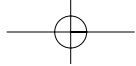


# Preface

**T**eaching children to behave—to act responsibly—takes a tremendous amount of time and energy. There are no magic potions or solutions. Some children by temperament are easier to manage than others. All children, however, have the right to be taught. The good news is that most behaviors are learned. If we, the educators and parents, do not like the behaviors children present, it is our responsibility to teach new, more satisfactory behaviors.

Years ago, when I was still a student in high school, I saw a movie about Helen Keller. In one scene, Helen's teacher, Anne Sullivan, asked the parents to leave the dining room so she could teach Helen to sit in her chair, use a spoon, wipe her face with a napkin, and keep her hands in her own plate. Helen's well-meaning and loving parents had allowed her to run around the table grabbing from whatever plate or bowl was available. They did not believe she could be taught because of her blindness and deafness. Anne understood that unless Helen was taught to behave in socially acceptable ways, her quality of life would be horrific. As she grew older and larger physically, she would be institutionalized. Helen fought like a wet cat initially, but she did, in fact, learn to eat at the table like a young lady. As we well know, Helen eventually learned to read, write, and speak. Instead of living out her days in a dreary residential hospital, she traveled, inspired many, and led an incredibly productive life.

I have chosen to dedicate my professional life to children who need desperately to learn how to behave. The children with whom I have worked have typically had average or higher levels of intelligence and do not suffer from severe, multiple disabilities such as deafness and blindness. Some of these children have been abused, sexually molested, or severely neglected. Some have been abandoned by their parents. Some have psychiatric disorders. Some are considered to be socially maladjusted. Some have been in general education classrooms. Others have been diagnosed with disabilities. What all of them have in common, however, is the ability to learn. I might have to structure those learning experiences and the environment in which they occur more rigidly for some than for others. The process might be much lengthier for some than for others. The number of additional people necessary to implement an effective plan might vary. The one constant across all settings and all children is the self-righting potential each individual possesses. Corrective teaching facilitates and strengthens that self-righting potential. The spirit and intent of this book is to foster the self-righting potential within the lives of students who others may believe to be beyond hope and help. Some of the information and anecdotes are more applicable to general education elementary-level



classrooms. Other information and anecdotes are more applicable to special education elementary-level classrooms. General guiding principles are applicable in both settings. I have chosen to address the full continuum of educational settings in this book because of the emphasis on inclusionary practices and the need for all educators to understand children who exhibit challenging behaviors.

Although the stories shared in this book are true, critical identifying information about the children has been changed to protect who they are now as well as who they will grow to be in the future.

