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This is such a fascinating book with a powerful message: All young people need to feel that they matter. A must-read for anyone interested in the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents.

—Rory O'Connor, PhD, Professor of Health Psychology, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, Scotland, UK, and author of *When It Is Darkest: Why People Die by Suicide and What We Can Do to Prevent It*

From the first page, Dr. Flett draws readers into a fundamental understanding of the need for children and adolescents to feel that they matter. He explores what mattering is, why it is important, and the potential consequences to youth from feeling that they don't matter including addiction, aggression, depression, and suicide. A leader in the field of mattering research, Dr. Flett works to ensure that people of all ages feel that they are important to and valued by others.

—Robin Kowalski, PhD, Professor of Psychology, Clemson University, Clemson, SC, United States

In an engaging style, Dr. Flett makes a clear case for why "mattering matters" to the healthy development of children and adolescents. This groundbreaking resource provides a comprehensive summary of the theory and research on mattering, and is a must-read for clinicians, researchers, educators, and trainees who are interested in supporting resilience and flourishing among our next generation.

—Randi E. McCabe, PhD, Professor, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada; Fellow of the Canadian Psychological Association; and author of *Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy in Groups*

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If you've ever wondered what truly makes children and adolescents feel seen, valued, and connected, this book is for you. It introduces the powerful idea of "mattering"— a concept that many don't realize is central to everything from mental health to motivation and social development. With clear insights and real-world examples, the book helps parents, educators, and anyone who cares about young people understand how deeply mattering impacts their lives and well-being.

—Virgil Zeigler-Hill, PhD, Distinguished Professor of Psychology, Oakland University, Oakland, MI, United States

Gordon Flett's work offers a comprehensive assessment of early life experiences of mattering to others. This book will benefit clinicians, academic researchers, and parents. I highly recommend it.

—John Taylor, PhD, Professor and Director of the Center for Demography and Population Health, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, United States

Dr. Gord Flett has taken up the scholarship of mattering, and its implications for children and youth, in an energetic and compelling manner. *Mattering as a Core Need in Children and Adolescents: Theoretical, Clinical, and Research Perspectives* is a critical addition to the necessary discussion of how to prevent maltreatment, emotional abuse, and neglect, as well as violence to self and others. This book should be required reading for public health officials who seek to build multisystemic resilience, promote mental health, and reward good citizenry. In short, this evidence-based presentation attests to the finding that people who feel they matter, *do* things that matter. Now, more than ever, we need this book to guide us towards a reinvigoration of positive relationality.

—Christine Wekerle, PhD, Associate Professor, Pediatrics and Psychiatry & Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON, Canada

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INTRODUCTION

Ten-year-old Mary lives with her mother, father, and older brother at an army base. Space has been made available at this base for people with limited financial resources, which certainly applies to Mary's family. At one point previously, they had lived in a modified garage. To Mary, today seems like a school day just like every other school day. Mary gets dressed, has her breakfast, and heads off to school.

Her day is uneventful until school is over and Mary heads home. She gets back to the army base and goes to where they live, but something is very wrong. Her mother, father, and brother are gone! All their stuff is also gone! What has happened? Imagine the distress of 10-year-old Mary and what she had to be thinking. There was no sign or clue where her family had gone. Were they abducted? Did she go to the wrong residence? Is it a bad dream? Kids sometimes run away from home, but when do parents run away from home?

Mary is close with her parents and brother. She knows she matters to them, and they matter to her, so they certainly didn't simply decide to up and leave without her. She knows they must be somewhere, and she must now focus on finding out where they are. It is upsetting for Mary, but only a bit

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because she knows in her heart they will either find her or she will track them down. Her bond with her family and the connection she carries with her is a source of some comfort.

But what if Mary didn't matter to her parents or wasn't sure she mattered to them? The thought might cross her mind when she found everyone and everything gone that she had been abandoned. Perhaps they made a tough financial decision and picked her older brother Billy over her because Billy is now old enough to work and help with the family finances. Or maybe she has become an earlier version of Kevin McCallister from the *Home Alone* movies—maybe they just forgot her! If she had become consumed with fears and worries about not mattering, this new situation might confirm what she anticipated all along. Now, she feels like she is being held hostage by emotions. Mary tells herself that she must calm down and find her family, but she can't because her feelings of not mattering add to her sense of feeling alone. She is preoccupied and distracted by feeling so isolated.

What happened to Mary's family? Military personnel visited the family right after Mary left for school and told her parents that the family had to be relocated, and it had to happen right away. There was no warning and no time to get a message to Mary. They planned to have her brother Billy meet Mary and direct her to where they now lived, but he had been briefly delayed.

I have heard versions of this story many times. Mary was my mother. I sometimes heard this story and other stories from my grandmother because I grew up in a home in Ontario with our extended family living with us (i.e., my maternal grandmother, grandfather, and aunt). My aunt was a later arrival to the Andrus family, and her presence was like having a slightly older sister. I witnessed for many years how much family members meant to each other, so it was easy for me to envision the 10-year-old Mary and her penchant for just keeping calm and carrying on. My mother used to tell me that when she found everyone and everything gone, she didn't know what to think at first, but she knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that they would come back and find her.

This book is about the feeling of knowing you matter to significant others versus feeling like you do not matter. The real-life scenario introduced earlier illustrates how the feeling of mattering can be a vital resource for children in understanding their worlds; however, the feeling of not mattering can be a barrier that can make upsetting situations even more upsetting. Children who have a feeling of mattering to others carry a connection and sense of attachment that comforts them even when they are alone. However, children who do not have a feeling of mattering to others can feel even more alone and disconnected.

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This book is about mattering research and theory in children and adolescents; however, the story of 10-year-old Mary reminds us that it is really about the life experiences of individual children and adolescents everywhere. The working premise is that the need to matter is universal and applies to everyone. When this need is satisfied, mattering is a psychological factor that has the potential to lift up all children. The approach taken here is that every child and adolescent would benefit from the feeling of mattering to others because every child and adolescent needs to feel a sense of importance and significance to others.

The central premise of this book is in keeping with initial claims about the importance of mattering when the concept was first introduced. Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) described the mattering construct in detail and showed, using data from four samples of adolescents, that "the adolescent high on parental mattering lives a richer, fuller, more satisfying life" (Rosenberg, 1985, p. 219).

This book essentially begins where my previous book on the psychology of mattering left off (see Flett, 2018a). The first book ended with a call for "the need to matter" to be formally enshrined as a sacred right of children and adolescents around the world. It noted that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) culminated in globally agreed on rights of children, including the right to care and protection and the requirement to always prioritize the best interests of the child. The one right missing from the list is the child's right to matter and have a feeling of mattering to the people in their life and their community. It was stated,

> We have an obligation to provide each child with the positive sense of self and the psychological feeling of security that comes from knowing that she or he matters to the people in her or his life. This right fits nicely with other rights that emphasize that children deserve a voice and they deserve to be respected. (Flett, 2018a, pp. 295–296)

The overarching theme of this book is that every child must experience the benefits of having a sense of mattering to others. This right needs to be made explicit and used commonly and routinely as a metric to evaluate how children are faring in their lives. Of course, we learn daily of troubling examples of young people treated in ways totally at variance with this feeling.

Research findings on mattering are valuable and informative, but there is also much to be learned from case accounts of individual children and adolescents. Their life stories serve as reminders that the feeling of mattering or not mattering is exceptionally personal. Jean Peterson (1998) provided us with a perfect reminder through her account of six adolescent girls. These girls were at risk for various reasons, but it was not readily apparent because

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some girls outwardly projected an image of doing well. Mattering came into play in the description of one of the girls, Angela. She was clearly functioning at a high level, and mattering likely played a role. Angela was described as a problem solver who had benefited from having a relative who showered her with unconditional care and affection. Angela also found mentors who supplemented her capacity to receive attention and positive regard from others. Peterson concluded that the need to be known to others in positive ways was a strong desire shared by all six girls. This need to be known is, in essence, the need to be seen and heard and feel significant (i.e., to matter). Peterson observed that all six girls just needed someone to pay attention to them. As Chapter 4 of this book states, far too many young people lack this feeling of mattering to others.

This book would not have been possible without the growth of the mattering field over the past decade and the many significant research developments reported by various teams. The study of mattering has become much more international in scope and focus. Interest in the concept is spreading as scholars realize that feeling important to others is a core aspect of self and identity for people of all ages. This has impacted my own research opportunities. Scholars from various countries have contacted me and proposed key collaborations. It is rewarding to witness the growth of interest in research and theory on mattering and how mattering promotion may be implemented.

This book is the first to examine mattering in children and adolescents comprehensively. Three obvious questions arise regarding a new book such as this one. First, why write this book? Second, why write it now? Finally, how is this book unique? Each question is addressed next.

WHY WRITE THIS BOOK?

I wrote this book for several reasons. First, mattering is a unique construct with incredible power. It has exceptional resonance among most people. Mattering is the psychology concept I point to if someone questions whether what researchers study has any bearing on the daily lives of most people. It is also a window into understanding a person; you can find out a lot about someone simply by learning whether they feel like they matter and, if so, what has made them feel this way. Also, do they treat other people like they matter?

Perhaps the best way to become more aware of our shared need to matter is to reflect on whether you could truly be happy if you felt that you did not matter to other people or that other people seemed to matter more than you matter. Think about this as if there were a birthday party for you and nobody

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came. Stories of this happening to some children have been reported (ABC News, 2015), and the public response in support of these children has been enormous. Why? People know how they would feel if this happened to them.

Second, while awareness and understanding of mattering is growing, it is still arguably the best-kept secret in psychology. I continue to encounter many highly educated and accomplished people who either do not know about mattering or mistakenly see it as similar to the concept of belonging or some other psychosocial construct it overlaps with. This book represents an opportunity to summarize converging evidence indicating that mattering matters, and it does so in a way that shows how it is unlike any other factors, especially in terms of making a difference in the lives of children and adolescents and their families and in society.

Another reason is to create a resource for groups and organizations invested in making a positive change in the lives of children and adolescents in their local communities. I have been fortunate to work with school boards in Ontario and public organizations dedicated to promoting resilience and positive youth development, such as the Maine Resilience Building Network. Seminars and workshops are increasingly being punctuated by requests from some people in attendance for a book focused on mattering in children and adolescents. This book serves as a summary of what is known thus far, but it also includes suggestions for how to extend the vitally important applied work being done on the promotion of mattering among young people.

This book is intended to be a potential catalyst for further research and conceptualization about mattering in general and among children and adolescents in particular. The volume of research on mattering needs to be expanded considerably because key information that could be easily obtained is being lost. Opportunities abound to expand the scope of inquiry meaningfully. One illustration of the possibilities is the emphasis on giving youth a voice in participatory action research, which represents a platform for understanding how mattering is tied to hearing the voices of youth, as shown in a recent investigation by Renick and Reich (2023).

It is far too often that I read a new study on concepts such as self-esteem or social support and am left to wonder why mattering was not included or at least acknowledged as likely having played a key role in shaping the research findings. The following is an example of this.

A new line of research has been built around the concept of childhood family connection. This impressive work by Whitaker and colleagues (2022), with participants from 26 countries, established that higher levels of childhood family connection predict higher levels of flourishing among adolescents, continuing on to when they reach adulthood. Mattering is not mentioned at

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all in this article. However, its role becomes evident after examining the five scale items used to assess self-reported family connection. These five items are heavily laden with themes that directly or indirectly reflect mattering to one's parents (e.g., My parents listen to me and take what I say into account. There are people in my family who care about me. My parents and I make decisions about my life together). Given the themes in this measure of family connection, it is reasonable to infer that having a feeling of mattering to parents contributes to elevated flourishing among samples of adolescents from 26 countries. Accordingly, this study is revisited in Chapter 8 of this book, where the focus is on mattering, happiness, and flourishing in children and adolescents.

Of course, researchers are entitled to investigate whatever they choose to study. Moreover, of course, they can label their variables in accordance with their interpretations. I prefer that interested researchers simply include a measure that directly assesses mattering if they think it is relevant. In most instances, this decision will be rewarded.

WHY WRITE THIS BOOK NOW?

Here again there are several reasons for writing this book now, but I focus on two themes: the prevalence of mental health problems and the prevalence of feelings of not mattering.

First and foremost is the growing mental health crisis among young people. I am convinced that feelings of not mattering account for much of the distress that children and adolescents experience.

To what extent is there a mental health problem? One example is the alarming results that emerged 5 years ago from an epidemiological study in Austria involving diagnostic interviews. This study, with a sample of 3,615 adolescents from Austria, found that the point prevalence of any disorder was 23.9%, which is almost one in four adolescents (Wagner et al., 2017). The lifetime prevalence for any disorder was 35.8%. Anxiety disorders were the most common disorders identified; they had a lifetime prevalence of 15.6%. The three most common anxiety disorders were specific phobias, separation anxiety disorder, and social anxiety disorder. Overall, almost half of the adolescents (47%) with some disorder had two or more disorders diagnosed. Feelings and fears of not mattering are likely playing some role; I have discussed at length how mattering is associated negatively with anxiety in children and adolescents (Flett, 2019).

There is no doubt whatsoever that the COVID-19 global pandemic added to the stress, strain, and mental health challenges faced by children and

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adolescents. We owe a debt to the three Boston physicians who felt compelled to write a journal article about their experiences (see L. K. Lee et al., 2021). These three emergency room physicians reported that, as of the summer of 2020, an unprecedented five to 10 children and adolescents have been presenting daily to their emergency department with new mental health crises.

An impressive study by Racine et al. (2021) provided a broad view of how the pandemic was challenging for young people through a meta-analysis of 29 studies conducted during the pandemic. Overall, more than 80,000 participants were included in these studies. Racine et al. concluded that depression was evident among 25.2% of the participants, while anxiety was present in 20.5% of the participants. Thus, it can be estimated that one in four have diagnosable depression, and it is likely that for many children and adolescents, this depression is comorbid with anxiety. How much of this can be attributed to the pandemic? Racine et al. concluded that cases of anxiety and depression among young people doubled in comparison with prepandemic levels. This has serious implications for our schools and mental health treatment systems that already were short of resources, and it suggests that there is an urgent need for prevention. It also suggests that boosting levels of mattering among young people is now more urgent than ever, and action is immediately needed. This suggestion fits entirely with the original claim from Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) that the need to matter is highly salient among adolescents, and mattering is a construct of profound societal importance.

Unfortunately, none of the investigations described in Racine et al. (2021) included an assessment of individual differences in mattering. Thus, we can only infer but cannot establish that those young people without a feeling of mattering to others are overrepresented among children and adolescents experiencing depression and anxiety.

Support for this conclusion can be drawn from a 2018 document produced by UNICEF Australia, which was submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child: *The Children's Report* (Irani et al., 2018). It garnered considerable media attention because of what was said by the 527 children, adolescents, and emerging adults who were interviewed for this report. The contributors ranged from 4 to 24 years old. The children and adolescents interviewed for the report sent the clear message that they were tired of being made to feel invisible and irrelevant. In other words, they had had enough of being treated and made to feel as if they were insignificant and did not matter. These young people emphasized that they felt invisible to adults in government and also to adults in their families and communities.

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The authors of the report concluded, "At a general population level, there remain serious questions about how Australians value children and young people" (Irani et al., 2018, p. 6).

Perhaps the frequency, intensity, and breadth of this message reflect, at least in part, the specific participants sampled. Care was taken to prioritize young people who are marginalized and with lived experiences that increase their vulnerability to abuses of their rights (Irani et al., 2018). Participants included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children with disabilities, children who identified as LGBTIQ+, asylum seeker and refugee children, and children described as being from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. As noted in the report, many of the young people interviewed had lived with neglect and abuse, addiction in the family, incarcerated parents, and homelessness, among other conditions. Not surprisingly, this also included children with mental health diagnoses and a history of attempted suicide.

Themes of feeling invisible and not heard are antithetical to mattering and represent what we have called anti-mattering themes (see Flett et al., 2022). As suggested earlier, anti-mattering is a sense of not being valued and living life feeling unheard and unseen. The unmet need to matter among these Australian children and adolescents came through in their messages (Irani et al., 2018). Each participant was tasked with writing the one message they wanted people to know. Consider a few examples. One participant wrote, "We matter, we are the future and living in the now. Understand us, our needs and our wants because wether [*sic*] you think it or not, it is IMPORTANT. We are important" (Irani et al., 2018, p. 5). Another young person emphasized the need for a sense of voice to matter:

> Everything that you are doing now is going to impact our future, and if we don't get a say then how are we going to fix anything? How are we going to be happy with the world that you left us? We have to start making a contribution now or we will never feel valid enough to try later in life. (Irani et al., 2018, p. 4)

Another girl emphasized the feeling of not mattering in society:

> I have a single mum who struggles to keep my brother and I alive but the government seems to just brush us away like we don't matter. I'm personally struggling, but no one knows, and no one knows how bad it is and how bad I want to be gone. And I don't know who is there to help me. (Irani et al., 2018, p. 47)

This contribution reflects how despair and demoralization and the pain of not mattering can ultimately result in suicidal thoughts and tendencies. These themes are explored at length in Chapter 8.

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Mattering is not a panacea for all mental health challenges and life problems experienced by young people. Still, it must be noted that the Wellcome Trust in the United Kingdom highlighted its role in safeguarding the mental health of young people. In October 2021, the Wellcome Trust published a report on what scientific research has identified as "active ingredients of effective intervention" (Wellcome, 2021, p. 6) when seeking to reduce anxiety and depression among young people. In total, 27 "ingredients" were identified and included on the list, including instilling positive tendencies such as hopefulness and self-compassion and reducing destructive influences such as perfectionism and repetitive negative thoughts. The seventh ingredient on the list is "a sense of mattering." Where would mattering be listed if all 27 intervention ingredients were rank ordered? It deserves to be in the top 10, but for some children and adolescents, it is their biggest need.

The second reason for writing this book now is the prevalence of feelings of not mattering. This book on mattering is needed now to draw attention to the current reality that far too many young people do not feel like they matter to other people, their school, or their community. We will see in Chapter 4 that when the focus is on feelings of mattering in general, about one in three young people feel like they do not matter. The prevalence of feelings of not mattering is more widespread when the focus is on feelings of mattering versus not mattering in the community. It must be incredibly unsettling to live somewhere growing up without the feeling of being valued.

I conclude this section by noting that the reality for many young people is that they lack a sense of relational mattering to other people, and in more existential terms, they also lack a sense of mattering in society. They do not feel important to the people in their lives or in the big picture. Children and adolescents can be made to feel insignificant and marginalized on a broad scale. Children exposed to discrimination, prejudice, and stigma that makes them feel irrelevant or insignificant in society are desperately in need of feeling like they matter to the people in their lives who are important to them.

A focus on mattering has given me ways of reinterpreting historical events, such as the horrors faced by Canada's Indigenous people who were sent without consent to residential schools. This practice was a profound indignity that not only conveyed the message that they did not matter in society but also removed these children and adolescents from the significant people in their lives who could provide them with a sense of relational mattering. The sudden loss of mattering and prolonged lack of contact with loved ones was understandably highly traumatic.

Canada now observes Orange Shirt Day every year on September 30. This day honors residential school survivors and their families and remembers

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how their experiences reverberated through so many lives. Phyllis Webstadt is the creator of Orange Shirt Day. Orange reflects the color of the shirt she wore on the day she was removed from her community and sent to a residential school. One of the first things that happened to Phyllis at this school was that her new orange shirt was taken away from her. Phyllis has poignantly remarked that, as a result of her experiences as a young girl, she regards orange as the color that signifies not mattering (Croteau, 2016).

HOW IS THIS BOOK UNIQUE?

The final question pertains to how and why this book is unique. At present, there is no comprehensive book on mattering in childhood and adolescence. Elliott (2009) authored an important book focused on adolescents, but the focus of his book, as reflected by its title, was on mattering in the family. The book has not received the attention it deserves; accordingly, various key pieces of information and insights from it are highlighted throughout this book.

I wrote this book as a significant extension of my previous book on the psychology of mattering (see Flett, 2018a). The topic of mattering in children and adolescents merits the extended focus it receives here for various reasons, including those outlined earlier. Most notably, this book is in keeping with the original emphasis that Rosenberg and McCullough (1981) placed on mattering in children and adolescents. This book's focus on children and adolescents also reflects the strong belief espoused by scholars such as Missildine (1963), Bowlby (1980), and Ainsworth (1982) that early developmental experiences are vital in shaping the self-concept and developing the capacity to deal effectively with challenges and conflicts.

Who would argue with the contention that the young child who knows that they matter to significant others is a child who has had an exceptionally better start to life than the young child who feels unimportant and not appreciated? We frequently hear the term "adverse childhood experiences;" one of the greatest adversities some children face daily is that they simply do not matter to the significant others in their lives. The secure feeling of being home is similar to what mattering feels like. Contrast the feeling of growing up in a home with a caring and attentive family to living in a place where you are made to feel insignificant. The story of Mary that opened this book is useful to remember. As you read through the rest of the book, I hope you will keep in mind how it feels when you are treated as someone special versus when you are made to feel invisible, irrelevant, or insignificant.

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ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

This book summarizes existing knowledge and introduces many new themes and perspectives. The first two chapters are designed to give readers a clear sense of the nature of mattering. Chapter 1 considers mattering in terms of how it is expressed and experienced by young people in terms of their affect, motivation, and cognition. Chapter 2 examines mattering from a definitional and a conceptual perspective and reviews the components of the mattering construct, beginning with the elements proposed by Rosenberg and McCullough (1981).

Chapter 2 tells part of the story of mattering from a historical perspective. Chapter 3 adds to this historical account by analyzing the emphasis on mattering in the positive youth development field. A key theme emerging from the chapter is that young people need opportunities and roles to build a sense of mattering while developing other skills and capacities. Most notably, support for efficacy and mattering is central to positive youth development and the programs promoting it.

As noted earlier, Chapter 4 provides detailed information which shows unequivocally that far too many young people are vulnerable because they do not have a clear and stable sense of being important to other people. This leads naturally into Chapter 5 and my analysis of the keys to understanding children and adolescents who feel unseen and unheard.

Chapter 6 discusses the assessment of mattering. I describe existing measures and outline specific assessment issues relevant to individual differences among children and adolescents that need further scrutiny.

Chapter 7 considers the multiple factors that impact levels of mattering from a developmental perspective. Existing research is summarized, and the case is made for a complex model in keeping with the model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (2005).

Chapters 8 and 9 examine mattering as a force of good in the young people's lives. The key themes addressed include the role of mattering in happiness and flourishing (Chapter 8) and how mattering is central to developing resilience and the ability to adapt to transitions (Chapter 9). Chapter 9 also illustrates how adverse experiences that can add to feelings of not mattering can become a troubling element of the stress experience of children and adolescents.

If mattering is central to the lives and experiences of children and adolescents, it should be reflected in the significant activities in their lives. This premise is explored in Chapter 10, which uniquely examines how the need to matter plays a role in the rampant social media use of children and adolescents.

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The emphasis on mattering as a force of good is a welcome contrast to the realities reflected in the subsequent chapters. Feelings and fears of not mattering can be highly problematic. Problems arise when the need to matter is not satisfied, especially when the need to matter has become excessive. Topics considered at length include addiction and substance use (Chapter 11), youth violence and aggression (Chapter 12), depression (Chapter 13), and suicide (Chapter 14).

The final chapter summarizes some key themes in the book and examines some key considerations when seeking to instill a sense of mattering in every child. This chapter builds on a recent article that examined how mattering can be put into action to address the growing problem of youth suicide (see Flett, 2024a).

Mattering is well-suited to community initiatives, and I hope this book will help provide the catalyst for new initiatives and meaningful extensions of existing programs and activities that have already been implemented and are underway. Impressive gains have been made. A greater focus on mattering is important in its own right, but it is also essential in showing how positive psychology can make the world a better place at a time when people need to see the possibilities for positive change and growth.

A central aspect of this introduction was to address the questions "Why write this book?" and "Why write this book now?" A related question I have saved until now that I have repeatedly asked myself is, "Why do I need to write this book?" If I had to describe my personality, I would focus on two tendencies. First, I tend to be a hopeful optimist, and this persists even during challenging times. My hope and optimism stem partly from the mattering concept and how the feeling of mattering and the possibility of mattering tend to inspire people. People can relate to the concept of mattering, which helps them connect with others who also understand how it feels. We can make positive change happen broadly by instilling a sense of mattering in people of all ages, especially young people. It represents a pathway to solutions that are much needed.

Another one of my personality features is a tendency to be protective, perhaps overprotective, especially when it comes to safeguarding young people. I maintain that anyone approaching the generativity stage described by Erikson (1968) will find the mattering construct quite appealing on multiple levels. Mattering needs to be put into action to promote the development and well-being of children everywhere, both now and in future generations.