

## **Children's Program and Book Demonstrate the Power of Compassionate Touch**

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. — Children who apply compassionate touch to playmates to help relieve pain strengthen self-esteem and positive behaviors, according to research conducted by The Upledger Foundation based in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

The four-month Compassionate Touch study was carried out at schools in Ohio, Texas, Florida, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and California. Conducted with 560 children in grades K-2, the program centers around a simple hands-on technique called “Direction of Energy” that allows children to help classmates who sustain minor injuries. The results show statistically significant increases in prosocial behaviors, and equally significant decreases in aggressive and hostile behaviors.

“We’re gratified by the outcome,” says John E. Upledger, D.O., O.M.M., founder of The Upledger Foundation and its nonprofit healthcare charities. “It confirms my long-held belief that compassion is inversely related to violence. When children help others they feel better about themselves. That alone can do wonders to ease potential violence as little ones grow into teenagers and young adults.”

Before and after each program, teachers assessed the children using the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS), a 57-item inventory of social skills, problem behaviors and academic competence designed for grades K-6. At the conclusion of the study, students demonstrated

statistically significant increases in social skills, including cooperation, assertion and self-control. They also exhibited statistically significant decreases in problem behaviors, such as externalizing and hyperactivity.

For the children followed for two years, the results continued to be significant. “They were also consistent from class to class, school to school and state to state,” Dr. Upledger adds. “So the benefits clearly apply to children across the board.”

While the formal research study has concluded, plans are in place to implement the program in schools across the country.

### **Author Captures Essence Of Program In A Children’s Book**

Sue Cotta, PT, ATC, is a big fan of Compassionate Touch. A therapist and certified Upledger Institute instructor, she wrote “I Can Show You I Care: Compassionate Touch for Children” (North Atlantic Books and UI Enterprises, 2003) to introduce the importance of touch to children, teachers and parents.

The book tells the story of Patrick, who trips over a tree root playing with his dog in the backyard. After his father uses the Direction of Energy technique on Patrick’s bruised knee, the pain subsides.

The next day after Patrick discusses his experience during Show and Tell, his teacher suggests trying the “helping hands” technique at school. Gradually, thanks to Compassionate Touch, the children in Mrs. Pendleton’s second grade become more considerate. They even stop the hurtful teasing that had become second nature.

According to Cotta, that’s a lesson we shouldn’t wait any longer to implement. “We’ve been programming children in our society not to touch for quite a while now. I understand there’s good reason for caution, but skin is also our largest sensory organ. Study after study on both humans and animals have demonstrated that we need touch to survive. So when you remove it from schools and then from homes where parents are absent, you affect children in a profoundly negative way.”

With Compassionate Touch, Cotta believes you can reintroduce the idea of touch in a safe way. “The whole process begins when one child asks another for permission to touch, which is just one of its safeguards.” And though the book is fiction, “The results are real. We’ve seen huge decreases in aggression and increases in positive behaviors, which our society sorely needs.”

“That’s why this book is about a lot more than touch,” Cotta says. “It’s really about how children can begin to change the world for the better.”

To learn more about the Compassionate Touch program contact

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To purchase a copy of “I Can Show You I Care,” Call 1.866.522.7725 or visit

<http://shop.iahe.com/Product-List/Health-and-Wellness/I-Can-Show-You-I-Care>

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## Results of the Compassionate Touch Program

### Positive Behaviors Increased

#### Cooperation:

- Finishes class assignments within time limits
- Uses time appropriately while waiting for help
- Produces correct schoolwork
- Follows directions
- Puts work materials or school property away
- Ignores peer distractions when doing class work

- Keeps desk clean and neat without being reminded
- Attends to teacher instructions
- Easily makes transition from one classroom activity to another

Assertion:

- Introduces self to new people without being told
- Appropriately questions rules that may be unfair
- Says nice things about self when appropriate
- Invites others to join in activities
- Makes friends easily
- Initiates conversations with peers
- Appropriately tells you when he or she thinks you have treated him or her unfairly
- Gives compliments to peers
- Volunteers to help peers with classroom tasks
- Joins ongoing activity or group without being told to do so

Self-Control:

- Controls temper in conflict situation with peers
- Compromises in conflict situations by changing own ideas to reach agreement
- Responds appropriately to peer pressure
- Responds appropriately to teasing by peers
- Receives criticism well

- Accepts peers' ideas for group activities
- Cooperates with peers without prompting
- Responds appropriately when pushed or hit by other children
- Gets along with people who are different

### Negative Behaviors Decreased

#### Externalizing:

- Fights with others
- Gets angry easily

#### Hyperactivity:

- Is easily distracted
- Interrupts conversations of others
- Disturbs ongoing activities
- Doesn't listen to what others say
- Fidgets or moves excessively