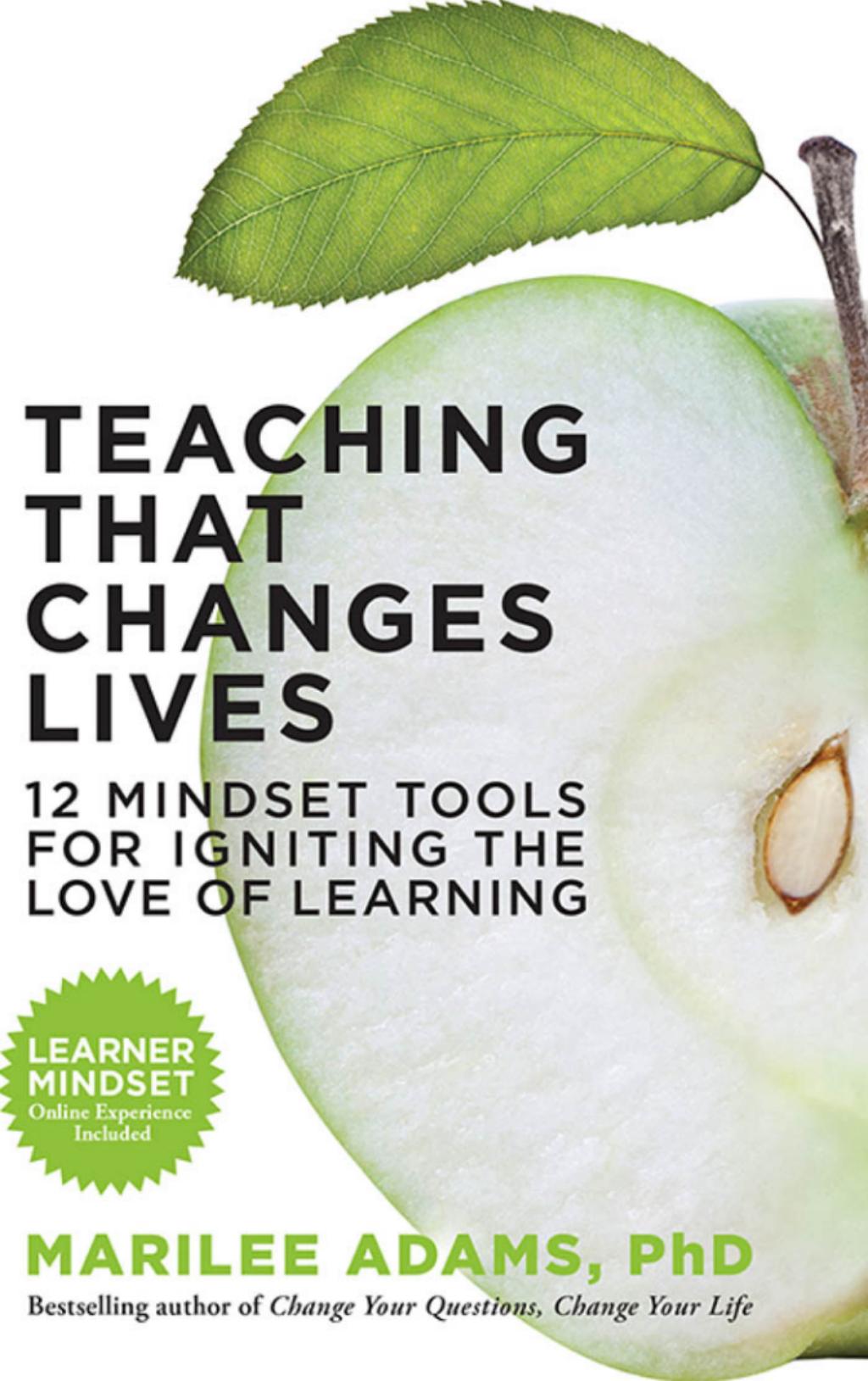


An Excerpt From

***Teaching That Changes Lives
12 Mindset Tools For Igniting the Love of Learning***

by Marilee Adams
Published by Berrett-Koehler Publishers



TEACHING THAT CHANGES LIVES

12 MINDSET TOOLS FOR IGNITING THE LOVE OF LEARNING



**LEARNER
MINDSET**

Online Experience
Included

MARILEE ADAMS, PhD

Bestselling author of *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*

More Praise for *Teaching That Changes Lives*

“Marilee Adams is an engaging writer. Using the medium of storytelling, she clearly explains the importance of developing a Learner mindset and the necessity for educators to create inquiry-based learning environments infused with curiosity, creativity, and caring. Any educator in higher education and K–12 is sure to benefit from reading this valuable and practical book.”

—**Patrick Blessinger, founder and Executive Director, International Higher Education Teaching and Learning Association**

“Offers a methodology for compassion...honors the power of the question and provides a gentle guide to a better kind of leadership. Great message. Very readable with tools and ideas that are easy to hold on to.”

—**Peter Block, bestselling author of *Stewardship and Community***

“Dr. Adams has created a fundamental framework that’s sure to lead educators, administrators, and students toward increased collaboration, problem solving, and greater success. This book is a must-read for anyone who cares about education and cares about the future. That means just about all of us.”

—**Naomi Drew, educational consultant and author of *No Kidding about Bullying***

“Every teacher can find himself or herself in this story. We all have days when self-doubt or frustration threatens to overtake our passion and commitment for teaching. *Teaching That Changes Lives* reveals the power of every teacher’s mindset to create a classroom climate that opens children’s minds, helping every student become engaged with and love deep learning. This is a must-read for everyone who touches the curious minds of children—a message that has powerful implications for changing schools and changing lives.”

—**Victoria Duff, President, Learning Forward New Jersey, and Senior Consultant, Center for Results, Learning Forward**

“What a joy it was to read your book! You are sharing numerous underlying messages about hope, the power of asking positive questions, the importance of knowing one’s students, learning styles, making mistakes and learning from them, and more. This exciting book will undoubtedly have a far-reaching and generative influence on teachers and students at all levels.”

—**Jenny Edwards, PhD, Professor, School of Educational Leadership and Change, Fielding Graduate University**

“Marilee’s work has changed the life of my campus.”

—**Verna Fitzsimmons, PhD, CEO, Kansas State University Salina, and Dean, College of Technology and Aviation**

“Best education book ever! Leverage the power of choice to ignite a passion for learning and change lives. Not only will you energize yourself as you read Marilee’s dynamic book, you will finally have the tools to enrich the lives of your students as you challenge them to claim their greatness.”

—**Vicki Halsey, PhD, Vice President, The Ken Blanchard Companies, and author of *Brilliance by Design***

“We have seen over and again that our mindsets impact all aspects of our work, forming the very foundation of trust, growth, and collaboration essential for achieving a positive staff culture, strong school culture, and, ultimately, academic success with our scholars. This book gives individuals at all school levels the tools necessary for building positive Learner mindsets...provides the ‘missing link’ in how to have a strong staff culture.”

—**Camilla Lopez, Principal, and Kevin Lohela, Academic Dean, Achievement First Crown Heights Elementary School**

“This beautiful narrative, evoking the struggles and victories of real people and real situations, awakens our hopes and aspirations for igniting the love of learning, not just for our students but within the very heart of our own teaching...as useful for youth workers, camp counselors, and parents as it is for classroom teachers.”

—**John McAuley, President and CEO, The Leadership Studio at Muskoka Woods, Canada**

“This book is a beautiful and compelling illustration of the power of positive psychology and resilience theory in education!”

—**Caroline Adams Miller, Master of Applied Positive Psychology and bestselling coauthor of *Creating Your Best Life***

“This is truly an inspiring story of learning and change. I love that change and learning did not happen just to students but to teachers as well...illustrates the impact of emotional intelligence in action...The transformative process embedded in the storyline is deeply beneficial and enlightening.”

—**Kenneth Rhee, PhD, Associate Professor and Director, Executive Leadership and Organizational Change Program, Northern Kentucky University**

“If every teacher in America read this book, I believe it would have an incredible impact on student learning. Dr. Adams helps the reader identify and manage two powerful mindsets that live behind all our actions—the Judger and the Learner. If you are looking for a clear path for improving the learning of your students through your professional learning communities, this book will be indispensable for making that happen!”

—**James L. Roussin, coauthor of *Guiding Professional Learning Communities and Implementing Change through Learning***

“*Teaching That Changes Lives* kick-starts the learning journey for teachers, students, and school communities. Appreciative Inquiry in education is a perfect fit with the insightful questions and choices presented in this highly readable, usable book. Dr. Adams has made a major contribution to the strengths-focused education community.”

—**Marge Schiller, PhD, founder, Positive Change Core, and coauthor of *Appreciative Leaders***

“An uplifting book with meaningful, appreciative strategies for teachers committed to making a positive difference in their students’ lives...a genuine contribution to teachers and learners in any setting.”

—**Jacqueline M. Stavros, DM, Professor, Lawrence Technological University, and coauthor of *The Appreciative Inquiry Handbook***

“Teaching That Changes Lives reminds us that at the heart of all good education are inquiry and a Learner mindset. This engaging and thoughtful book is filled with examples and simple, practical tools for creating a climate of learning where we can challenge our assumptions and change the questions we ask ourselves to build the education system of the future.”

—**Kathy Telban, MEd, CPT, SPHR, Director of Curriculum and Assessment, Cuyahoga Community College, Cleveland, Ohio**

“Teaching That Changes Lives wisely reminds us that authentic teaching requires that we must model the behavior we teach or we cannot hope to influence the behavior—or the future—of our students.”

—**Robert M. Tobias, JD, Director, Key Executive Leadership Programs, American University**

“This book re-ignites the *raison d’être* for teaching—to change lives. Marilee gives teachers powerful and simple methods for getting on track for what *real teaching* and *real learning* are all about.”

—**Dr. Henry Toi, founder and CEO, Nurture Craft Education Group, Singapore, and Publisher, *Brain Capital Magazine***



**TEACHING
THAT
CHANGES
LIVES**

Other books by Marilee Adams

Change Your Questions, Change Your Life, Berrett-Koehler

**The Art of the Question: A Guide to Short-Term
Question-Centered Therapy**, Wiley



TEACHING THAT CHANGES LIVES

12 Mindset Tools for Igniting the Love of Learning

Marilee Adams, PhD



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Teaching that Changes Lives

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DEDICATION

*With respect and gratitude
for Dr. Bill Friedman and
every teacher who believes
that teaching changes lives*



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FOREWORD



We have devoted many years as educators to writing and teaching about the Habits of Mind—dispositions needed for productive thinking and problem-solving. Although many people refer to these dispositions as “soft skills” because their measurement does not yield “hard data,” we nonetheless believe that these are essential skills that students need in order to succeed in the increasingly complex, uncertain future that awaits them. Happily, we are part of a large and growing community of educational authors, thought leaders, and teachers who share this belief and whose work is making a solid difference in many countries around the world. With *Teaching that Changes Lives*, Dr. Marilee Adams joins this constellation, contributing her insightful work on mindsets and questioning for the benefit and satisfaction of students and teachers alike.

Through the rich traditions of teaching through story-telling, Dr. Adams demonstrates how our mindsets—the perceptions we hold of the world—impact our students, our colleagues, and ourselves. In this engaging educational story, Marilee has captured key emotional and intellectual challenges that teachers encounter in today’s classrooms, while weaving in practical, time-tested tools for meeting these challenges. The characters, drawn from real life, demonstrate how it is possible to literally *change the weather* in the classroom to gain optimal rapport, engagement, responsiveness, and learning.

The concept so artfully presented here is how a teacher’s mindset, cognitive processes, beliefs, and mental models affect their behaviors and their ability to connect with their students.

Through the story we become aware of how our external, observable human behaviors are a result of our inner thoughts, decisions, and perceptions. The author leads us to the practical consideration of how a teacher can manage his or her mindset even in challenging circumstances.

Teaching that Changes Lives offers insights and tools to help teachers recognize and choose their own mindsets, building consciousness and skills for leading their classrooms and enhancing their students' learning. This mindset work holds real promise for contributing to the intellectual and emotional development of students. At the end of the book, Dr. Adams has included a comprehensive workbook with 12 practical, easy to apply tools for thinking about our own thinking and gaining new awareness of options and interventions that are congruent with our intentions. This material is an invaluable contribution to the body of work available for professional development for educators.

The implications of this work are not just for educators, however, but are for all of us to become more metacognitive in life—becoming more aware and skillful with our choices and decision-making processes, and more mindful of our actions and their effects on others, both in our schools and in our lives in general. *Teaching that Changes Lives* is a valuable contribution to our field. And it is an important reminder of the cognitive and collaborative skills required for encouraging more thoughtful students, classrooms and schools—as well as for building the next generations of thoughtful leaders who believe in their power to change themselves and thereby change the world.

Arthur L. Costa, Ed.D., Granite Bay, CA

Bena Kallick, Ph.D., Westport, CT

Co-authors, *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind*:

16 Characteristics of Success

Co-founders, The International Institute for Habits of Mind

INTRODUCTION



MINDSETS FOR LEARNING

The hidden curriculum . . . is the teacher's own integrity and lived conviction . . . It is the message which is written in a teacher's eyes throughout the course of his or her career. It is the lesson which endures a lifetime.

Jonathan Kozol

You wouldn't be reading this book today had it not been for the teacher who changed my life. As a youngster I was never a star student, though I always had a book in hand, often reading at night with a flashlight under the covers or hiding in the closet to finish a story long after my parents thought I was asleep. While I loved to read, school was often a struggle for me and I had little confidence in my own abilities. It was in graduate school that a single teacher, Dr. Bill Friedman, provided that magical combination of caring, connection, and intellectual conscientiousness wherein I was able to flourish. While Bill was demanding, he was also kind and patient, always letting me know he believed I could live up to the high standards he set for me. Over the years he helped me hone my natural curiosity into the kind of

disciplined question asking that is the foundation of critical and creative thinking—and thereby contributed to the path that has become my life’s work.

Through Bill’s tutelage I made some of the most significant changes of my life—in my mindset and in the beliefs I held about myself as a learner, thinker, and as a person. The evidence for those changes showed up in sometimes unexpected ways. Once, when another professor deeply critiqued one of my papers, I surprised myself by easily responding, “Okay. What do I need to learn to fix it?” If, instead, my old mindset had been in charge, I would have drowned in a familiar downward spiral of self-reprisal. Of course, that would have prevented me from learning from that professor and going on eventually to turn in an excellent paper. Now I remember that incident fondly as my matriculation into “mindset school,” where we are all perennial students.

Almost everyone agrees that the overarching purpose of education is to prepare students for the future, yet never before has the future been more difficult to predict or prepare for. To borrow Neil Postman’s metaphor, students who “enter school as question marks and leave as periods” will certainly be ill-prepared to face the uncertainty of a future where there are no easy answers. Consequently, being a teacher today is more challenging and potentially more exciting than ever before. The key is helping students develop excellent thinking skills¹ and the capacity to engage in vigorous problem-solving to tackle the novel situations that the future has yet to reveal. While it is essential that we teach the core skills of literacy, numeracy, and technology, students will need to be more curious and creative than ever before. They will need to be resilient and have effective skills for interacting and collaborating with others in positive and constructive ways.

This is why our schools and classrooms must provide environments that encourage students to develop a lifelong love

of learning. These proficiencies are so important to businesses and organizations that many emphasize “continuous improvement,” providing training focused on communication, decision-making, critical and creative thinking, building collaborative relationships, and general people skills.

Teaching interpersonal communication and thinking competencies is of a different order than teaching the ABCs or math, where “correct” answers are more easily tested. Even when students get all the right answers on subject area tests, it is no guarantee of their preparedness to pass the tests of life. Most of us recognize that answers typically *close* thinking while questions typically *open* it. Lest we forget, answers are only the *end point* of a process—they can be only as useful as the questions and thinking that *precede* them. In *Learning and Leading with Habits of Mind*, Doctors Arthur Costa and Bena Kallick write that we must be “... interested in not only how many answers students know, but also how students behave when they don’t know an answer. We are interested in observing how students produce knowledge, rather than how they merely reproduce it. A critical attribute of intelligent human beings is not only having information but also knowing how to act on it.”²

As fundamental as questions are for attaining knowledge and living our lives, it is easy to overlook the importance of the mindset from which a question is launched. One’s mindset will have a huge impact on any answers or results that might follow. In the words of Stanford University researcher Carol S. Dweck, “When you enter a mindset you enter a new world.”³ She cites compelling evidence for the impact of mindset in multiple areas, especially in learning and intelligence, and discusses how mindset interventions can even help resolve conflicts between longstanding adversaries.⁴

Dr. Dweck’s formidable research on the distinctions between what she calls the “growth mindset” and the “fixed

mindset” is conceptually aligned with the Learner and Judger mindsets described in this book and in my two previous books, *The Art of the Question: A Guide to Short-Term Question-Centered Therapy*⁵ and *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life: 10 Powerful Tools for Life and Work*.⁶ An international bestseller, *Change Your Questions* was originally intended for a business and organizational audience but has acquired a wide readership among educators. These books illustrate how skillful “mindset management” can be strengthened through developing greater facility with the quantity and quality of the questions we ask ourselves and others.

Teaching that Changes Lives focuses first on the teacher’s mindset and the impact of that mindset—Learner or Judger—on their students, and on their own satisfaction with the experience of teaching. As you read the pages ahead, you’ll also see how these same skills increase teachers’ job satisfaction, which according to reliable studies has hit the lowest point in a quarter of a century.⁷

The skills outlined in these pages help us stay calm and present in order to think clearly and strategically from moment to moment, including when leading a classroom. These skills also help us successfully manage difficult situations that are a part of everyday life in many classrooms. The focus is on cultivating the Learner mindset for professional development, enriching the climate of learning, whether it’s with whole classrooms, individual students and colleagues, parents, or professional learning communities.

In writing *Teaching That Changes Lives*, I chose to employ the same allegorical form as I used with *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*. According to the *Wikipedia*, allegory is “a device in which characters or events in a story, poem, or picture

represent or symbolize ideas and concepts.” Successful allegory takes us deeper into our own lives, empowering us with new thinking, skills, and possibilities. My readers often share how much they have personally benefited from the mixture of story and practical application that the allegorical form provides “lessons embedded in a page turner.”

The narrator of the story is Emma Shepherd, a sixth grade teacher who is a composite of many people I have known and worked with. Hopefully you’ll find the story of Emma’s struggles, insights, and breakthroughs to be engaging and enjoyable to read, while keeping in mind that her character is a vehicle for illustrating the Learner Mindset System at the heart of this book. Another main character is Dr. Sophie Goodwin, a university professor in a school of education. Dr. Goodwin’s early work developing the mindset system of tools had a powerful impact on Emma, when she had Sophie as her sixth grade teacher.

The mindset and questioning lessons woven throughout Emma’s story are rendered into 12 practical, easy to apply tools presented in a workbook at the back of the book. Throughout the story there are instructive graphics, pull quotes, and tables that augment the text. At the end of the book there is also a link to free digital tools for reinforcing the lessons of the book.

Much of Emma’s story takes place in her sixth grade classroom. I had very specific goals in choosing this grade as the setting for the story. First and foremost, this age group constitutes an important milestone, when students often develop their own intellectual interests and passions, sometimes independent of what they’re being taught at school. Many educators and brain scientists believe that if we can deeply engage students in learning and thinking by sixth grade, we can not only keep them in school longer but encourage their continuing intellectual, social, and emotional development. Almost everyone understands that

we need to find better ways of accomplishing this end. Dropout statistics indicate that a quarter of American students drop out of high school before graduation, and in urban areas those statistics are even more distressing.⁸ Perhaps it's not surprising that teacher job satisfaction has also declined significantly.⁹

As I've mentioned, many educators have already read *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*. If you are one of them, you'll find that these two books complement one another. While the settings, characters, and stories are different, both books focus on the importance of mindsets, thinking, and questioning to achieve desired results. *Teaching that Changes Lives* illustrates how the mindset tools that have proven so successful for readers of *Change Your Questions* can make a similar positive difference in the world of education. When teachers strengthen their ability to manage their own mindsets skillfully and intentionally, they become more effective and satisfied as educators. When students strengthen their ability to manage their own mindsets skillfully and intentionally, they become more effective and satisfied as learners.

Emma's story illustrates how she uses her newfound mindset skills to great benefit with her students and colleagues, and for herself personally.

It is my heartfelt desire that *Teaching that Changes Lives* might contribute to each reader's greater fulfillment and success as a teacher, educational leader, parent, or student. I can think of no better way to pay homage to my own teachers and what they contributed to my life. You can imagine how gratifying it was for me to find Bill—the teacher who helped change my life so long ago—and let him know I've dedicated this book to him!

CHAPTER 1



THE ALCHEMY OF INQUIRY

Not just part of us becomes a teacher.

It engages the whole self...

Sylvia Ashton-Warner

I leaned against the kitchen counter at our home on Cedar Avenue, gazing out the window into the backyard. Since it was during the Thanksgiving break at my school, our cherry tree was bare, the grass lifeless and brown. But inside, sunlight streamed through the stained glass artwork which hung in the kitchen window behind the sink, sending little rainbows of light all around the room. Tiny facets of color danced over my arms and apron. The real magic to me, however, glowed through the big question mark at the center of this artwork. Set in a simple wooden frame, a bit larger than a 3-ring binder, that colorful stained glass image was a poignant reminder of Sophie Goodwin, who had been my teacher in the sixth grade, a year that dramatically changed my life. Much later, when I myself began teaching, Sophie became the most important mentor I could ever have wished for.

At the bottom of the frame was a small silver plaque that Sophie had had inscribed years before. She said this quote had been a guiding principle throughout her life:

The important thing is to not stop questioning.

Albert Einstein

Why that quote was so important to her was a mystery at first. As a child, I couldn't have begun to imagine the essential relationship between Einstein's words and what Sophie would teach me about questioning, mindsets, thinking, learning, and listening. What I did know for certain was that Sophie had a miraculous ability to create a safe, open, and inviting climate for learning. She connected with her students in ways that awakened our minds so that we became more engaged and successful learners. I had experienced something in Sophie's very being, that is, in who she was when she walked into the classroom, that changed how I thought about myself and how I felt and thought about the world.

Many people said her abilities were a gift one is born with, the way some people say that a gifted artist's or musician's or scientist's gifts are innate and not something one can learn. However, Sophie would clearly show that her gift and her impact on students *could* be learned. After retiring from classroom teaching, she earned her doctorate, became a professor in a school of education and began mentoring other teachers, teaching them the tools she had developed over her lifetime as an educator. Veteran teachers, those just entering the profession, administrators, and educational leaders were soon finding their way to her classes.

As important as she'd been for me in the sixth grade, I had lost touch with Sophie until my second year of teaching, when

I was facing a crisis in my profession, and was on the verge of quitting. As a child, Sophie's influence changed how I thought about myself and my capacities as a student. Now, as an adult and a teacher, her wisdom helped me avoid what would have been one of the most disastrous decisions of my life. Only as an adult would I learn from her how to *apply* her wisdom and tools in an intentional and systematic way. And I believe I changed the person I am whenever I walk into a classroom. That's what this story is about. But more than that, this book is my way of honoring Sophie's dream of making her innovative and practical teachings widely available and easily accessible to others.

Sophie's work is not part of any formal curriculum you might run across. But I believe it is fundamental to helping teachers manage the incredible pressures they experience while also reaching their most gifted students as well as those who are struggling. Today, thanks to Sophie's methods, I am able to be the teacher I've always dreamed of being, leaving the classroom at the end of each day satisfied that I've made a valuable contribution.

This book has been a labor of love as I relived my experiences as Sophie's student and recorded what she later taught me about teaching when she became my mentor.

To give some background: Right after my graduate training, and eager to start teaching, I spent the whole summer job-hunting, but jobs were scarce for new teachers. I was on the verge of giving up and applying for a job at a coffee shop when a friend suggested I look into Greenfield Elementary, a school in transition, thanks to budget cuts and certain problems they were experiencing. There had been school closings in the district and several teachers had quit. The principal, Dr. Malstrom, who'd been there for years, had recently taken early retirement. Class sizes had been increased and non-academic programs dropped.

The school district was looking for teachers who would come in at the bottom of the scale, with minimal benefits. It didn't sound great, but at least I would be *teaching!* I'd figure out how to make it work for me.

On the plus side, the school had a new principal, Dr. Bob Marshall, who had already made a name for himself in education. I'd be co-teaching a combined fifth and sixth grade class with an experienced teacher's assistant, Mrs. Santiago. I accepted Greenfield's offer and my husband Jared and I rented a small house just a few miles from the school.

My first year at Greenfield went well enough, thanks to my own idealistic exuberance and Mrs. Santiago, who had four years of experience managing the classroom under the teacher I'd replaced. She had also been studying nights and summers to get her teaching certificate. I liked Mrs. Santiago, but felt she was clinging too much to methods she'd learned from Mrs. Peterson, and it seemed like she resisted almost any change I wanted to make. This became a growing source of conflict between us.

Like most schools in transition, morale had been low at Greenfield, though in the time he'd been there, Dr. Marshall had brought us a long way. He had secured additional funding, including a grant for a new computer lab, and we'd had a small increase in enrollment when a charter school merged their program with ours. Dr. Marshall's predecessor, Dr. Malstrom, had left behind more than a few wounds and antiquated policies that some of the staff didn't want changed. Dr. Marshall definitely had his work cut out for him. In spite of the progress he'd made, there were some teachers, Ms. Privet chief among them, who were still fighting to retain the old principal's methods and considered Dr. Marshall too *nice*. He seemed to take this resistance in stride, winning over his adversaries one by one, patiently, confidently, and with great skill. His plan was to build

a collaborative learning community at Greenfield and he knew this couldn't happen by forcing people to immediately comply with new ideas and policies.

Mrs. Santiago and I had a combined class of 34 students, many of whom required more individual help than we had time for. I worried about the underachievers, of course. But I also worried whether our more eager students, even those who earned excellent grades, were learning how to *think*. As for discipline, we were still limping along with Dr. Malstrom's archaic point system that was posted on the bulletin board. The *best* kids got stars after their names; those who misbehaved got big Xs after their names and were threatened with calls to their parents, which most kids dreaded. Being a particularly regressive system, this chart was one of the few things Mrs. Santiago and I seemed to be in agreement on. We both wanted to change it. But there always seemed to be more pressing issues, so discussing it was put on hold.

In spite of it all, our class was doing okay. Our achievement scores were acceptable but this wasn't any great comfort to me. What bothered me most was what I was *not delivering* to our kids. By the middle of my second year of teaching, I was worn down by all my doubts, the burgeoning, distracting incidentals, and the extra duties I had to fulfill that had little to do with teaching. I felt overworked, stressed, and certainly underappreciated.

I often recalled how excited and engaged I'd felt in Mrs. Goodwin's class and longed to be able to create that same experience with my own students. Why did so many of our students seem unenthusiastic and disengaged? What was I missing? Education had to be more than what Mrs. Santiago and I were providing. Was it the kids—too much TV, too many hours playing electronic games, lack of parental guidance, a system gone awry? Regardless of the answers to those questions, I knew one thing for sure: what I experienced as a teacher fell far short of

what I'd dreamed was possible. I had never been so discouraged and disillusioned. There were days when a job at a coffee shop began to look pretty good to me.

One afternoon Jared picked me up after school. We'd made a date to shop for a new sofa, our first major purchase together if you didn't count the car we'd bought the year before. After that we had planned to treat ourselves to dinner at our favorite restaurant. But I wasn't feeling enthusiastic about anything. It had been a particularly frustrating day at school, culminating in an argument with Mrs. Santiago over practically nothing. I'd ended up apologizing but I was sure it was going to leave bad feelings.

Jared and I pulled into the parking lot at the mall and he shut off the engine of the car. Instead of getting out right away he reached over and lightly rested his hand on my shoulder.

"What's going on with you lately?" he asked. "You seem a million miles away."

I wanted to lean over, lay my head on his shoulder and have him assure me that everything was going to be okay. But I knew he couldn't fix what was wrong. I admit I can get a little edgy when I've reached my limits, and this was one of those days. I just wanted to go home, climb into bed, and pull the covers over my head.

"I'm wondering why I ever got into teaching," I blurted out. "It isn't turning out the way I expected. Not at all."

Jared looked shocked, and a bit irritated.

"But that's been your dream for as long as I've known you," he said. "Can't you talk to a supervisor or something? Maybe your principal? There have to be other teachers who could help you."

Truth be told, I desperately wanted to talk with other teachers, but it seemed like everyone had their own problems. And anyway, why would they care about me, a relative newcomer? If I told Dr. Marshall about my dissatisfactions, I was pretty sure

he'd dismiss me on the spot, or at least start looking for someone to replace me. Sitting there in the car, I tried to tell Jared about what was bothering me and he did his best to understand. I had a long list of grievances. Mostly, however, I had questions: Why did I feel so dissatisfied and down on myself about being a teacher? Why didn't I feel excited about teaching? Why didn't I feel more connected with my students? And why couldn't I make things work better with Mrs. Santiago? Most of the time, I just felt annoyed and resentful toward her.

These thoughts and feelings plagued me even more than the escalating pressures of too much paperwork, too little time, and too little money in the budget for some of the things Mrs. Santiago and I wanted for the classroom. Not to mention the omnipresent awareness that both of us were technically *on probation*. Any day we could get the news that we wouldn't be hired back for the coming year. I had tried to remind myself to take it one day at a time, but that old adage was wearing thin.

Jared and I sat and talked for a long time, and he did his best to be helpful. The only thing that came out of it was the decision to put off buying a new sofa. Taking on another big expense when I was so unsettled about my job didn't make sense. We cancelled our dinner reservation and picked up a pizza on our way home. I felt terrible about spoiling the evening but couldn't pretend any longer that everything was okay.

My self-doubts gnawed at me more each day as I racked my brain for solutions. Maybe I just wasn't cut out for teaching after all. I couldn't go on the way things had been going. It finally came to a head late one Friday afternoon as I sat alone in my empty classroom. In the distance I heard the whine of the janitors' vacuums and the shouts of children out on the playground. I stared off into space, feeling like the dark cloud hovering over my head would be there forever. Where was the excitement

about learning I'd experienced as a young student? Mrs. Goodwin had worked her magic on all of us when we were kids, but it was painfully obvious I didn't have her gifts or her patience. I wasn't as good as she was, and never would be.

What happened next certainly wasn't a plan on my part but a reaction to the dissatisfaction and frustration I'd felt building up in me. As I was leaving school I noticed that Dr. Marshall's door was open and he was doing some paperwork. He looked up as I knocked lightly and apologized for disturbing him. He smiled and gestured to a chair across from his desk, inviting me to sit down.

I knew I needed to say what I had to before I changed my mind or lost my courage. Once I got started, the words came out in a rush. "I thought I should tell you that I'm seriously considering leaving teaching. I'll finish out the year but if someone comes along to replace me, I'll step aside."

As these words left my lips I felt a big knot twisting in my stomach.

"Every Monday morning when I walk into school," I continued, focusing my eyes on a light-colored rectangle where a picture had once hung on the wall behind Dr. Marshall, "I just feel hollow. I know it's because I'm not delivering what these kids deserve and what they need. Isn't that proof that this isn't where I belong?"

When I turned my attention back to Dr. Marshall's face, I was startled to discover that he was actually smiling, not unkindly, but as if he just had some brilliant insight.

"Emma," he said, "this may sound crazy to you right now, but I believe your misgivings say something positive about you. I hear your concerns, and I've observed your teaching. I can tell how much you care about your students and about teaching. Believe me, I would never have renewed your contract if I hadn't been

pretty sure of you.” He paused, I guess to let his words sink in. Then he added, “Fortunately, I know someone who may be able to help you. I’m sure she’d be willing to speak with you if I ask her.”

He told me that some years ago, he’d been at a similar life impasse. He’d almost left education until he learned about the importance of mindsets and asking new questions that transformed what he thought was possible. He said that some kind of alchemy happens when we change the questions we ask ourselves. My face must have expressed bewilderment because he chuckled and added, “You’ll find out what I mean soon enough.” He didn’t go into details, but tapped a few keys on his keyboard, then jotted something on the back of one of his own cards for me.

“I’m sure you’ll like this woman very much. Please speak with her before you make a decision. She’s semi-retired but teaches at the university and still mentors a few teachers. I’ll give her a call and let her know you’ll be contacting her. After you’ve met with her, let’s get together and discuss your next steps.”

I took the card and nodded, wondering what I had gotten myself into. I thanked him, went out to the parking lot, and climbed into my car.

I slumped behind the wheel and wondered if I had made a big mistake by talking with Dr. Marshall. Had he been nice to me, bolstering my morale, only because he didn’t want to bother looking for another teacher? Would admitting my shortcomings hurt my record? No matter. What’s done was done. I glanced down at his card, stared at his name for a second and then turned the card over.

This had to be a mistake! The name he’d written on the card was Dr. Sophie Goodwin. Could this be *my* Sophie Goodwin, my sixth grade teacher? That would be too much of a coincidence.

Driving home that afternoon, I kept seeing Mrs. Goodwin's face in my mind's eye and remembering moments from her classroom. What a wonderful year that had been in my life. I'd been this plugging-along kid before that, making do and just getting by. During her class I came alive to the experience of thinking and learning, even enjoying working on projects with other students. Mrs. Goodwin had been the first person to plant ideas in my mind of going into teaching someday. Who am I kidding? She was practically the first person to recognize that I even existed. At least that was how it felt at the time.

At home, I did a computer search for the university where Mrs. Goodwin taught, then clicked through to the faculty bios. My heart skipped a beat as Mrs. Goodwin's picture came up on my screen. Though she looked older than the idea of her in my mind, there was no mistaking that smile. It really *was* her. And she really had become *Doctor Sophie Goodwin!*

I started to dash off an email to the address listed with her bio. Then I thought better of it and decided on a handwritten note. The next day I bought a card with a beautiful nature scene and wrote her a message, including my email address and information about myself, such as when I'd been her student, and how Dr. Marshall had suggested I meet with her. After mailing the card, I felt hopeful for the first time in weeks. If anyone could help me, it would be Mrs. Goodwin.

It seemed like an eternity passed with no reply. Had Dr. Marshall told her something about me that put her off? I could hardly imagine Mrs. Goodwin not responding right away. Poor Jared had to listen to all my anxieties as I waited for her reply.

Then one morning an email from Mrs. Goodwin popped up on my screen. "I would love to meet with you," she said. She apologized for what she called her "tardiness." Personal matters had come up. She didn't give any details.

To my surprise she suggested that we meet the following Saturday at her place, about an hour's drive from my home. We'd have tea and talk things over, she'd said.

The morning of our meeting, I phoned to confirm the time. During the call I addressed her as Mrs. Goodwin, as was my habit. Embarrassed, I corrected myself: "I suppose I should call you *Doctor* Goodwin now."

She quickly corrected me: "Oh, for goodness sake, Emma, please call me Sophie. You don't need to be so formal, and besides, we're not in school anymore."

To a stranger's ears, those words might have meant very little. But for me they had a comforting inference. This was my hero, the teacher who'd changed my life. More to the point, her upbeat, optimistic tone made me feel better than I had in a long time. Maybe it was possible for me to pick up some of her teaching techniques. But maybe she'd simply help me clarify why I should change careers.

My answer would come over tea.

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CHAPTER 2



MINDSETS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Seek opportunities to show you care.

Kids don't remember what you try to teach them.

They remember what you are.

Jim Henson (Creator of The Muppets)

On Saturday, my GPS led me to Sophie's address at Hillview Apartments, an attractive building with large windows that let in plenty of light. It was surrounded by well-manicured lawns and beautifully tended flowerbeds.

I was buzzed in at the glass door in the vestibule and took the elevator to the third floor. As the door slid open, I found Sophie waiting for me in the hall. My heart skipped a beat. Her warm smile instantly reminded me of how *seen* and appreciated I had felt in her class. I had become the kind of student that had seemed impossible to me before that. Recalling all of this, I was nervous that she would be disappointed in me when she found out about my present problems. I was certain I hadn't lived up to her expectations.

Sophie gave me a brief hug which instantly put me at ease, just as her presence had made me feel more at ease in the sixth grade. I was startled by how frail she felt, reminding me of how much time had passed since I'd last seen her. But as she led me briskly down the hall to her apartment, she seemed as peppy and vital as ever. By the time we reached her door, she was excitedly sharing a story about the course she was teaching at the university, as if we were colleagues.

She gave me a quick tour of her apartment, explaining that she had moved here four years ago, soon after her husband died. It had been a difficult transition, she said, but she now felt quite connected to her new friends here.

Her expansive living room was furnished like a study, with floor-to-ceiling shelves along two walls, holding everything from children's books to the classics, as well as books on education and philosophy.

A large, high-definition computer monitor sat on a massive mahogany library table that I was sure must have an interesting history. Next to the computer keyboard were some leather-bound journals and stacks of paper that looked like a manuscript in progress. Was Sophie writing a book?

I turned my attention back to the screensaver on her computer monitor, which had aroused my curiosity the moment I saw it. It was some kind of map: *The Choice Map*, it said at the top of the screen.

“Does any of that look familiar?” Sophie asked, noticing my interest in the map.

“The Learner and Judger paths,” I puzzled. “I remember something about them. But not the map, though I do have a vague memory of some sketchy lines you drew on the white board.” As I studied the Choice Map, memories of her teachings about the Learner and Judger paths slowly made their way back into my mind.

There were two paths one could follow, each with distinctly different destinations. The Learner path led upwards to a beautiful bright sun. The Judger path led downward to a pool of mud. I couldn't help but notice a figure stuck in the mud who looked pretty miserable. That was how I'd been feeling lately—miserable and stuck in the mud.

I studied the figures on the different paths. They all had thought bubbles over their heads with questions that I quickly saw were very different, depending on which path they were on, the Learner mindset path or the Judger mindset one. I knew what mindsets were, of course, but I had lots to learn about Learner or Judger ones.

As I puzzled over the map, I remembered something Dr. Marshall had said about learning to manage his mindset by asking new questions that transformed what he thought was possible. Would this map help to explain what he was talking about?

"Make yourself comfortable while I get us some tea," Sophie said. She disappeared into the next room while I settled into a comfortable chair from which I could view the Choice Map. Sophie returned with a tray that held a beautiful hand-painted tea service.

Over tea and Sophie's delicious home-baked blueberry muffins, I gave her the *Cliff Notes* version of my life since the sixth grade. This retelling led naturally to my difficulties at school. Sophie listened with rapt attention, interrupting now and then to ask questions.

As our conversation progressed, we turned our attention to her Choice Map. She described how she had continued developing it long after I was her student. She said she thought it could help me now with the difficulties I had described in my note.

"Each year of teaching helped me refine what I was discovering about mindsets and how to reach my students," she said.

Choice Map™

We choose moment by moment



START

Choose

Learner Mindset
Judger Mindset

React

- Why am I such a failure?
- Why are they so stupid?
- Why bother?

JUDGER PIT

- What assumptions am I making?
- What are the facts?

- What happened?
- What do I want – for both myself and others?
- What can I learn?

- What are they thinking, feeling and wanting?
- Am I being responsible?

- What's possible?
- What are my choices?
- What's best to do now?



LEARNER

- Thoughtful Choices
- Solution Focused
- Win-Win Relating

SWITCH
Ask Learner Questions
to Avoid Judger Pit

Whose fault is it?

Switching Lane

- What's wrong with me?
- What's wrong with them?

JUDGER
• Automatic Reactions
• Blame Focused
• Win-Lose Relating



To download a color version
of the Choice Map and to see
a video explanation of it:
www.LearnerMindsetOnline.com

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“In the beginning, it was mostly intuitive and evolved from my observations about how children learn best. Today I use the Choice Map to demonstrate to my graduate students how our questions reflect our mental attitudes, that is, our *mindsets*, and how these mindsets can influence everything in our lives—how we think and feel and behave and interact with others. The term mindset represents the set of beliefs and assumptions we hold about ourselves, others, and the world. It’s mindsets that make all the difference. The Choice Map illustrates a whole system of mindset tools that can be helpful for teachers and students alike.

“It comes down to this: when you walk into the classroom, your own mindset makes all the difference in the world. It affects how you connect or don’t connect with each child, and in turn how they connect with you. That connection, of course, will influence what your students are able to take in. It affects what they feel is expected of them and how encouraged or discouraged they’ll be about learning to use their own minds and thinking for themselves. Your mindset creates the *climate*, the *weather* in the classroom.”

The term mindset represents the set of beliefs and assumptions we hold about ourselves, others, and the world.

“The weather?” I asked. “I don’t understand.”

“I read something many years ago that struck a chord with me. I recited it to my students so many times that I’ve learned it by heart. The author was Haim Ginott, a teacher and child psychologist. He said, *I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather... In all situations, it is my response that decides whether*

*a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a person humanized or de-humanized.”*¹⁰

“Are you kidding? It’s *my* mood that makes the weather in the classroom? That’s pretty daunting,” I said.

“Yes, it can be,” Sophie said. “But you’ll discover it’s also empowering. Another educator, Robert J. Marzano, makes the same point in a different way: *The relationship between the inner world of a teacher’s thoughts and emotions and the outer world of a teacher’s behavior has been recognized for years—in research on teacher expectations; teacher beliefs about collective efficacy; and teacher and student perceptions of self-efficacy.*”¹¹

“That makes sense,” I said. “But what can we do about it? It seems like our mindsets are constantly changing, depending on so many things, both inside and outside us.”

Sophie pointed at the Choice Map. “Look at that figure standing at the crossroads on the left between the Learner and Judger paths. What are the words you see circling around its head?”

“Anything that impacts us at any moment—thoughts, feelings, circumstances,” I read. “Are you saying that these create the weather?”

“Exactly,” Sophie said. “And therein lies the challenge. We can’t control what happens to us but we do have choice about what we do next. The Choice Map provides a way of *managing how we respond to circumstances* and even our own thoughts and feelings. It shows ways to monitor and change our thoughts, feelings, and actions from moment to moment.” Sophie touched the wireless keyboard in her lap and a cursor popped up on that figure standing at the junction between the two paths. “In responding to the weather, people will take one of those two paths: Learner or Judger. Those paths represent our mindsets. And to tell the truth, when we’re upset or things don’t go our way, our natural reaction is to head right down the

Judger path. You see, that's everybody's default position. We're all recovering Judgers."

We're all recovering Judgers.

"Back in sixth grade," I said, "you helped me become aware of the thoughts and feelings I was holding in my mind. I guess these were creating my weather—my inner weather! Most of the time I was a big storm inside, but I never thought about it. I just took it for granted that what I believed about myself was . . . well, just the way it was for everyone. I certainly never imagined I had any power to change anything."

"Tell me more," Sophie said.

Encouraged by her response I went on: "That year my brain began working in ways that were absolutely new to me. Before your class I always felt that maybe there was something wrong with me. I wasn't very bright. Maybe it was the usual kid stuff, you know, when you're just sure you're the only one in the world who doesn't have all the answers. I was always thinking things like: *Why am I always messing up? Why don't I know how to do this? Other kids don't have problems like this.* I know I acted pretty dull, too. But soon, thanks to you, I stopped going so Judger on myself. I really did change, didn't I?"

"You certainly did! Watching students change and grow, as you did, is a teacher's greatest reward. I kept track of you, you know. You eventually went on to win academic honors and, as I understand it, you did extremely well at college and in your graduate studies."

"You know all that about me?"

"Oh, sure," Sophie said. "I do like to keep up on my kids."

"I'm embarrassed to tell you what I mostly paid attention to in class," I said. "For example, I worried about how I could

keep from being noticed, or what did I had to do to just get by? I wanted to be invisible so nobody would find out what a loser I was. But then something clicked for me. It started when I discovered that in your classroom it was safe to be *visible*. I didn't have to hide. I guess you'd say I learned about the Learner path. I started regaining that sense of curiosity and wonder I had when I was a little kid. I remember, too, that I started participating in class and finding I could actually contribute something. I wasn't afraid to ask questions anymore. You didn't just want us to remember things so we could get the right answers on a test. I found out what it meant to think my own thoughts and really *understand* what I was learning. It was exciting, really exciting."

I couldn't have explained all this when I was a child, of course, but I do remember feeling respected and valued for myself, for being *me*. That was a new experience in my life. Sophie brought that kind of respect to the classroom. Now I understand that this came from her *mindset*. I always knew she was really happy to be there with us. I felt like my own ideas, my questions, and my curiosity were important. Sophie had a way of making us each feel like we *mattered*. She cared about *us* and not just about our grades.

I thought I was going to tear up as I recalled these experiences, but I took a deep breath and continued. "You taught us that making mistakes didn't mean we were dumb; on the contrary, mistakes were usually opportunities for expanding our knowledge. I stopped getting mad at myself for messing up. I think that's when I first realized that being smart isn't just about memorizing from some books. It's about keeping my curiosity revved up and asking lots of questions and believing that I could actually learn."

"Yes," Sophie said enthusiastically. "When we're in Learner mindset we're in a curiosity-and-questioning mode. It's won-

derful to hear how much you remember. You'd be surprised how quickly children forget what they've learned, especially when they get so focused on taking home a good report card. Well, of course, you do know that by now."

Learner mindset means being in a curiosity-and-questioning mode.

We both laughed, though there was certainly a serious side to all of this.

"Everything you're saying tells me you're no stranger to the art of self-observation," Sophie said. "And this is so important, noticing, that is, observing what's going on in your own mind. It's the foundation of the system I teach in my grad course at the university. Being able to observe yourself is essential for anyone who wants to be able to monitor and manage their own mind-sets. That level of self-awareness is at the heart of being a teacher who can make a real difference in students' lives."

Even as she said this, I plunged into Judger, picturing my students' faces as it struck me that their experiences were nothing like what I'd experienced in Sophie's sixth grade class. Not even close. My eyes stung like somebody had slapped me.

I thought about Becky, a girl I had tried very hard to reach. I winced as I recalled a disastrous meeting I'd had with her recently. She'd submitted a short writing assignment and, as I'd expected, most of her writing was sloppy and thoughtless. But there were four excellent sentences in the middle of her work, indicating that she was far more capable than I'd thought. I had been certain she always dashed off her assignments just to get through them. After reading those surprising sentences, I got excited about bringing out her true capabilities. She needed a pep talk. I don't remember my exact words to her but the gist was that she had *a lot of potential*. She could be getting As if she

only learned to apply herself. When I told her that, Becky just stared at me blankly. Her face suddenly contorted and she burst into tears.

“Everybody’s always telling me that,” she had sobbed. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. I can’t do it. And I hate school.”

What was wrong with that child? She acted like I was punishing her and I was just trying to help. I tried to smooth things over, but she picked up her backpack and bolted from the room. Even worse, she was absent the next day and I blamed myself.

I also thought about Brandon. The way he acted out and put other kids down with his remarks really got under my skin. I knew I was critical and overly harsh with him. I was even making extra heavy Xs after his name on that Behavior Chart of Dr. Malstrom’s, just to emphasize how angry he made me.

Not to mention my deteriorating relationship with Mrs. Santiago. How could I forget that?

“Are you okay?” Sophie asked.

“I hardly know where to start,” I said, feeling myself getting wound up. “Mrs. Santiago, my co-teacher, is so rigid and set in her ways it makes me want to scream.” As those words escaped from my lips, I immediately regretted them. Mrs. Santiago was a bright, well-educated woman who’d worked hard to get her teaching credentials. Maybe I was the stupid one. Why couldn’t I figure out how to get through to her, or to my students, for that matter?

For a moment I felt as speechless as I’d first felt going into the sixth grade. I turned my attention back to the Choice Map and started reading the questions in the bubbles over the figures’ heads. It took but an instant to see that the questions I was asking—about my students, Mrs. Santiago, and even myself—were all solidly on that Judger path.

“I think I need a mindset adjustment,” I mumbled, trying to make a joke of it.

Just then there was a knock at the front door.

“Please excuse me for a moment,” Sophie said. “That would be my neighbor, Charlotte. She’s an avid gardener. She oversees the neighborhood co-op garden down the street, and promised to bring me some flowers from their greenhouse.”

I breathed a sigh of relief, grateful for the interruption. While Sophie went to answer the door, I retreated to the powder room. Once inside, I burst into tears. Gazing at my reflection in the bathroom mirror, the face that stared back at me seemed like a stranger’s. I guess I hadn’t been noticing the tension and frustration my face was expressing lately. I even looked a little hard, anything but receptive. Was this the face I presented to my students each day? Who was I when I walked in the classroom? What impact was my current mindset having on the kids? And what impact was it having on Mrs. Santiago?

Something I’d observed in Sophie, both when I was very young and in our meeting today, kept playing at the edge of my awareness. It had to do with the *quality* of her presence and how the room seemed to light up when she was there. Was this what she meant about *creating the weather*? I washed my face, touched up my makeup, and walked back into the living room as Sophie was saying goodbye to her neighbor Charlotte.

“This is one of the perks of having great neighbors,” Sophie said, admiring the flowers she’d just received. “I’ll put these in some water and be back in a second. Then let’s talk a little about that mindset adjustment of yours.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Teaching that Changes Lives is Dr. Marilee Adams's third book, expanding her innovative and practical work on questioning, mindsets, and thinking into the world of education. Her first book, *The Art of the Question*, is a behavioral-cognitive textbook which one eminent reviewer described as “a seminal and breakthrough contribution to the field of psychotherapy.” Her second book, *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*, applies the principles she has been developing over the past 25 years to coaching, business, and the challenges of organizations and change. It is an international bestseller, published in more than 16 languages. Though Marilee herself was never a K–12 teacher like the characters in this book, *Teaching that Changes Lives* was inspired by her lifetime love of learning and her deep respect for the vital role that educators play in all of our lives.

Marilee is the leading expert on Question Thinking™. A dedicated educator, coach, workshop facilitator and keynote speaker, she is an adjunct professor at American University, School of Public Affairs, teaching in the Key Executive Leadership Program. She has also been a guest lecturer at Teachers College at Columbia University and teaches the Learner Mindset System in a wide variety of organizational, educational, and public settings. Her workshops on *Teaching and Thriving in Difficult Times* and *The Learner Mindset Advantage*, as well as the conference she hosted on *Education and the Inquiring Mindset*, have attracted educators from throughout the United States as well as from Canada, mainland China and Singapore.

Dr. Adams has presented her work at Harvard University; Kansas State University; Kent State University; New York University; Northern Kentucky University; Princeton University; Humber University; George Mason University; Georgetown McDonough School of Business, and has consulted for a state-wide coaching program of K-12 principals in the state of Texas. She is also an advisor to Learning Forward New Jersey.

She has presented at conferences such as: New Jersey Educational Association; Learning Forward Annual Conference; the International Coach Federation; Pegasus Systems Thinking Conference; Organizational Development Network; Society for Human Resource Management; National Training Laboratory; American Society of Training & Development; Positive Leadership at American University in the Key Executive Leadership Program; and she has been affiliated with Columbia University's Global Learning & Leadership Group at Teachers College.

Her consulting with leading organizations and agencies has provided her with a unique understanding of skills and abilities such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, innovation, and initiative that students will need for the future. Client organizations include: Ameriprise, Lockheed Martin; Johnson & Johnson; Merck & Co.; Booz Allen; DHL; Brother International; the United States Navy; NASA Goddard; National Defense University; United States Departments of Treasury, Interior, and Education; National Geospatial Agency; Brookings Institution; Johns Hopkins; Toronto General Hospital; Hamilton Health Sciences; and Christiana Care Hospital.

She holds a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the Fielding Graduate University and an MSW from the School of Social Work at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Marilee and her husband, artist and psychologist Ed Adams, live in the river town and arts community of Lambertville, New Jersey.

About the Author

ABOUT THE INQUIRY INSTITUTE

Dr. Marilee Adams and her colleagues at the Inquiry Institute share a passion for learning and for making a positive difference for K-12 teachers, students and schools, as well as for educators and students in higher learning. We offer unique, innovative tools for creating a climate of learning and improving job satisfaction for teachers and other professionals throughout the educational spectrum. Our work at the Inquiry Institute is informed by the principles, practices, and tools of the Learner Mindset System described in this book. Here's a partial list of the resources you'll discover at our website:

- The Learner Mindset Advantage Workshops and Programs
- Learner Mindset Intensive Program
- “Chief Question Officer” Certificate Program
- Q-Storming® Training Programs
- Coaching for Teachers and Educational Leaders
- Membership in Online Learning Community
- Professional Learning Community Resources
- Learner Mindset eLearning Programs for Educators

Marilee Adams, Ph.D. is available for keynote presentations, consulting, coaching, and workshops, both on-site and virtual.

We'd Love to Hear From You: We are eager to receive your success stories, suggestions, and questions. Let's be in touch!

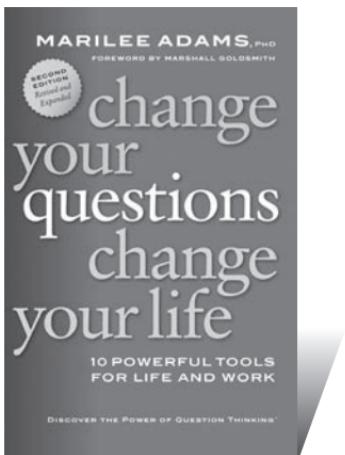
The Inquiry Institute
10 York Street, P.O. Box 339
Lambertville, New Jersey 08530-3204
Phone: 800-250-7823
Email: Info@InquiryInstitute.com
www.InquiryInstitute.com

Also by Marilee Adams, PhD

Change Your Questions, Change Your Life

10 Powerful Tools for Life and Work, Second
Edition, Revised and Expanded

Foreword by Marshall Goldsmith



This is the bestselling book that introduced Question Thinking™, the Choice Map™, and the Learner and Judger mindsets to the world. Readers said they personally experienced changing their lives by learning to ask the *right* questions—ones that empower people rather than get in their way. This insight leads the book's hero to breakthroughs that save his career as well as his marriage. In this extensively revised second edition, Adams made her quick-read story even more illuminating and helpful, adding new chapters as well as three powerful new tools. This entertaining, enlightening step-by-step guide has what you need to transform your life, personally and professionally.

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Praise for *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*

“The ideas in *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* have had a profound impact on me and my business. Few books offer such potential to change *everything* in your work and life. Read this book and learn how to use the power of Question Thinking to revolutionize your thinking, solutions, and results.”

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“In Congress or the physics lab, I focus on the important skill of asking myself the tough questions, framed in a way that they can be answered constructively. Marilee Adams’s enlightening book teaches, in a skillful, readable way, techniques for asking the right questions so we can achieve preferred outcomes in our personal and professional lives—and also in how we can contribute as thoughtful citizens.”

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“Well done, Dr. Adams. *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* is the rare book that I use almost every day. I asked Learner questions to quickly transform a delicate organizational situation that had seemed intractable for a whole year. Your Question Thinking work changes paradigms, organizations, and lives. It’s a classic!”

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—Tracy Davidson, Anchor and Consumer Reporter,
NBC 10 News Philadelphia

“Question Thinking offers patients, families, and clinicians a new paradigm for patient and relationship centered care. The simple yet profound framework of questions has the potential to contribute, at every level, to the transformation of health care.”

—Cynda Hylton Rushton, PhD, RN, FAAN, Associate Professor, Nursing and Pediatrics, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow

“We’ve used Question Thinking so successfully in our simulations that it led to a radical transformation in how people approach problems. It also made an immediate and sustained change in their behavior. In an organizational culture, the more people can be taught these processes, the greater positive impact it can have on productivity and the bottom line.”

—Carmella Granado, Senior Director of Organizational Effectiveness, Flextronics

“Marilee is smarter than anyone I know about asking the questions that really matter.”

—Lillian Brown, author of *Your Public Best* and *The Polished Politician*, named “one of the 100 most influential PR people of the century” by *PR Week*

“This book is great. I couldn’t put it down! It clearly communicates how the questions we ask ourselves and others determine our results—and this makes all the difference for successful sales. I strongly recommend *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* to everyone who takes my sales courses.”

—Jacques Werth, coauthor of *High Probability Selling*

“This book is an invitation to success for individuals and organizations. Dr. Marilee Adams has created a surprisingly simple and powerful practice for learning that propels us to our goals. Best of all, the same practices that make a difference for individuals also offer practical and impactful guidelines for learning organizations.”

—Victoria J. Marsick, PhD, Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University, and coauthor of *Sculpting the Learning Organization*

“A breath of fresh air. Of course, both questions and answers are necessary, but if you only focus on answers, the world becomes a very small place indeed. Marilee Adams helps open the door to innovation, creativity, and inspiration. This book is a treasure chest.”

—Harrison Owen, founder of Open Space Technology and author of *Wave Rider*

“This book may cause organizational leaders to take another look at their lists of competencies. If Question Thinking isn’t already there, it may be time to go back to the drawing board. Marilee demonstrates why this capacity is absolutely essential to organizational and leadership success—and how easily it can be acquired.”

—Beverly Kaye, PhD, coauthor of *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em and Love It, Don't Leave It*

“It was through the use of Dr. Adams’s Question Thinking tools that I was able to help people reach a meaningful and successful resolution for a highly controversial project. Shifting from a Judger mentality to a solution-oriented one helped people move out of adversarial roles and enabled them to co-create a shared community.”

—Tracey Pilkerton Cairnie, MS, Adjunct Professor, Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University

“Marilee’s Question Thinking work shows us how to use questions to illuminate choices and help us understand how to manage our work and private lives in the most positive and productive ways. Marilee is a terrific presenter, and her workshops for our high-potential leaders made a significant and positive impact.”

—Liz Barron, Director, Executive Leadership Programs,
The Brookings Institution

“This fable is destined to be a classic in the Og Mandino genre. Question Thinking will make your life more effective regardless of personal history, personality type, or profession. Buy this book and read it tonight. Your life will never be the same.”

—Stewart Levine, author of *The Book of Agreement* and *Getting to Resolution*

“*Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* is an amazing conversation. With clarity and accessibility, Marilee models a process whereby we can intentionally change our way of internal inquiry. Imagine being in conscious charge of our own thoughts! A wonderful tool for coaches, helping professionals, and all who desire to transform their inner conversations.”

—Pamela Richarde, Master Certified Coach, Past President,
International Coach Federation

“Question Thinking is brilliant and simple. Marilee demonstrates how you can use the power of questions to transform any and every area of your life. By changing your questions you are able to transform the way you think, the way you act, and importantly, the results you can achieve. This book is an ideal guide for anyone looking for positive results at work or at home.”

—Lori Sheppard, President, EDGEucation Worldwide Enterprises

“I read this book cover to cover *twice*. I had valuable insights each time! I also think it would be exceedingly smart for politicians and diplomats to use Dr. Adams’s questioning methodologies. It could make our world a safer place.”

—David Pensak, PhD, author of *Innovation for Underdogs*

“This is a must-read for any leader who wants to produce powerful results. The tools presented are straightforward yet extremely effective in helping the reader learn to ask empowering questions—those that inspire, motivate, and produce positive change. This book demonstrates that Question Thinking can truly change your personal and professional life.”

—Tara Gomez, Manager of Employee Development, Strategic Learning Services, United States Postal Inspection Service and Office of the Inspector General

“Question Thinking is groundbreaking work, and Dr. Marilee Adams is the thought leader who introduced it to the world. I find *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life* inspired and transformational. So do my students of Action Learning. They consistently find that these question methodologies help them unleash and fulfill the true potential of Action Learning.”

—John Czajkowski, School of Public Affairs, American University

“Questions, more than answers, have the power to change our lives. Question Thinking brings you into a world of successful problem solving and decision making. This book delivers the goods: transformation, improved judgment, and innovation. Can a book really change your life? The answer is ‘Yes!’”

—Hildy and Stan Richelson, authors of *Bonds: The Unbeaten Path to Secure Investment Growth*

“Using Question Thinking skills has transformed how I see and operate in the world. I’m far more effective as a coach and as a manager. My marriage is stronger and more enjoyable, and I also believe I’m a better parent. My daughter even loves sharing the Choice Map with her friends and teachers!”

—Kim Aubry, Life Coach

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MARILEE ADAMS, PhD, is president of the Inquiry Institute, a consulting, coaching, and educational organization. She is an advisor to Learning Forward New Jersey and an adjunct professor at American University in the Key Executive Leadership Program, School of Public Affairs.

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