

# Rita Marie Johnson

Educator, author, speaker, and award-winning innovator Rev. Rita Marie Johnson has been sharing her message and her method worldwide for almost 15 years. The “Connection Practice” she pioneered, now used by individuals, schools, faith-based communities, non-profits and businesses, brought her the *Ashoka Changemakers Innovation Award: Building a More Ethical Society*, chosen from 79 projects in 32 countries.

Rita Marie grew up on a farm near Kansas City, Missouri. She received her B.A. in Psychology from the University of Missouri. She moved to Costa Rica in 1993.

In 1997, Rita Marie founded the Rasur Foundation and the School of Rasur, both named for a Costa Rican poem that inspired her vision for humanity. The small school served disadvantaged Costa Rican children.

Rita Marie’s educational endeavour evolved into a search for a social-emotional method that could prevent violence. Learning Nonviolent Communication (NVC) led her to the realization that empathy is most efficiently attained through a conscious connection to feelings and needs. Through HeartMath, she found that insight is most reliably accessed through heart-brain coherence.

Rita Marie discovered a synergy between empathy and insight that maximizes social-emotional intelligence, eliminates unnecessary suffering and leads to life-enriching choices. This epiphany resulted in the Connection Practice, which works for people of all ages and from all walks of life. The creators of NVC and HeartMath supported her in the development of this work.

In 2004, Rita Marie offered the Connection Practice in Costa Rican public schools. Now over 1500 teachers have been trained, impacting approximately 40,000 students each year. Annual evaluations revealed that bullying, intolerance, conflicts, violence and misconduct reports had decreased.

Rita Marie heard of efforts to establish a Dept. of Peace in the United States. With board members from the Rasur Foundation, she initiated a bill in Costa Rica’s legislative assembly in 2006 to establish a Ministry for Peace and it passed in 2009. She founded a US non-profit, Rasur Foundation International, in the same year, and began to teach the Connection Practice in the United States and other countries. Beginning in 2010, Rita Marie taught the Connection Practice as a credit course at the United Nations University for Peace, a graduate school for international leaders.

In 2015, Rita Marie wrote ***Completely Connected: Uniting Our Empathy and Insight for Extraordinary Results***, an Amazon bestseller in Conflict Resolution and in Communication and Social Skills, which has been endorsed by Eileen Rockefeller and President Oscar Arias, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. In 2016, the book won a silver Nautilus Award in the Psychology category.

In addition to presenting seminars in the USA, Canada, Japan, Europe and Central America, Rita Marie has been a keynote speaker at a Global Summit for Ministries and Departments for Peace, a Rotary International Peace Conference and a Peace Alliance Conference in Washington DC. She currently serves as CEO of Rasur Foundation International. She makes her home with her dog, Millie, in Gilroy, California.