

"Annette crossed my path during an event of my platform Grace and Us. Her energy, sparkling eyes, and positivity immediately caught my attention! How wonderful that she offers us a helping hand in the maze of parenting with all her experience as an educator, mom, and mindset mentor. Her book is a clear, concise, and delightful source of inspiration for our most significant task as parents: supporting our children to be or become the best version of themselves!"

Anouk Smulders - Founder of Grace & Us, Tv Host, and mother of 2

"Normally, I prefer follow my own intuition and don't like to be lectured, but from Annette, I take it! Through her Instagram channel @theflyingdutchfamily, I was already a fan of her parenting style, and the fact that she has now written a book about it was reason enough for me to buy a self-help book for the first time in my life. Here's to raising beautiful children who function in their being like a fish in water."

Saskia Weerstand - YouTuber, Travel Lover, Tv Host, and mother of 2

"Annette does what many do not dare to do. She completely follows her own heart and walks her own path. She is that educator and mother who truly sees her kids. 'Sees', in the deeper sense of the word. While reading her book, it makes me realize what truly matters in raising children (including my own inner child) and to get my priorities straight. I wish this book for everyone who also feels that making a difference for the new generation begins with oneself."

Kelly Caresse - YouTuber, Self-Love Coach, and mother of 4

What Readers Are Saying

"Today, I started reading your book. It's very relatable and serves as a fantastic mirror right from the beginning. Tonight, I put one of its concepts into practice: my youngest daughter had been munching on chips on the couch before dinner, leaving quite a mess to deal with, to put it mildly. Instead of reacting with frustration, I approached the situation differently. I joined her on the couch and asked how we could solve the issue together. She suggested using the handheld vacuum cleaner and expressed her willingness to clean up the mess herself. It was heartening to witness her joy at my response and the subsequent open conversation. She shared that she was tired and worried about having a tantrum during dinner. By discussing it openly, we had a delightful, relaxed dinner and an enjoyable evening afterward. Thank you for your book, and I'm eagerly anticipating the rest of it!"

Miranda Staal

"I've read your book with great pleasure. It's so clear, filled with numerous tips, and also highly relatable. I hope to inspire and motivate my colleagues at the after-school care center to embrace a growth mindset in our work. Through this, I aspire that we can teach the children that a growth mindset leads to growth and self-confidence. I consider the book a genuine recommendation!"

Cindy Hartjes

"I read your book in one sitting, well, almost, haha, with some interruptions from the kids and other daily tasks. The book truly held my attention. I felt a sense of recognition and was immediately inspired to take action. I was eager to make real changes in my life, and I found myself making progress after just a few pages. When I finished it, I was hoping for a Part 2! Your book is incredibly practical, and it motivated me to take action right away. I've learned to be more gentle and patient with both myself and the people around me. This approach feels much more pleasant for everyone involved. Realizing that I have the ability to choose how to act and react has been a real eye-opener and game-changer. Sometimes it's challenging, and at times, very challenging, but it's absolutely worth the effort (which means counting to ten more often). Thank you; I've started spreading confetti, just like you."

Annette van den Vondel

"I was a participant in your growth mindset course, and it was truly wonderful to delve into this topic, listening to your stories and feeling inspired by you! While reading your book, I can almost hear you speaking to me. The clear step-by-step plan is written in a simple yet engaging manner, encouraging deep reflection on various subjects. Furthermore, the book is filled with heartwarming examples and situations. What struck me most was my heightened awareness of those essential daily moments with my child that hold immense significance."

Jessica Reinders

"You've received a message from my mother before about how our family, consisting of young adults, was engaging with the concept of a growth mindset. She had purchased your book and shared it with my 16-year-old brother, 21-year-old sister, and me, who's 23. During that vacation, we actively immersed ourselves in the concept, and it frequently became a topic of conversation. It truly made a difference.

During the first week of my solo adventure abroad, I read your book myself. Those weeks were often filled with tension and challenges, but your words always seemed to come at just the right moment. I, too, have faced numerous challenges in my life as a child, teenager, and still now, as an adult. I've often heard questions like 'Do you think you should do that? Are you sure you can?' or 'Are you in the right place?' (especially since I'm in my third year of social work, and people have doubts about me).

I'd like to share this special learning experience with you:

I'm someone who feels quite insecure in new situations. I prefer to prepare thoroughly; even for my runs in the Netherlands, I often stick to the same route because I knew it so well. In Denmark, I went for a run for the second time. Along the way, I was thinking about your book and my growth mindset, how it had been such a tremendous help, and how proud I was of that. With confidence, I navigated through an unfamiliar neighborhood, taking turns where I wanted. As a result, I eventually arrived at a beautiful lake and, with a little help from Google Maps, made my way back home.

Your words about the power of one's reaction are especially important and make such a difference. Although your entire book is incredibly helpful, I particularly loved Rosa's anecdote.

As a social work student, I've always been someone who promotes positivity, and I'll certainly do so even more actively now. I'll also recommend your book to fellow social work students. I'd almost say it should be required reading because it offers valuable lessons

about one's own growth mindset. You're incredibly inspiring with your travels and adventures. I wonder if I'll ever return to the Netherlands; so far, Denmark has been such a great fit.

Your book is absolutely amazing and definitely not just for parents. As a social work student, I embarked on an exciting yet nerve-wracking adventure filled with new challenges. I found myself stepping out of my comfort zone on numerous occasions. Your book played a pivotal role in helping me maintain a positive outlook. During tough moments, it served as a reminder of the power of choosing my reactions and nurturing my growth mindset. Annette, thank you for your invaluable assistance; you've made a significant impact on my journey.

Thank you for the message you convey. I wish they would use this in all schools. You inspire me greatly."

Hanne Schutte

"I read your book with a lot of pleasure. It was very easy to read because of the examples you described. Incredibly inspiring. It makes you look at yourself and the kids in a different way. Highly recommended!"

Djanet



Ready
to
grow?

LET'S DO THIS

TOGETHER

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About the birth of this book

Let's go back in time for a moment:

It's Friday evening, January 7, 2022. I'm here in Norway, sitting on the bed in our house with a laptop on my lap, typing a book. Say what? Typing a book? Yes, really! I kid you not. I'm typing a book. Never done it before, so I think I can do it. Ten minutes ago, I came up with this idea in the bathroom and then shared it with my husband, who was reading a book in the living room. His response came in the form of a question, "Did you just come up with that while sitting on the toilet?"

In my head, I thought, "Well, not really, because I was in the bathroom watching an Insta Live with Jules von Hep about manifesting your life, and he asked the viewers what they were going to manifest. Without thinking, I typed, 'I am going to write a book about raising children with a growth mindset.' Jules reacted very enthusiastically and said he thought it was a fantastic plan."

My mouth only shared the shorter and actually funnier version of the birth of this book, "Yes, I just came up with that idea on the toilet."

And just as I'm typing this sentence (right here, right now), he walks into the bedroom with a curious look in his eyes and asks, "Are you really writing a book? Are you really doing this?" A determined feeling is flowing through my entire body and mind as I reply, "Yes, I am really doing it. I am writing a book."

Back to the present: I did it! I've done it! I have written a book. With love, so much love. It's incredibly exciting to now share all these writings with the world, but above all, it's so much fun. Wishing you lots of thinking, doing, and learning pleasure, dear reader.

About the author

(and why she wanted to write this book so badly)

Oh, oops! I totally forgot to introduce myself. Who is that person with a laptop on her lap who spontaneously decided to write a book somewhere in Norway in January 2022? Who is this girl (*who's obviously old enough to be called a 'woman', but still feels like she's about 21 years of age*) who is convinced that raising children with a growth mindset is so important that an entire book should be dedicated to it? Where did she get all the knowledge, experience, and expertise from to fill a book?

Hey, hello! It's me: Annette. Annette de Graaf. Born in Zaandam (the Netherlands) at the Heel hospital on August 17, 1983. My dear mom and dad took me to our tiny house in Koog aan de Zaan where we lived with the 3 of us for 3 years. We needed to move to a slightly bigger house in Wormer, because our family was about to expand. It was in our house in Wormer where my handsome (forever little) brother Michel was born. We grew up with a love for sports (korfbal, gymnastics, tennis, soccer, swimming, kayaking, rowing, running) and playing outdoors (all day, every day) with many friends. That part of my childhood was fantastic, and I look back on it with a warm heart. I'm superduper crazy thankful to my parents and brother for everything they did for me, what I learned from them and for giving me a loving home. What I didn't like so much about my childhood was school. I couldn't understand why other people determined what and how me and my friends should learn, how we should or shouldn't behave, why their ideas were more important than ours, why we had to be quiet, sit on our chairs for so many hours, work hard, try to get high scores for tests and avoid making mistakes. It was incredibly frustrating that no one ever asked for our opinion or let us explain why we did something differently. In other words: when we did not meet the teachers' expectations, it was considered 'wrong'.

I learned at a very young age that it was better for me to keep these wonders to myself, to not stand out and just go with the flow (*although my father insisted that it*

was a good thing that I was someone who dared to chart my own course - thank you for that, papa).

I always felt really dumb at school, because whenever I asked the teacher a(ny) question, there would be a big sigh before she answered. She even told me not to be so curious and just do what I was told. Nothing more, nothing less.

Curiosity was seen as a negative trait. Asking questions about why you couldn't add unlike fractions together was suppressed with, "I just explained that, don't you understand it yet?"

I was repeatedly told in primary school and middle school that I had a talent for languages but that math wasn't my thing. They literally said, "You just don't have a talent for that." After hearing this so many times, I started to believe it, and the differences in test results confirmed it all. I participated in all language lessons with great pleasure, but I found math unbearable. It gave me a stomachache. Still, I found a way to switch my own mindset: **In my mind, I imagined myself in a different world in the classroom. I imagined that I was the teacher and that I would do things completely different. That I would see the children for who they are and truly listen to them. I would come up with different ways to help them solve and understand difficult math problems because even then, I already realized that everyone learns in a different way. And if my learners wanted to think and learn about math problems under the table or read a book somewhere on the floor; that would be totally, absolutely allowed. I would even create cozy corners with cushions where you can read, think, talk and learn comfortably. This fire started when I was eight years old and has never left.**

Ten years after I first made these plans in my head, I hoped to make these dreams come true during and after my studies at the university for education. Unfortunately, reality was a harsh blow in the face. Internship supervisors wanted me to teach exactly like they did themselves. I was expected to follow the curriculum and not deviate from it. Many internship supervisors gave me a failing grade because I didn't just copy their teaching style. They said that teachers should do the talking, and children should listen. They said that I should be in charge more instead of listening to their ideas. I should be talking to them, instead of with them. They said it wasn't clear to them who was the teacher when I was in the classroom together with the children. They said I was too friendly and should be more strict. They found me too stubborn, because I

did not agree with their (in my eyes -old-fashioned) ideas. Even in the final year, I was told that I was not suited to become a teacher. **My idea was that this way of teaching and learning was used during the industrial revolution. It was designed to train children to sit still, listen, and simply repeat what the teacher told them during the lectures in order to be prepared for working in factories. This way of teaching did and does not involve any learning. There is no active thinking happening at all and it kills the wonderful creativity and curiosity in children.** Unfortunately, I did not meet anyone at the university of education or during my internships who had the same ideas about education. Would my dream to be the educator I always hoped to be, be a mission impossible?

No, it would not. I would not let that happen. I would not give up.

Fortunately, miraculously, there was an educator working in the lovely village of Oost-Knollendam who believed in me and shared the same ideas. She handed over her combined grade 5/6 class to me with love. I learned from and with her and she wrote praising words about me, which she sent to my professor at the university of education, so that I could (finally!) graduate. I'm still incredibly thankful for you, dear juf Mieke.

When I entered the 'real' working life, I encountered the same problems again. It was expected of me to brainlessly follow the curriculum every day, and there was little room for creativity in the lesson plans. I wanted so much more compared to *'today chapter 1, lesson 1, and tomorrow chapter 1 lesson 2'*. It felt like you could pick a random stranger from the streets and have them teach the children the same things. All lessons had to be taught the same way as in previous years. And everything was focused on test results. Truly looking at the children and truly listening to them, so that I could give them what they needed, was hardly there. Children were expected to be quiet, listen to the teacher, and if they could repeat exactly what the teacher had said later, then they were considered good students, and the school was considered a good school with good results. Frustration grew, and I felt like that misunderstood 8-year-old child again. Maybe all those internship supervisors were right. Maybe I was not suited for teaching after all.

With that idea in my mind, I started looking for another job. Hello, Google. An amazing job at the Youth News channel became available: writing texts for the program. In other words, translating adult news into news for children. Unfortunately,

that didn't work out due to my lack of background in journalism. A job as a teacher at the Emma Children's Hospital came up. My application was too late because they had just hired someone. Suddenly, luckily, thankgoodnessfully, I ended up on the website of the International School of Amsterdam. To avoid missing out again, I quickly sent out my application. This all worked out very well (they wanted me to become an important part of their learning community!) and I enjoyed every single day at this school for an incredible 11 years. With tears in my eyes, I gratefully look back on this time. At this school, I had the opportunity to experience education based on curiosity. At this school, I discovered that I wasn't the only wild one who had different ideas about education. There were so many more educational innovators like me there! Nearly 200 of them! That's why it always felt like a warm embrace. Together, we learned, together we made mistakes, together we grew, and together we made the school so much more than just a school for our students. Together, we truly looked at our learners and listened to them. Together with them, we shaped education. I am forever grateful for thinking, learning and growing together with Susan Loban, Sarah Grace, Carolyn Lacey, Melanie Smith, Kate Swift, Heidi Fernandez, Marjolein Ravensbergen, Erin O'Brien, Geerte Plas, Paul Sanders, Jordy Siljade, Daan van der Fange, Jonne van der Fange, Lisa Verkerk, Angela Strunks, Ingrid Spanjaard, Lisa van der Meer, and many more inspiring friends and colleagues.

At ISA, new seeds were planted, and ideas started to make sense. I learned new things about my own brain, those of the children, and as a result, I could grow on a personal and professional level. The combination of education based on curiosity, cultivating a growth mindset, and using Visible Thinking techniques (learned during my numerous studies at Harvard Graduate School of Education's Project Zero) felt like coming home to me. Again: I am forever grateful to my ISA family for these 11 years of growth, recognition, acknowledgment, camaraderie, and lifelong friendships.

In 2013, Thaddeus and I were blessed to welcome our very first child into this world. What an honor it was to carry the titles of mom and dad. Another long-awaited dream come true! Jools marked the beginning of our family life. Since her birth, we enrolled her at ISA because we felt that this type of education was exactly the kind of education we wanted for our child. Both of us could easily compare it to regular, public Dutch primary education, and that was not what we wanted for her. In July 2014, I was so lucky to hold a positive pregnancy test in my hands once again - with a view of Mount Everest, as I was in Nepal doing volunteer work at schools - and in

March 2015, Pippa was born. Our household grew into a family of four. Pippa was also enrolled at ISA. Every year, we renewed our application to be as high as possible on the waiting list when our daughters turned four. As local employees, it's not easy to secure a spot for your child at this private international school, and paying the full tuition fee was not an option.

In June 2017, we left the Netherlands to go on a 14-month world trip. We were able to enjoy the most beautiful classrooms on earth, such as Table Mountain, Cape Town, Etosha National Park, Fish River Canyon, Otjiwarongo, Gaborone, Madikwe Game Reserve, Knysna Heads, Great Karoo, Boulders Beach, Cape of Good Hope, Schiphol, Buenos Aires, the Iguazu Falls, the Osorno volcano, Lago Llangquihue, Humahuaca, Plaza Dorrego, Hochsauerland, the Dordogne, Frigiliana, Malaga, the Efteling, the SS Rotterdam, Emmen, and Leiden. We could call 92 different places our "home" and together we learned an incredible amount from everything we saw, heard, tasted, felt, and smelled. This experience will forever live in our hearts.

Upon returning to the Netherlands, we enrolled Jools in a Dutch primary school due to the fact that there was still no place available at the International School of Amsterdam. She had just turned 5 years old and was of compulsory school age. Fun fact: Little Miss Jools called the school's principal herself to inquire about a spot in the kindergarten class. Fortunately, there was an opening, and Jools began this new adventure with great enthusiasm. The teachers wanted to assess whether Jools should be placed in Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten, since she had missed a year of school at the age of 4. They were concerned that by skipping Pre-K, she might have missed too much to be ready for K. After her first day of school, we were told that Jools would be placed in K.

We all had to adjust to life in the Netherlands. We now had to deal with so many more external influences, and the pace felt quite overwhelming. We had to get used to the busy and vibrant world around us, which we hadn't missed at all during the past 14 months. We managed to find our way and developed our own way to live comfortably in the Netherlands with all the obligations that come with it. We bought a house in Lisse, Pippa attended a play school a few days a week, Jools enjoyed Kindergarten,

Thaddeus resumed his work as a physiotherapist, and I cherished being part of the International School of Amsterdam.

During a workshop led by a colleague at ISA, I was introduced to the term 'growth mindset' for the first time. She shared how her students greatly benefited from training their growth mindset and showed various examples. I was very enthusiastic about it but didn't really follow up on it at the time. It did plant a tiny seed though. It wasn't until we experienced a very challenging school year with Jools in Grade 1 in 2019/2020 that the idea of training a growth mindset resurfaced. It also helped a lot that Thaddeus had read Carol Dweck's book 'Mindset,' and together we combined our ideas to help Jools as best as we could. That school year, Jools had changed from being open-minded, eager to learn, and curious to a frustrated and anxious girl. I remember vividly when Thaddeus showed her a puzzle in the newspaper and asked if she wanted to solve it together. At first, she looked at it, but when she realized she didn't understand it, she got angry. Thaddeus tried to assist her, but anger turned into rage. She absolutely refused to give it a try and ran away from us. As we reflected on it, revisited conversations with the teachers, and talked to our daughter about it, we realized that Jools saw mistakes as something very bad. By avoiding difficult things, she could prevent not knowing or making mistakes. That felt safer. Jools truly hated going to school. Every morning, we had to move heaven and earth to get her out of bed, dressed, and have breakfast. She found it boring and stupid at school. Our hearts broke to see her like that. Conversations with the teachers led to nothing. We felt powerless. It may sound strange, but the very first COVID-lockdown in March 2020 came as a gift to us in that regard. We dumped all her Grade 1 textbooks somewhere on the highest shelf of a cupboard and went full throttle with Growth Mindset Training. That investment was priceless because we started to see and hear the authentic version of our daughter more often. We saw that sparkle in her eyes again when she practiced new skills and persisted until she mastered them. We enjoyed the rebirth of her curiosity, which, among other things, led to a delightful impromptu Show & Tell about springboks. From that moment on, we realized how focusing on developing a growth mindset can make your child, and how developing a fixed mindset can break them. **Thaddeus and I vowed to do everything we could to continue training our own and our children's growth mindset. We made a commitment to dedicate time and attention to it.** We continued to read books and