

New Book Series Aims to Teach Empathy at Early Age through Relatable Real-Life Bonobo Apes

Clinical Psychologist and Bonobo Photographer Take New Approach to Developing Empathy in Young Kids and Preventing Future Bullying and School Violence

CINCINNATI, OHIO – November, X, 2014 – Dr. Anne Wessels-Paris, clinical psychologist, and Marian Brickner, animal behavior photographer, have released a new book series called “**The Empathy Way.**” Featuring a family of real-life bonobo apes, the series aims to teach young children empathy skills, one of the most important qualities in being able to create healthy relationships. Available to schools, counselors, and parents, the series offers the most comprehensive approach to helping kids understand and internalize the concept of empathy at an early age, in an effort to help prevent future bullying and school violence.

“Never before has the need for empathy among kids been so important. Neuroscience research shows that when kids are understood emotionally, they are more calm and able to learn, and are less likely to engage in bullying and violent behaviors,” said Dr. Paris. “Most school programs teach empathy too late and on the surface, and it’s not reaching kids in their hearts. We are connecting with young children using bonobos, the most empathetic of animals, to help them understand what empathy is and how to use it in their lives.”

The Empathy Way series includes three books: “Empathy Way: Insides Out,” “Empathy Way: I’m Different You’re Different” and “Empathy Way: You Scared Me!” Each book features a story involving the relationships between real-life bonobos, the closest genetic relative to humans who also share traits such as love, compassion and empathy. Demonstrating an ability to live peacefully among each other and resolve conflicts easily, bonobo relationships are relatable to young children and make it easy to illustrate empathy concepts.

“Empathy can be a difficult concept to understand and is often misunderstood for being nice or feeling sorry for someone. These simple and easy-to-understand stories about bonobos teach kids what empathy means and helps them learn how to relate to other kids through understanding and validation of feelings,” said Dr. Paris. “When kids are able to demonstrate empathy towards each other, we have a better chance of preventing bullying and school violence.”

In addition to the book series, the accompanying Teachers Manual outlines The Empathy in Education Programs for Schools that includes a comprehensive curriculum for children in kindergarten through third grade and the Empathy Buddy Program, a mentoring program that pairs an older student (4-6 graders) with a younger student (k-3 graders) to create a mutually supportive relationship in school. The Empathy Way Programs also encourage the involvement of parents, with activities that help parents both learn and teach empathy skills to their children.

“We are excited to continue working with Dr. Paris and her “The Empathy Way Series”. This program holds great promise for affecting positive change for our students,” said Jason A. Brasno, Principal, Northridge Local Schools in Licking County, OH. “The content and curriculum provide excellent vehicles for impacting the social and emotional learning needs of our students. In particular, we are excited about the potential for the “Empathy Buddy Program” and the leadership opportunities it may provide for our 4th and 5th grade students.”

The Empathy Way Program launched this year in several school districts, hospitals and counseling centers and is available at www.empathyway.com and www.amazon.com.

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