

A photograph of five diverse children (three girls and two boys) standing behind a large white sign. The children are smiling and looking towards the camera. The sign contains text about a 9-week curriculum.

9 Weeks to a 'Make A Difference' Year



The Educator's Companion Guide to the book

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

with the Power of

Connection

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PROFESSIONAL TEAM DEVELOPMENT TRAINING:
9 Weeks to a Make A Difference Year

A Personal Message ...from Mary

If you are an Administrator or the Professional Development Trainer, your role will be to take your faculty through this weekly process, just before the teachers begin the weekly activities in their classrooms. In this way, the adults can experience the exercises, activities and discussion possibilities for themselves, right before they do them with the students. This helps each person to understand—through experiencing these processes—how the activities will grow a community/team consciousness.

This 9-Week Curriculum contains the activities I used as a teacher and school counselor. Later, these same activities became a part of the Professional Team Development Training I use with adults in business, organizational and corporate trainings. Every part of this curriculum has been “field-tested” by over 20,000 people—children and adults—within the United States.

How to use this 9-Week Curriculum for Professional Team Development Training:

- Schedule at least 1 hour (preferably 90 minutes) each week for a faculty and staff in-service trainings.
- Print out a *copy of 9-Week Curriculum* for each teacher’s classroom.
- Follow the Week’s *Training Activities* and *Discussions* as they are described to do with children.

This curriculum is designed for K-12 students and above. Each teacher will need to adjust language and discussion questions per age group.

Make A Difference with the Power of Connection Gift Book & DVD is the companion book to this Curriculum . For Quantity Discounts go to: MakeADifference.com/Connection .

In what way does this training actually forms teams?

Experiencing the exercises, activities and thought-provoking discussions together as a group, builds community consciousness, which, after all, is the foundation of Team Building. When you come to know each other through these gentle, fun, yet highly revealing activities, a compassionate community unfolds and synergism is in the air!

Recommendation

I highly recommend that you invest in my program, *Connecting with Colors—Personality Style Training*, to use in a 2- to 3-hour in-Service/training before you begin to work with the *9-Weeks Curriculum*, to understand how to Connect so people (and children) will align.

To learn more go to:
ConnectingWithColors.com

What does Connecting with Compassion have to do with a Make A Difference school year?

Many think that being compassionate is about placating rather than directly addressing unnecessary and unskillful behaviors. What you, your faculty and your students will experience in this 9-week curriculum is just how palpable and powerful Connecting with Compassion actually is in transforming every kind of challenging situation the human experience offers. This IS what creates a learning environment where every student succeeds.

In your preparation to do this 9-week curriculum, it is my highest recommendation that you begin by watching our Teddy Stallard Story movie at: MakeADifferenceMovie.com.

This movie was inspired by “*Three Letters From Teddy*,” a short story first published in 1974. It is a durable classic told from endless numbers of podiums. It reminds us why we got into education. The instant success of this beloved story as a flash movie led me to create its companion book to sustain the huge –Make A Difference – momentum this story generates. It takes us all back to “core values,” which brings compassion to the classroom as one of the primary fundamentals to engage students in wanting to learn and be successful citizens.

The impact of what Teddy says to Miss Thompson instantly connects us to what really matters in any given situation. He is the anchor that provides a visceral reminder that anyone can instantly access compassion in emotionally charged situations.

What we—as a society—tend to do, is much like what Miss Thompson did initially: put big red F’s on the failing work being handed in and treating challenging individuals with disdain and skepticism. What we all have the capacity within us to do, however, is to seek understanding. It is through understanding, we can access that compassionate place within ourselves to reach out and let children, parents, faculty and staff know that they matter.

Compassion is the variable that will re-energize your school culture--and inspire greater academic engagement and success: Despite what some may think, working harmoniously with challenging students will not be won on the front lines by changing specific techniques and processes at the “be nice” level. Rather, it’s a culture of compassion and understanding that makes the difference in all human interactions.

Statistics indicate that court appointed Anger Management Classes are not as successful as had been hoped. However, new findings reveal that as people learn to reconnect to their core values, which includes learning how to re-access inherent compassion, there are great sustainable gains now being made, and that these offenders are not repeating their visits to the judicial system. Professional trainers now working with court appointed abuse offenders are teaching them the power of compassion, and it’s working in profound ways. If it works in this arena, certainly compassion will have a huge impact in the culture of our schools as we place importance on it.

This is the kind of book that does the work for you: *Making A Difference with the Power of Connection* Gift Book & Movie (ConnectionMovie.MakeADifference.com) is helping to

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transform our mass consciousness to one of peace and harmony through a beautiful, easy to read book that allows educators and parents to get in touch with the innermost core of their being, to know that they have more power than they have ever realized, and to know that they can influence what is hap-pening through the energy generated from compassion. When everything else fails, compassionate connection gets it done!!

Educators have many concerns in working with today's youth. One concern that the message of this curriculum brings up for teachers is: "How do you expect me to compassionate when my classroom is maxed out and overcrowded? How can you possibly expect me to make time to deal compassionately with every problematic child I have in my classroom? There is not enough of me or time in the day."



It only takes three simple steps to accomplish a classroom where students collectively will become self-managing and highly productive.

Step 1: Change your mind and you change your relationships. If you currently see certain children as "problem children" then you are not seeing the inherent greatness in them that's trying to get out. You are inadvertently making them feel like the enemy. When you allow yourself to be seduced by unskilled or hurtful behavior you miss what they are teaching you. Children teach us exactly what we need to know ... if we will just pay attention.

Slow down and take a few moments to look past the behavior to see what's really going on. It takes less than a minute. The willingness to be open to a shift in your perception will instantly lift your own energy and will changes things for the better as you now reach out to connect to the heart and genius within each child.

Step 2: Think community. You must hold firm to the concept that your classroom is a safe haven. It's all about community, where every single child is included and is expected to show up and belong. When you witness one student doing something verbally or attitudinally harmful to his classmates, i.e., his community, you simply and quietly take the child aside to address what's really going on, openly and compassionately.

At this pivotal moment, you only need to say one thing to individuals who have been hurtful or unskillful: "What's going on for you that you would do (or say) what you just did to so and so?"

For a 'Make A Difference' Year

If they don't know, simply say, "If you did know, what would it be?"

If they still can't access what's actually upsetting them, then say: "When you do know, will you please share it with me? I care about you. For now, let's get back to work."

No more and no less. If you start ad-libbing and you may easily start being condescending without meaning to. Keep it simple and then stop yourself from saying one more word! Seriously. Close your mouth and leave some air space for what you've just asked to work its magic. Say you care and then leave it on the table to be worked out within that individual's own psyche. Every single child has their own inner voice that can take it from there.



That's it. This very specific technique interrupts what's happening and transforms any unproductive experience with anyone. Try it at school, home with your spouse, children and /or teenagers. You will transform any situation quickly and once and for all!

Simply asking "What's going on for you" instead of "Why did you do it?" connects the dots to the heart of the matter instead of making up more cerebral excuses that never, ever get resolved!

It lets individuals know that, even though they've been unskillful in their treatment of others, they matter to you. They now have your full compassionate attention, and they know that you want to help them with whatever it is they feel they needed to strike out about.

Step 3: Repeat Steps 1 and 2 repeatedly for the next nine weeks and you will have a classroom of students that's a community where everyone is included and expected to show up and belong. They will excel beyond any predicted level, and you'll reap benefits for holding firmly to this goal.

There is a heart that beats within every single one of us.

Compassion calls the heart of the matter forth in ways that are beyond our human understanding. How compassion works is a mystery. With behavior-affirming attention, there is a whole range of positive possibilities.

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AN IMPORTANT FACT:

Research about the brain reveals that compassionate thoughts literally light up the frontal lobe of a person's brain. (The frontal lobe is where the mind can access solutions.) When we are resentful or angry, there is no light in that part of the brain, and so we shut down and fail to function well. As soon as we deliberately think compassionate thoughts, this part of the brain lights up, and we can literally go from "impossible" to "possible" in an instant.

Compassion is, after all, a deep awareness of the suffering of another, coupled with the wish to relieve it. It is truly wanting others to be free from suffering. And when we offer this, we have made a difference.

There are times when we think our actions have not made a significant difference—and that can be disheartening. What's important here is to take heart in those moments. Remembering always that you receive the instant you give and, in that, you can trust you've made a difference in someone's life, because you felt it in your own.

- Excerpt from pages 86-87 *Make a Difference with the Power of Connection*

Mary Robinson Reynolds