

The Story Behind Writing
Raising Caring, Capable Kids with Habits of Mind

In my role as public information officer for a suburban school district outside of New York City, I often wrote about the Habits of Mind for our parents. To prepare for this I attended several week-long workshops given by Dr. Kallick and Dr. Costa, as well as immersing myself in their teachers' guides and other writings. One thing that became so clear to me was how much I—and my already grown children—could have benefited from knowing about these wonderful tools as they were growing up. I thought about the ways in which *Metacognition* and *Listening with Understanding and Empathy* might have disarmed some of the difficulties that so commonly arose when tackling homework or long term projects, as well as dealing with chores and other responsibilities. The Habits of Mind were “take aways” I wished I could have given my children when it was time for them to leave home and build their own lives.

After one particularly inspiring workshop, I approached Dr. Kallick, and asked her if she had considered writing a parents' guide to the Habits of Mind. She handed the ball right back to me as she suggested with a smile, “Why don't you write it?” This was an invitation/challenge I could not refuse, but where to begin? I asked Dr. Lauren Carner, a district psychologist, if she might join me. I knew that, as part of a Habits of Mind team, she had been teaching the Habits in school-wide assemblies, classrooms, and in individual counseling sessions with students and their parents. In our many conversations about the applicability and usefulness of the Habits of Mind, she also expressed how much she wished she had had those tools available when her children were younger. As both of us began to make the Habits part of our everyday life, we marveled at the many ways they could positively affect both work and relationships. We realized that the Habits of Mind have as much potential for improving communication, fostering cooperation, and encouraging warm and positive interactions as they do for strengthening academic and work behaviors.

Working on the book together was a great opportunity to deeply understand and put into practice the Habits. By Thinking and Working Interdependently, we grew to appreciate each other's different strengths and perspectives. By Thinking Flexibly, we found ways to approach certain chapters so that parents would find them accessible and interesting. By Listening with Understanding and Empathy, we were able to support each other through those inevitable dry spells when inspiration seemed in short supply. And, of course, Persistence was a much relied upon Habit that got us through a project that had quite outgrown our original goals.

Lauren and I are forever grateful for our adventure in writing *Raising Caring Capable Kids with Habits of Mind* and, in the process, making these Habits such an essential part of our lives.