often leads to anxiety, anger, delinquency, and depression.
- First studied by Mary Ainsworth, a Canadian psychologist, with mothers and children in Africa and the US

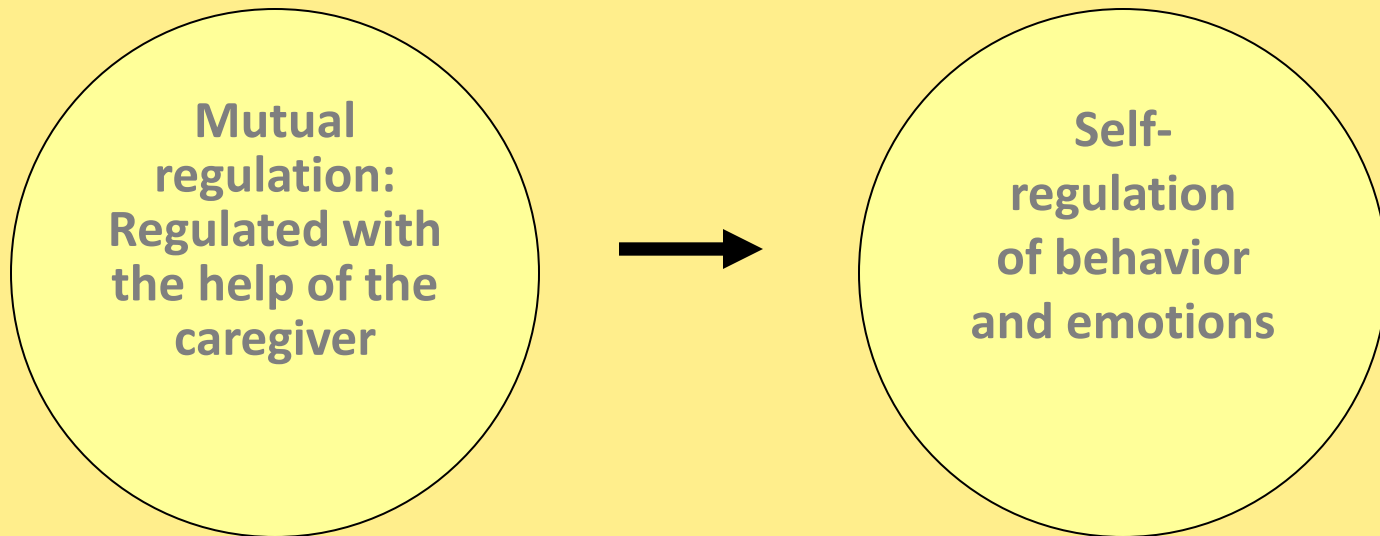




# Behavior and Emotion Regulation Across Development

Secure Attachment creates greater probability of:

Interpersonal attunement ➔ Internal Self-Regulation ➔ Resilience



# The Connection between Attachment and Mindfulness

(Bowlby, Siegel, Shaver & Mukilincer)

- Attachment Relationships Shape the Development of the Regulatory Circuitry of the Brain
- A Secure Mind is Reflective!
- **Reflection** enables Social and Emotional Intelligence, is at the heart of mindfulness, and is likely the common root of secure attachment, empathy, and compassion.
- When one feels secure, one acts with great altruism, caring and compassion



# THE INFLUENCE OF SCHOOLING AND EDUCATION



# Issues in Creating a Caring School

- ❖ Both Children and Adults need **Emotion Regulation skills**
- ❖ Teachers and Adults need to create **Healthy Norms and a Safe Environment**
- ❖ Schools need to adopt practices that **create shared communities of caring**
- ❖ This can include **high quality SEL skills, mindfulness skills, expressing caring and gratitude**
- ❖ This requires **Principal Leadership**





## HINDUISM

This is the sum of duty:  
do not do to others what would  
cause pain if done to you  
Mahatma Gandhi 1931



## BUDDHISM

Treat not others in ways  
that you yourself would  
find hurtful  
Udana-Varga 5.18



## CONFUCIANISM

One word which sums up the  
basis of all good conduct...  
loving kindness.  
Do not do to  
others what  
you do not  
want done  
to yourself  
Confucius  
Analects 15.23



## BARA'I FAITH

Lay not on any soul a load  
that you would not wish to  
be laid upon you; and  
desire not for  
anyone the  
things you  
would not  
desire for  
yourself  
Rabbi Akiva  
Gleanings



## ISLAM

Not one of you truly believes  
until you wish for others what  
you wish for yourself  
The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)



## JUDAISM

What is hateful to you,  
do not do to your neighbour.  
This is the whole Torah;  
all the rest is commentary  
Hillel, Talmud, Shabbat 31a



## JAINISM

One should treat all  
creatures in the world  
as one would like  
to be treated  
Mahavira, Dattakandanga



## ZOROASTRIANISM

Do not do unto others  
whatever is injurious  
to yourself  
Bahagaiti-Fa-Gihyast 13.29



## NATIVE SPIRITUALITY

We are as much alive  
as we keep the earth alive  
Chief Dan George



## UNITARIANISM

We affirm and promote respect  
for the interdependent  
web of all existence  
of which we are a part  
Unitarian principle



## CHRISTIANITY

In everything, do to others  
as you would have them  
do to you; for this is the  
law and the prophets  
Jesus, Matthew 22:37-40



## SIKHISM

I am a stranger to no one;  
and no one is a stranger  
to me. Indeed, I am  
a friend to all  
Guru Granth Sahib, pg. 1299

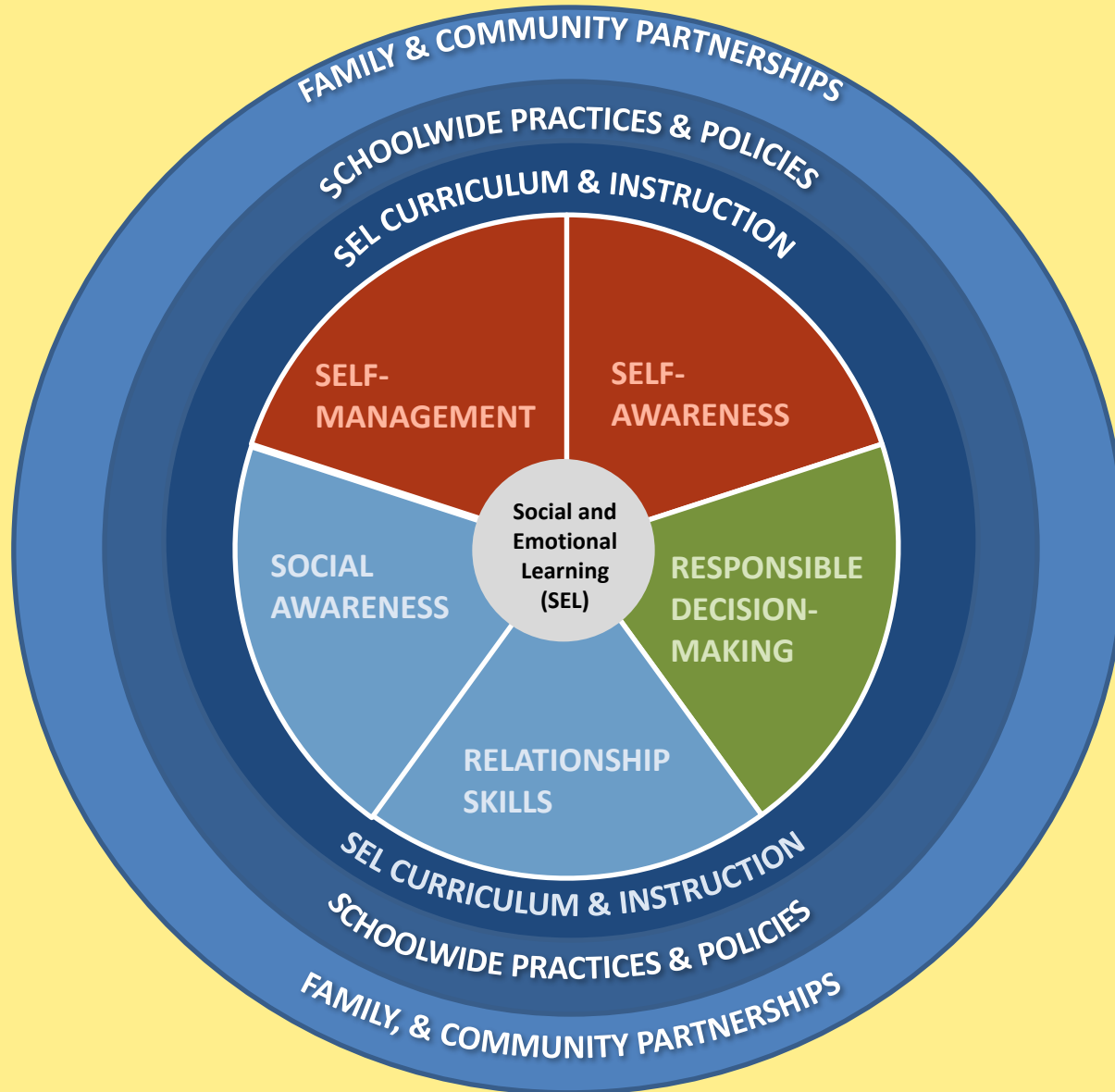


## TAOISM

Regard your neighbour's gain  
as your own gain, and your  
neighbour's loss as your own loss  
Tai Shang Kan' Tzuang Ching 33-34

# THE GOLDEN RULE

# THE CASEL Model: Schoolwide SEL



# Schools Can Adopt Practices that Create Shared Communities of Caring

It is possible to nurture and support

- ◆ Kindness
- ◆ Altruism
- ◆ Caring/Compassion

What is the Process? The Social Development Model

- ◆ Teach New Skills
- ◆ Provide Ample Opportunity to Practice the Skills
- ◆ Provide Feedback and Recognition for Their Performance



# The Seattle Social Development Model





# Contemplative Developmental Science (Roeser)

- Nascent field which focuses upon gaining an empirical understanding of the effects of secular mindfulness and related trainings
- Contemplative Education, an allied, applied discipline focused on understanding the development, implementation, and efficacy of secular mindfulness and related trainings in school and community settings with children, adolescents, parents, and educators.



# Core SEL Competencies – Contemplative Deepening

- Emotion Regulation
- Inhibitory Control
- Deployment of Attention



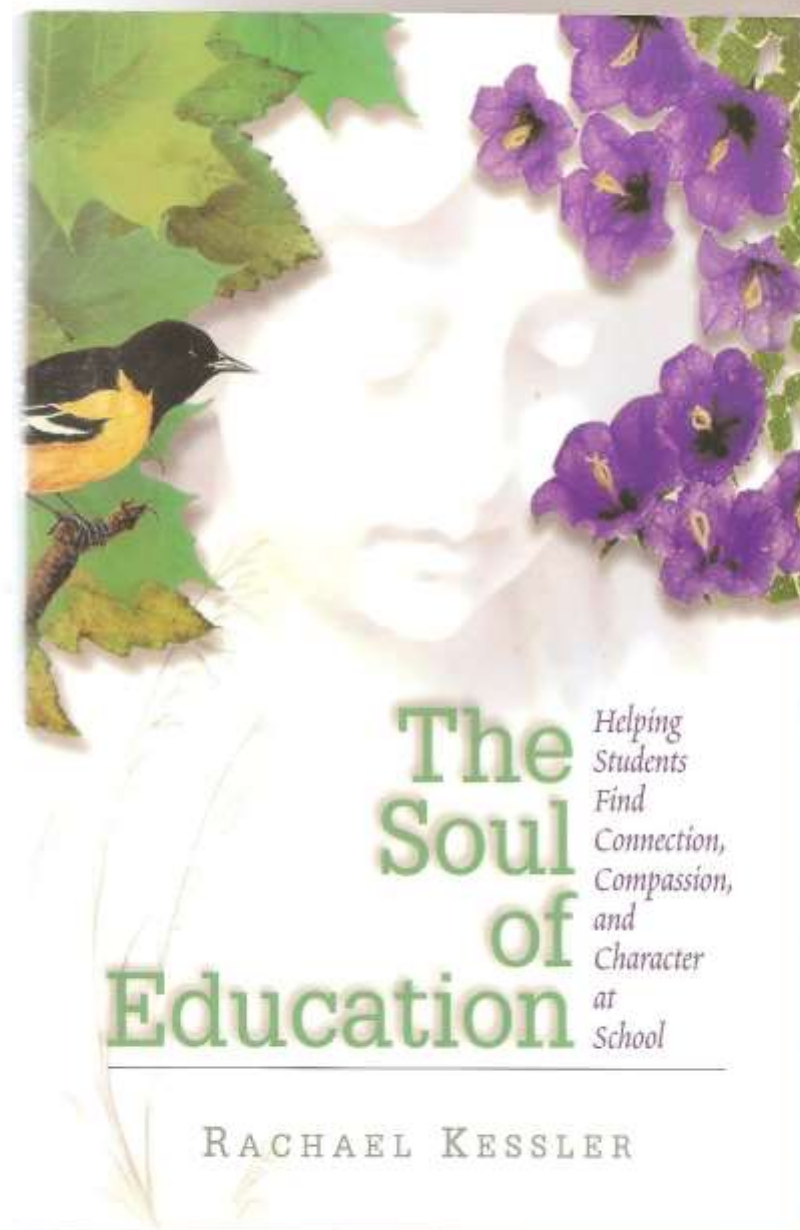
- Understanding the Nature of Mind
- Emotional Awareness

- Stating Facts without judgment
- Making ethical choices based in awareness and caring

Showing empathy and compassion for others

- Mindful Listening
- Thoughtful Dialogue
- Managing conflict





# Rachel's vision

*Imagine if every student were provided with a safe place to sit with a group of their peers and reflect on their lives.....*

*to share the questions that trouble or confuse or mystify them...*

*to find support for their pain and joy...*

*to discover the solace that comes in silence...*

*to be challenged to respect those who appear fundamentally different from them.*

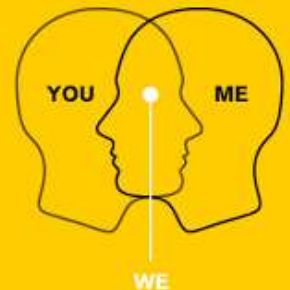


- *Making such experiences available not only nourish students spiritual development, they also help them*
  - *to transcend prejudice,*
  - *increase academic motivation*
  - *improve focus and cooperation*
- *In other words, caring about the inner lives of our students make educational sense at every level.*



# Bringing in the Inner Life

- *I use the word “soul” to call attention in schools to the inner life; to the depth dimension of human experience; to students longing for more than an ordinary, material and fragmented existence.*
- *When the soul is present in education, attention shifts. We listen with great care. And then we concentrate on what has heart and meaning. The yearning, wonder, wisdom, fear and confusion of students become central to the curriculum.*





# What is Mindfulness?

- Mindfulness is: ***paying attention, in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.*** --***Kabat-Zinn, 1990***
- An awareness of one's conduct and the quality of one's relationships..... are intrinsic elements of the cultivation of mindfulness.
- Mindfulness in everyday life is the ultimate challenge and practice.

***Kabat-Zinn 2011***



# Mindfulness, Ethics and Cognition

- Engaging in mindful awareness means not only being aware in the present, but it also means reflecting on and living a set of *ethics* including “*not to harm others and to engage in wholesome actions*”
- This involves recollecting and reflecting on one’s actions with discrimination, evaluation and mature judgment – **rather than being reactive.**

# Research on Effects of Mindfulness

- Focus has been primarily on
  - Symptoms (pain, stress)
  - Brain Activity
  - Self-Reports of Mindfulness
- Less Focus till very recently on
  - Being Compassionate
- Little Focus on
  - Our Interpersonal behavior

# What is Interpersonal Mindfulness?

## (Teachers/Parents)

- Listening with full attention to children and colleagues
- Present-centered awareness of emotions experienced by self and students during interactions
- Openness and non-judgmental acceptance and receptivity to child's thoughts and feelings
- Self-regulation in teaching /parenting- Low reactivity and low automaticity in reaction to normative child and adolescent behavior
- Awareness of and responsiveness to child's individual needs – “teachable moments”
- Compassion for self and students



# Broad Question:

## How Do We Promote Caring & Compassion?

### 1. What does it mean to be caring/compassionate?

Attentive and Aware

Sensitive to others needs and states

Open-minded

Listening without judgment (or deep listening)

Recognizing of our common humanity

**Acting** from a ground of Ethics “Do No Harm”

### 2. In what ways can we effectively promote these skills in:

Schools

Families

Students

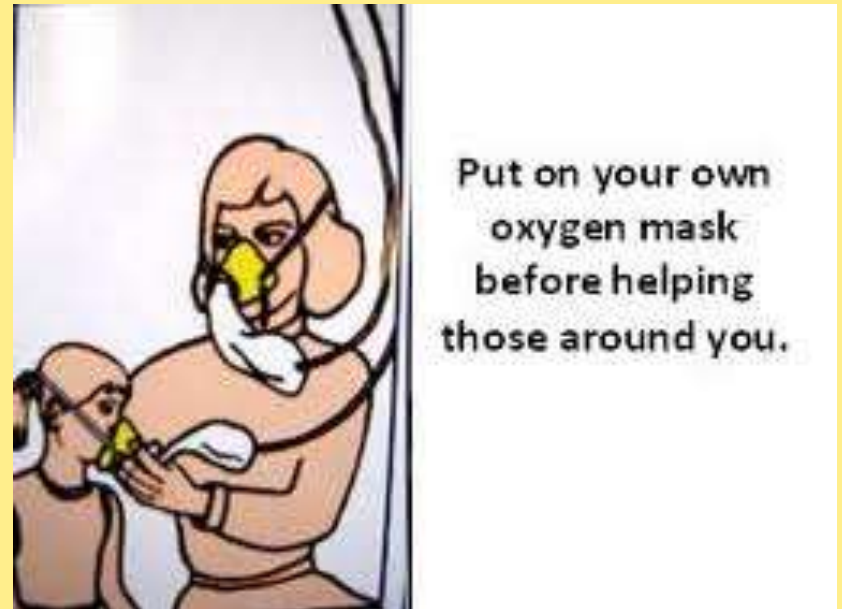


# Developmental Issues

- Understanding the nature of mind
- Ability to see the other as oneself – widening our circle of concern
- Ability to see past outward experiences of race, gender, culture, age, etc.
- The understand the fundamental similarity of all beings
- Discernment of moral issues and ability to see with clarity and insight

# Building Nurturing Environments

- There is much yet to be learned in promoting compassion in children
- Helping adults (parents and teachers) to become mindful is essential.



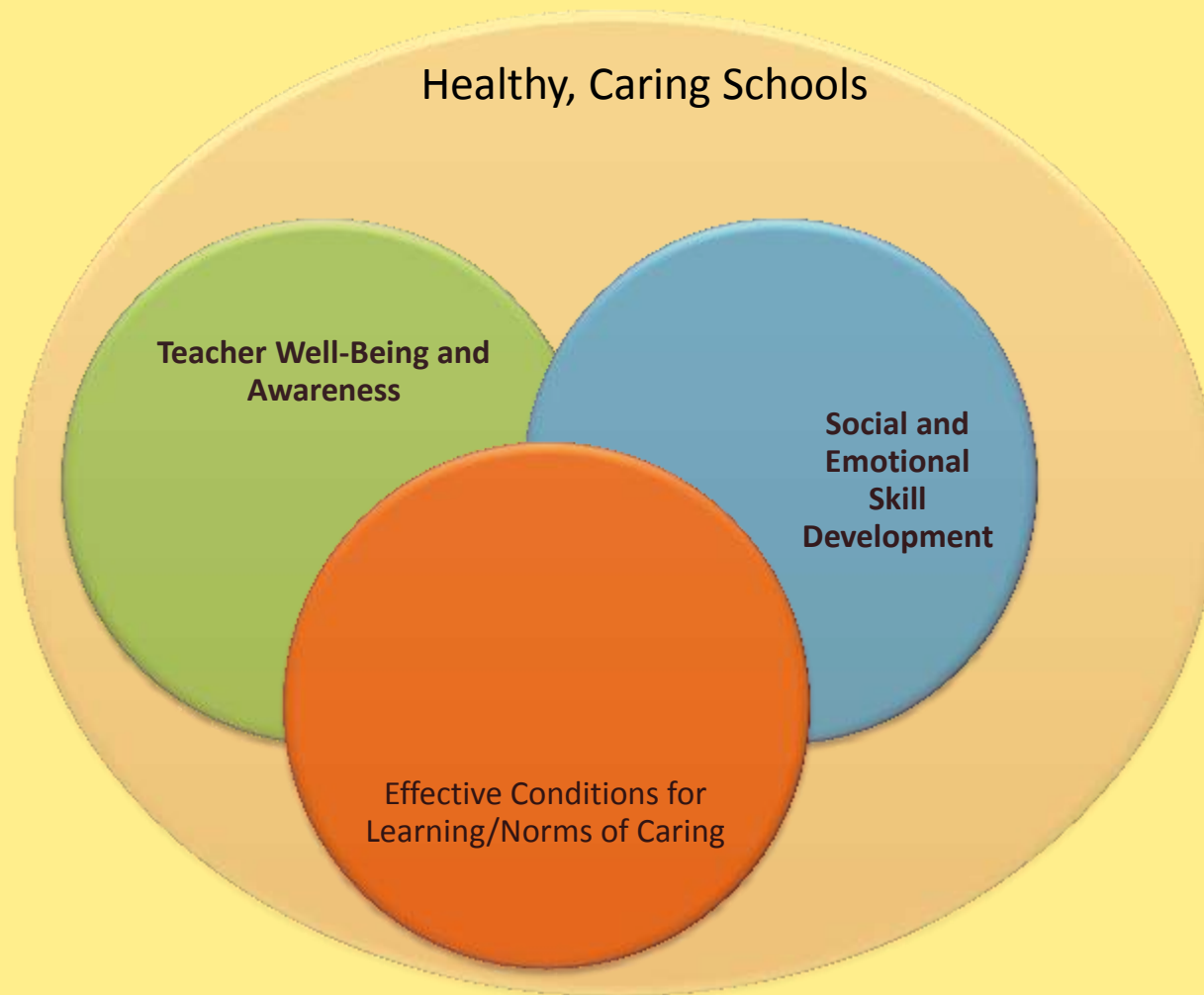
# Focus on Caregivers

Promoting these abilities in caregivers (parents, teachers, other givers of care to children) is essential for

- Child well-being
- Strengthening families
- Building cohesive communities
- Caring for the Environment

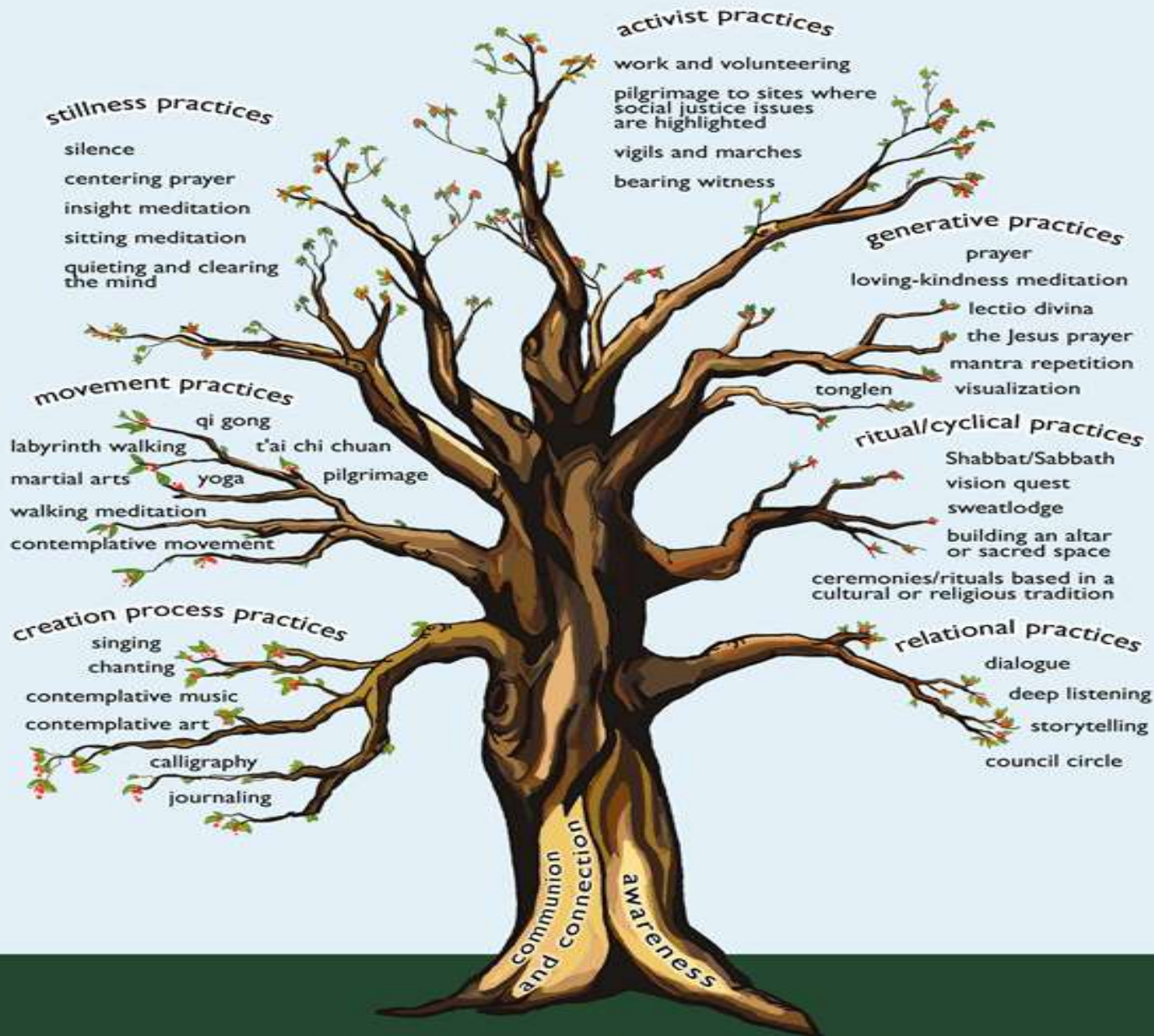


# A Holistic Picture: Supporting Effective Social and Academic Development and Well Being



# Ways to Facilitate Mindfulness & Compassion: A Taxonomy





The Tree of Contemplative Practices

From Center for Contemplative Mind in Society

# Elevation, Awe, & Wonder

- Feeling of Elevation is caused by witnessing virtuous acts or feats of moral beauty. Elevation elicits warm, pleasurable sensations in the chest.
- Elevation makes an individual feel admiration for the altruist and motivated to help others. Elevation has the potential to spread by creating an upward helping spiral in which individuals view others doing good deeds and then feel an increased urge to help others.
- Shiota & Haidt assert that elevation is a self-transcendent emotion that directs attention away from the self towards appreciating an exceptional human action or remarkable aspect of the natural world.
- Compared to joy or amusement, people experiencing elevation were more likely to express a desire to perform kind or helpful actions for others, become better people, and imitate the virtuous exemplar.

# EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES TO FACILITATE CARING AND COMPASSION

- Milieu Models
  - Golden Rule
  - Noticing and Remembering The “Good” Things (Prosocial Mapping – D. Martin)
- SEL Skills Development
  - Emotional Awareness of Self and Other
  - Listening skills
- Contemplative Awareness Practices
  - Meditations ( Just Like Me, Tong-len, Loving Kindness)
  - Story telling
  - Council Procedures
- Specific Actions
  - Service and Volunteering with Reflection
  - Vigils and Bearing Witness
  - Honoring the Actions of Others
  - Viral strategies in social networks



*The best way to find yourself  
is by losing yourself in the  
service of others.*

*Mahatma Gandhi*



# Measuring Processes and Outcomes

- Self-report (first person phenomenology)
- Reports of Others (teachers, peers, parents, spouses)
- Hypothetical Vignettes (social cognitions)
- Observations that are Naturalistic
- Observations of Social Task Performance (interpersonal “tests” /behavioral economics, etc)
- Observed Reactions in Virtual Reality Contexts
- Psycho-physiological Reactivity and Regulation
- Neural and Epigenetic Activity



# Challenges

- Can we understand with greater clarity the developmental course of empathy/sympathy and compassion in different cultural settings?
- What combination of skills necessary for empathy and prosocial behavior and motivation for compassion develop? And how can it be nurtured?
- How do prosocial behaviors develop that are motivated by true compassion, and not based on future rewards?
- What kind of “service-learning” experiences best nurture a compassionate perspective?



# Challenges #2

- Can carefully prepared experiences lead to the softening of in-group vs. out-group perceptions and thus lessen bullying, aggression and other forms of fear and hatred towards those that appear different?
- Can we increase our own capacity to care for others with an attitude of gratitude for the opportunity to do so?
- Can we nurture greater appreciation for the interdependence of all beings and thus deepen our understanding and caring for the natural environment and to act to reduce global warming and environmental degradation?



## Suggestions for Developing a Common Ethical Framework

- ❖ Discernment exercises that extend the 'what is' to 'what is beneficial' in the development of human capacity
- ❖ Creation of a learning or developmental space that permits inquiry and critical evaluation of the causes of suffering
- ❖ Skillful examination of the grounds of human motivations and intentions
- ❖ Removing the hindrances and obstacles to safe, health and truly democratic modes for organizing human communities
- ❖ Employing practices that enable human potential by taking other's perspective
- ❖ Leading with the premise that people are more alike than different, yet mindfully exploring, recognizing and honoring differences
- ❖ Cultivation of non-aggression and peaceful modes of action
- ❖ Developing mutual tolerance and respect for all faiths



# Questions

1. When a child shows compassion, should we consider it to be different than that experienced by a teen or adult?

- Because it is intuitive, rather than based on a deep, meta-cognitive understanding of the relations (oneness) between all living things – should we talk about it differently

2. If children are insecure in their attachments or have experienced deep trauma, should compassion support contain a greater emphasis on self-compassion?



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
SHOW  
COMPASSION**



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