

Empathy

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This You Tube video shows a wonderful moment at Fenway Park when an entire stadium full of fans joined together in a show of solidarity with an autistic man.

It makes me recall a time some years ago when I was in a crowded movie theater in Harvard Square...the movie, I remember, was "Kill Bill"...and suddenly a man a few rows behind me began making bizarre barking noises quite loudly. At first the crowd was irritated and there were some pointed "Shhhh"s (I might have been one of them) but then within a very short time you could feel that the crowd realized the man had Tourette's Syndrome, couldn't control the noises he was making, and everyone became empathetic. It is hard to describe, because it was a darkened theater, with hundreds of strangers around me...but you could FEEL the shift in attitude. You can feel the same thing in this very touching video.

The question often arises of whether empathy can be taught. I don't know the answer to that. But I think awareness of the human condition can be taught...and modeled...and books (plus parents, teachers, friends and fellow humans) do play a role in that.

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