

Little Ant is Approaching

Words by: Yuen Wing Tung Stephanie, Ho Sze Hau Cecilia, One One
Pictures by: One One

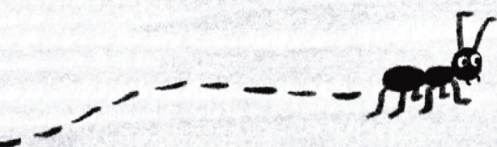






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Daddy was going to play in a football match today.
“Mommy and I are your cheering team!” I said excitedly.





Daddy went to warm up after we arrived at the football ground.



Mommy and I sat at the spectator stand. She took out a mosquito repellent.



Ew...No!



"I know you hate the smell, but do you remember what happened last week?" Mommy asked.



I went to birdwatching with daddy that day.



A fire ant stung
my leg.



"I was worried when I saw you suffering from the pain and itchiness. I hope the mosquito repellent can protect you from insect bites." Mommy explained patiently.

I was glad that mommy cared my feelings and shared with me her loving intentions.





Neither did I want to be stung again nor my mommy to worry about me.
“Alright!” I held my breath bravely to let mommy spray on me.



Whistle blew and game started.

While I was searching for daddy, a black little ant came into my sight.

...AH AH AH!



A neighbour girl walked to me and
said, "Hey there, you look scared."

Mommy told her my bad experience
with ant.





She smiled and said, “I can see why you are afraid of ants, but they don’t necessarily bite. Do you want to know why this little ant walk to you?”

If this ant did not want to
bite, what was its intention?
I nodded curiously.





She turned to the ant, "Why do you come close, little ant?"
She had her ear to the ground looking for the answer.

“Little ant gets lost and
feels helpless. It is
hoping to find its
way back home.”





It dawned on me that little ant was just looking for my help. I was sorry that I misunderstood it.

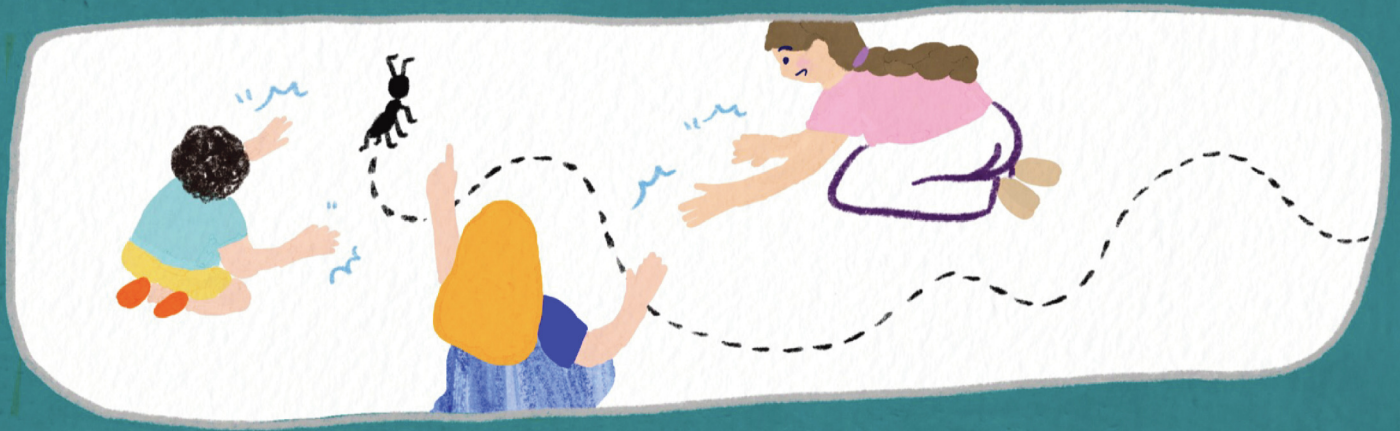
**“Do you want to
help little ant?”
The girl invited me.**



**Little ant must be very lost
and panic. I wanted to be
its guide!**



She demonstrated how to lead by blocking the wrong way.
“Little ant will know this is a dead end.”



We guided the ant back to the grassland together.



"Goodbye, little ant."



Mommy turned to me and said, "I am grateful that you offer help to the ant!"



“Little ant will appreciate our effort in helping!” said the girl.

It was true that ants did not necessarily bite. Hope little ant could find its way home!



We returned to the spectator stand and realized daddy's team was a goal behind. But... the match was not yet over! Mommy and I shouted aloud together, "Come on, daddy!"



The key concept of the "40 Minutes @Harmony Space" project is compassionate communication. It advocates the use of a positive and non-violent way of self-expression in dealing with personal emotions, family dynamics, and other interpersonal relationships. We hope this book can promote compassionate communication to children, parents, and other professionals, at the same time, enhance their interest and motivation in learning about it.

"Little Ant is Approaching" describes an encounter between a child and an ant on a soccer ground. The child had a fear of ants because he preconceived that ants would harm him based on his previous experience of being stung by an ant. When he could guard down to try understanding the ant with compassion and curiosity, he naturally showed empathy and willingness to offer help.

Sometimes parents regard their kid's behavior as a deliberate challenge of authority. This belief brings tension to their parent-child relationship. They may even develop hostility towards each other, which will hinder their emotional connection, resulting in further misunderstandings and dissatisfactions. Parents have to put aside their criticism and create an open, friendly space for dialogue in order to achieve effective communication.

The Nature of Compassion

Many parents wish to foster kindness and empathy in their kids. They feel distressed when their kids are unable to take perspectives and have conflicts with peers. Compassionate communication assumes humans are all compassionate by nature. When children are capable of understanding people's feelings and needs, their kindness flourish naturally. Same as the boy in the story, when he could think and feel from the ant's perspectives, he chose to help.

The ability to understand people's mind starts to develop at around the age of 4 to 6. Children may be incapable to fully understand and infer the intentions of others before 6 years old. Parents play a facilitator role in guiding their kids to take perspectives and identifying other's feelings and needs. Repeated practice of this mode of compassionate communication helps nurture empathy and kindness.

Connections over Solutions

There are many compassionate dialogues in the story. We hope to demonstrate to parents the natural use of compassionate communication in everyday parenting situations through the interactions between story characters. In the scene where the mother tried to put on mosquito repellent for the child, the mother embraced the child's resistance. She soothed the child's emotions by affirming his emotions before expressing her worries and making suggestions.

Parents often go straight to teaching and hope to handle matters quickly. However, they forget the important step of connecting with their kids on the emotional level, which leads to communication failure. When children become emotional, label their feelings with words can help relieve the tension and restore calmness. They will also feel listened and develop trust in their parents. With an intimate relationship and a calm state of mind, problems can be resolved much effortlessly.

Four Elements of Compassionate Communication

There are four elements in a compassionate communication interaction:

-  **Observation:** Describe what you see, hear, taste, smell, and touch objectively.
-  **Feeling:** Express your inner feelings, such as happiness, disappointment etc.
-  **Need:** State the needs that you value and yearn to satisfy.
-  **Request:** Make clear, specific invitation and stay open with the result.

The above four elements facilitate the foster of empathy, expression of kindness, and development of emotional bonding among people. Parents can understand these four elements as a four-step cycle and learn compassionate parenting in a more systematic and structured way. Below highlighted the four elements in the interaction between the sister and the child:

The sister **heard**  the child's screaming and **saw**  him leaning to his mother.



 The sister recognized the child's **fear**  and acknowledged the emotion was due to a past bad experience with ant. She affirmed the child needed to be **protected** , hoping to avoid harm.

After soothing and connecting with the child, the sister **invited**  the child to hear the motives of the ant.



 With the child's consensus, the sister went over the four-step cycle again to **listen**  to the ant.

The sister explained to the child the ant's **helplessness**  and its act of seeking **help** .



 Allowed the boy to **decide**  if he wants to help.

Co-reading Suggestions

Before: Make personal connections and predictions of plots to arouse interest.

1. Have you ever seen ants before? Where? When? What was happening?
2. Can you find the ant on the cover page? Who is it heading to and why?

During: Explore the story development and clarify twists of plot.

1. Why did the child allow his mother to spray mosquito repellent on him?
2. Why did the child try to listen to the ant even he was scared?
3. Why did the boy want to help the ant to find its way home?

After: Link with personal experience to strengthen the spirit of kindness.

1. If you were the boy in the story, would you be willing to help the ant? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of other ways of helping the ant?
3. Share an experience of helping. How did you feel after offering help?

Extension Activities: Walk into different communities in Hong Kong. Explore the nature getting to know the plants and animals.

1. Look for traces of ants in daily life. Observe different types of ants and record them by drawing.
2. Visit Tai Po Kwong Fuk Football Ground and Mai Po Mangroves. Spot the scenes in the story, for examples public transport, animals and plants, streets etc.



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The child is terrified of ant due to a previous ant-bite experience. This time the child encounters another ant in a football court. Will the child continue to show resistance and avoid or be willing to let go of his guard and be acquainted with the little ant?



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