



PART 1

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *Breaking Bold*.

We thank you so much for picking up this book and giving it and us a chance. As educators ourselves, we know how valuable and in short supply your time is. We're truly honored to get a sliver of it.

We promise it will be worth your while. What follows in these pages are 12 habits of relationship masters, as dictated by the data and proven by the pros. The habits are the culmination of our review of reams of research from multiple relevant fields of study. They are informed by years of lessons learned as teachers and school leaders and by thousands of hours of classroom observations with master educators in every imaginable nook and cranny of the US. They are the habits of people who tap into what we know to be true about being human—that all humans need and want to be seen, valued, and understood by caring adults. These are the habits not just of educators but of people who lead with this truth.

We ourselves would not be breaking bold if we didn't practice what we preach. We have folded all 12 habits into our own work speaking to and coaching educators all over the world. We have field-tested these ideas with our collaborators and colleagues. We have also field-tested the assessment exercises and the tools to implement all 12 habits that we lay out in the book.

The impact has been profound. And in short order.

The educators with whom we've worked to bring all 12 habits into their teaching and leadership practices experience a paradigm shift, one that has allowed them to see all the ways—big and small—they had unknowingly underutilized, undercut, or undervalued all the relationships in their classrooms or schools. A shift that is happily liberating educators to put relationships with students first—with the confidence that doing so will meaningfully deepen student learning and engagement in a matter of weeks. A shift that is transforming student mindsets for the better, stoking their intrinsic motivation, and skyrocketing their self-efficacy. A shift that is moving educators toward the kind of socially and emotionally conscious teaching that automatically addresses students' cognitive, social, and emotional learning. A shift that is guiding students to grasp that true well-being cannot exist in the absence of healthy relationships. And a shift that is making school more fulfilling and fun for everyone—including you.

To witness this work in action has been more gratifying than we could have imagined. We both have had the enormous privilege of knowing and partnering with scores of educators for so many years. The two of us have had countless joyful experiences during which we were able to relish with educators those moments when they just got it and they grew. But few have been as rewarding as when we are helping educators unlock their capacity for connection and relationship with all students. These are the moments, we have learned, that push a teacher from good to great, from doing well enough to becoming unstoppable. These are the moments where they break bold—and there's no going back from bold.

These are the moments waiting for you on the other side of these pages.

Before we get to it, a quick primer on the layout of this book.

First things first. You'll notice the text in this book is multi-colored. This is on purpose. Wherever you see **red** text, it's Molly speaking. "**Hi, guys!**" When you see **blue** text, it's Weston. "**Hey, guys!**" The black text is narrative text. You can assume this comes from both authors. We wrote the book this way because we want it

to be a conversation between you and us. What better way to have that conversation than for you to read *our* words, in *our* voices.

In part 1, we will make our research-backed case for why the prioritization of relationships with all students, in all schools, is urgent and nonnegotiable. We will also introduce you to all 12 habits from a high level. Lastly, we will explain the fixed features of the 12 habit chapters, including the self-assessment section and the tools to implement and practice a habit.

In parts 2 and 3, we devote a chapter to each of the 12 habits. They are divided into two categories: In part 2, we look at the habits that encompass the bold beliefs and behaviors that support relationship building. In part 3, we turn our attention to bold instruction and learning that is designed specifically to leverage and fortify all relationships in the classroom.

Again, we thank you for joining us. Let's roll up our sleeves—and have some fun.

Sincerely,
Weston and Molly