



## A Compassionate Sense of Wonder J. Ronald Lally

At PITC, we have as our goal for the socialization and guidance of children under five a concept that tries to encompass both the needs and rights of the individual child and the needs and rights of all other living things. This socializing goal we call “**A Compassionate Sense of Wonder**”. We selected this goal because we have seen that often when people socialize children to be a particular way – curious, independent, empathetic, obedient, altruistic, etc., they get more than what they have bargained for. They want children, for example, to be independent, but not so independent that they never rely on another for help or see themselves as part of interdependent community. Similarly, they want children to be curious, but don’t want them to think that it is fine to take their expensive watch apart in order to see what makes it tick. At PITC, we recommend that each socialization goal you develop should be framed in a “self in relation to others” context rather than just focusing on an unidirectional goal for self or another for getting along with others. All goals should be a mix of the following four attributes:

- confidence in self
- intellectual curiosity and interest
- a sense of deep connection with fellow humans and other living things
- a reverence for the planet

I have come to link these component parts under a construct I call “a compassionate sense of wonder.” A compassionate sense of wonder combines the sense of wonder with which a child comes into the world with a compassion that develops over time as a child learns about the impact of the environment and his or her impact on others. A sense of wonder by itself can be ruthless, egocentric, and destructive. A sense of compassion by itself can be very passive. The coupling of a sense of wonder with compassion in children provides the world with curious, experimental, creative problem solvers who go out into the world with a feeling of connectedness with others, sharing that world, and filled with a sense of cooperation.

Living a life with a compassionate sense of wonder is a way of living that is:

- curious, but not destructive
- bright, but not manipulative
- confident, but not obnoxious
- altruistic, and initiating
- powerful, and considerate
- creative and responsible