

Parent's Toolshop® Jump Start Guide

5 EASY STEPS

to Effectively **RESPOND**
to **ANY** Parenting Challenge



Jody Johnston Pawel

LSW, CFLE



The Parent's Toolshop® Jump Start Guide: 5 Easy Steps to Effectively Respond to Any Parenting Challenge

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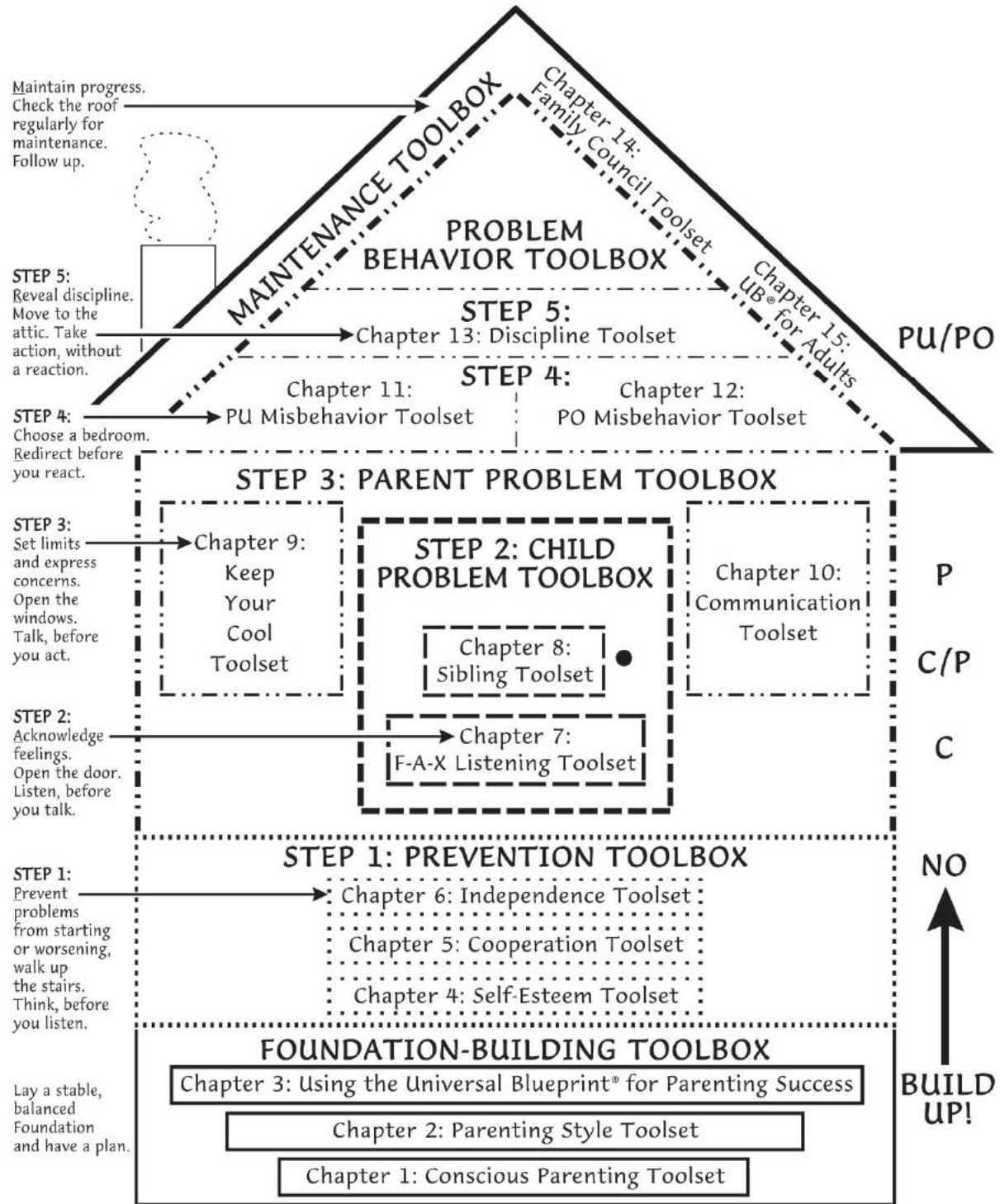
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Introduction



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Welcome to the Parents Toolshop® Jump Start Guide

I know how busy you are, so I wrote this Jump Start Guidebook so you can get the basic tools and strategies you need, as quickly as possible and start getting immediate results!

Who am I? Jody Johnston Pawel, LSW, CFLE, author of the award-winning book, *The Parent's Toolshop®: The Universal Blueprint® for Building a Healthy Family*, and President, CEO of Parents Toolshop® Consulting, which celebrates its 25th Anniversary in 2018.



I often see parents struggling with common parenting challenges that may be preventable. Or getting frustrated and angry when their good intentions and positive attempts don't work, or even make matters worse. They just want a solution *now* to deal with *that* problem!

This is why Parents Toolshop® offers “Done for You Solutions” that apply our unique Universal Blueprint® for Parenting Success System to dozens of common parenting challenges.

Often, those solutions reveal what's being said and done that *is* effective, what isn't, and gives new insight into the *cause* of the problems parents say they are frustrated with handling.

They *want* more, but might not have the time, then, to take a class or read a comprehensive book with all the details they *could* use, to prevent or respond helpfully to *any* challenge.

Without this information, they can get stuck in a vicious cycle of reacting to problems in ways that make the problem worse. When often, very small, simple changes could make their daily parenting experience go much more smoothly.

So that's what this resource provides. Instead of *quick fixes*, this is a *quick learning experience that* gives super-concentrated value, so you get *long-lasting results!*

There's never any fluff in Parents Toolshop® programs and resources, but there is advanced information, explanations of the science behind the teachings, examples, stories, and more, which all take more time to read, listen to or watch.

In this *Jump Start Guidebook*, you get everything that is essential and practical, that you can use right away and see results. This gives you a huge jump start, which will immediately reduce your stress, help you relax more, and focus better.

Then, if you want more advanced information or training you can get it, by checking out the bonus resources in the Action Guide, citations or links to the research, examples, and practice exercises. Or take a more advanced class later, to keep learning, growing and improving!



Let me Introduce Myself (Briefly)

Many people have told me that my self-introduction in the original *The Parents Toolshop®* book (© 2000) was both fascinating and inspiring. For our purposes here, in case you haven't read or learned anything about me, let me give you a quick jump start introduction, like speed dating!

I have been involved in parent education since I was eight-years-old, helping my parents create audio skits for *their* parenting classes.

I am a Licensed Social Worker and Certified Family Life Educator through the National Council on Family Relations, and have been teaching parenting classes since I was in college, before I ever had children.

That's me, at age 8, recording a skit for my parents' parenting class.



When I had my first child, I quit my social work job to be a stay-at-home mom and started a non-profit group called The Family Network, which is still going strong more than 25 years later.

Many of those parents asked me to teach parenting classes, so I spent the first 8 years of parenthood researching literally hundreds of parenting resources to learn every known research-based, highly-effective parenting tool.

I organized these 150+ tools into a step-by-step problem-solving, decision-making *system* that helps parents *prevent* common parenting challenges and plan *individualized* effective responses to challenges that do arise. This is the secret sauce that makes Parents Toolshop® so unique from all other parenting programs *and* more effective.

When my youngest child entered school, I took a part-time job with a non-profit organization that had a grant to offer prevention programs. For the next 10 years, I wrote my award-winning book, created the core parenting curriculum, worked with a United Way Ph.D. Evaluation Specialist to design outcome-focused evaluation tools for my program, and use them for a ten-year research project with nearly 2000 parents from diverse backgrounds.

The results showed that Parents Toolshop® programs got statistically significant results, which the United Way said were far better than any other parenting programs they had evaluated. So the program and evaluation tools became a national model and Parents Toolshop® trainers started being certified worldwide, to offer live programs in *their* local area.



The Universal Blueprint® Organization System

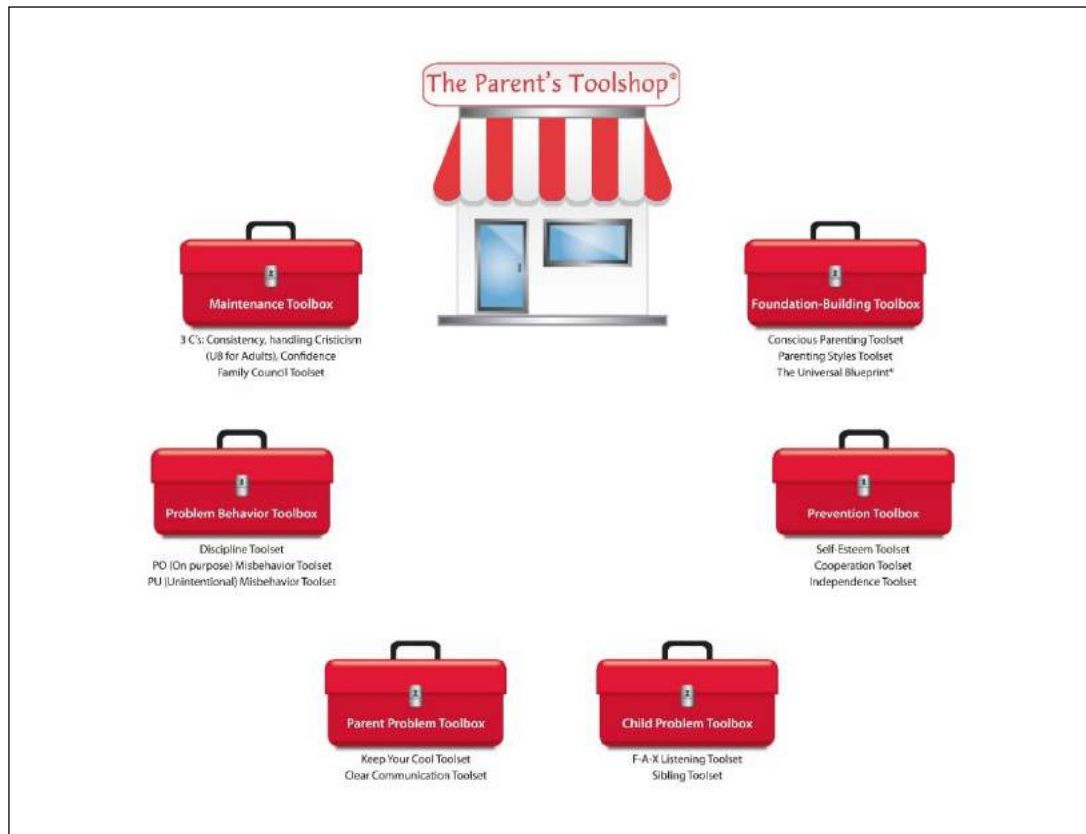
You are about to embark on a *quick* tour of a pretty-amazing parenting plan that offers:

- A **Universal** process for parenting children of any age or from any family ... that
- Meets the **Individual** needs of family members ... and
- Can become a part of each parent's **Unique** personal style.

2018 will be the 25th anniversary of The Parents Toolshop® proprietary Universal Blueprint® formula, and in all that time **this system has never failed.**

Like any system, there can be operator errors and *parts* of the system won't work as well alone as they do when used *as a whole system*. But after thirty years of training and coaching over 50,000 parents worldwide and doing hundreds of media interviews, including many call-in-advice shows, I have been able to **rely on this system every time to direct me and the parents I serve to healthy responses to the challenges they face.**

The system is so simple, you can learn *what* it is (all 3 questions and 5 steps) in less than 3 minutes. I encourage parents to take a class or read a manual with more details, though, so they understand *how* to use the system in an individualized way. That's what you need if you are going to be prepared for the gazillion different ways children think to behave! Here's a very basic diagram of how the tools are organized.



The Parent's Toolshop® uses the analogy that building (or remodeling) a family is like building (or remodeling) a house: you need a variety of toolboxes, toolsets and tools.

Just as a home builder has an electrical toolbox to install wiring, a plumbing toolbox and a carpentry toolbox, parents need to have and know how to skillfully use a variety of tools that serve a specific purpose.

That's because **parental love may come naturally, but effective parenting skills are learned** --- and most of us don't learn them as children.

To prevent overwhelm and make it easy to know *which* tools to use and *when* to use them, The Universal Blueprint® for Parenting Success System organizes effective parenting tools by:

- **Toolboxes**, which focus on the problem *type* they solve. Each contains...
- **Toolsets**, which focus on a common purpose. Each contains...
- Many **tools** that help achieve that purpose.



TOOLBOXES
Types of
PROBLEMS



TOOLSETS
Groups of Tools
that serve a
common purpose



TOOLS
individual
techniques/skills

For example, the Prevention *Toolbox* contains three *Toolsets* that help prevent problems. One, the Cooperation Toolset, houses *all* the tools that are best for getting children to do what you want them to do, the first time you ask, by engaging cooperation and fostering self-motivation. There's no need for yelling, lectures, threats, reminders, bribes, rewards, incentives, or sticker charts. By using these tools *first* and skillfully, you can usually *prevent* tantrums or power struggles, which are two common parenting challenges.

In The Parents Toolshop®, there are 6 toolboxes, which contain 13 toolsets, which collectively house over 150 tools that solid parenting research has shown to be effective. You don't, however, have to learn, know and use all 150+ tools! This book will give you the most essential Top Five Five-Star Tools, which you will use the most. This will give you the best "jump start"!

Each part of the Universal Blueprint® system is based on teachings found in research-informed resources and has shown to be effective for *decades*. Other research-based parenting programs might teach one or two parts, or *some* of the concepts and tools. But none teach *all three parts*, like *The Parents Toolshop®* does, and *none* organize them as part of a reliable problem-solving, decision-making parenting *system*.



You can find most of the tools in *The Parent's Toolshop®* elsewhere, but not all in one place and not as part of a specific *plan* for knowing *which* tool to use, *when* to use it and *how* to use it most effectively. Many parents already have *some* of these tools, but few have them *all*. (Even though I was raised by parent educators, I didn't!) Even most therapists don't learn them in their traditional education and need to attend continuing education training to learn them!

It's important to know how to use *all* the toolboxes and certain tools from each toolset, because **they work best when used together as part of a whole step-by-step system.**

Parents (or professionals) can know hundreds of skills, but if they don't know *which* skills/tools are the best to use for certain *types* of problems, don't know what *order* to use the skills or don't use them in specific *ways*, the skills will be less effective, the results will be less than desired, and problems are more likely to occur.



With the unique Universal Blueprint® decision-making process, all you need to know is what type of problem you are facing and what you want to accomplish! The system and its tools are organized in a way that leads you straight to the most effective tools for *that* situation, happening *that second* in time, with *that* child! It's like having a GPS system or Guide to Parenting Success!

Tips for Getting the Most From this Book

Since The Universal Blueprint® is a step-by-step process, **it's important to learn and use this system in order.** You will start by setting a balanced foundation and work your way up to maintaining progress. If you follow these tips, you'll get the best results:

- **Set realistic goals.** While some of these tools have the potential for overnight miraculous miracles, remember that you only learned the basics of a few tools and not the entire system or how to use the tools to their maximum potential. If many of the tools were new to you, don't expect to master them all at once.
- **Take it one step at a time.** If you try to absorb or implement everything all at once, you and your children will feel more discouraged. If you take small steps, focusing on mastering only one tool or resolving one challenge, you will all move forward faster and feel more confident.
- **Give yourself credit for your efforts and improvement.** No one is perfect, nor will you ever be perfect. As you become aware of mistakes in the past and in the present, be gentle with yourself (and others). Remind yourself that you did the best you could at the time, with the awareness, knowledge and skills you had. Release any self-imposed guilt or shame.

Use your past mistakes to increase your present effectiveness. Ask yourself, "What did I learn from this?" and "What would I do if it happened again today?" At whatever point you catch yourself, put the Universal Blueprint® to work.



Eliminate the discouraging words “right,” “wrong,” “good,” and “bad” from your vocabulary. Instead, view choices as “more effective” and “less effective.” Remember, mistakes are a natural part of any learning process, and everyone makes them when learning new skills, including you and your children.

Accept the fact that you are not a perfect parent, will never be a perfect parent, and don't want to be a perfect parent. Perfect parents believe they have nothing new to learn. That's why children don't want perfect parents. They want human parents who are honest about their mistakes and can model what to do to correct them. What you do after a mistake often makes a greater impression on others than the mistake itself.

If you tend to expect perfection of yourself, read the affirmation below. It's from the original *The Parent's Toolshop®* book. If you are alone, read it out loud. The spoken word is far more powerful than a thought.

Declaration of Imperfection

I, now, allow myself to be an imperfect parent; one who makes mistakes and is sometimes wrong. I know I have made mistakes in the past and am sure to make more in the future. That's okay. While I am not happy about my mistakes, I am not afraid of them. Instead, I strive to learn what I can from the experience to improve myself in the future. When I catch a mistake, I correct myself respectfully. I pick myself up and don't put myself down. As I become a better and better parent, I won't make the same mistakes too often—but, I still won't be a perfect parent. That's okay, because my goal is continual improvement, not perfection.

--- Jody Johnston Pawel, LSW, CFLE, from *The Parent's Toolshop®*

What's Next?

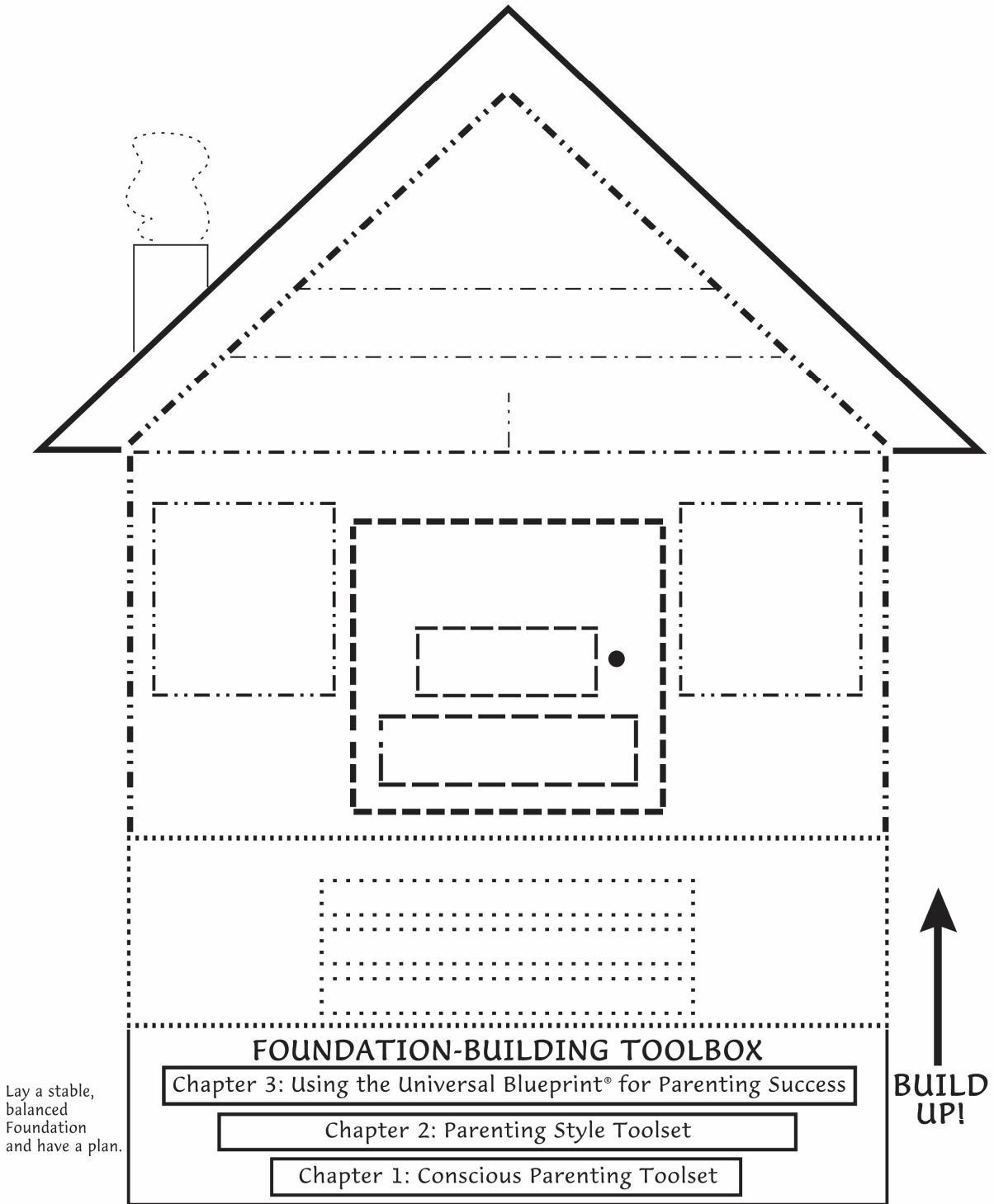
So, are you ready to begin your “quick tour”? The next section is the Foundation-Building Toolbox, which encourages you to have a more conscious mindset, set a stable balanced foundation for your parenting and gives you the Universal Blueprint® to start building or “remodeling” your family.

Action Steps

Before you head into the chapters, be sure to get the universal Action Guide that accompanies this book. Since it's an e-book, it has links to bonus resources, research citations, practice exercises, and more. The link is: www.ParentsToolshop.com/ActionGuide.



Section I: Foundation-Building Toolbox



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When building a house, you first decide what type of house you want. Then lay a foundation that's solid, firm and balanced. Then, to start building, you need a blueprint or plans to follow.

Parenting is similar. You want to set your parenting goals, and then have a plan for reaching your goals. If you've already "started building" your family, then you can look at that plan, see whether the foundation you've set and the path you are on are the most direct and effective way to achieving those goals. If not, you can adjust, so you still reach your long-term goals.



The Foundation-Building Toolbox contains three very important Toolsets:

- **The Conscious Parenting Toolset**
- **The Parenting Styles Toolset**
- **The Universal Blueprint® Parenting Success System**

The Conscious Parenting Toolset focuses on the foundational beliefs that drive your parenting. It will help you understand how *and why* your beliefs, past conditioning, and habits can cause you to react unhelpfully to parenting challenges or keep you stuck in less-effective parenting patterns. Most importantly, you'll learn how to become a more conscious, aware parent.

The Parenting Styles Toolset focuses on setting your parenting goals, then looking at whether your current general parenting approach is likely to achieve those goals. If it's not, you can choose to use the parenting style research shows will give you the best chance of reaching the universally-healthy parenting goals most parents have. Then, the rest of the book will show you the beliefs and tools you can use that are consistent with that style.

Using the Universal Blueprint® chapter provides a high-level overview of this amazing system, so you understand what it is and how it works. Then, each chapter thereafter to the end of the book, will walk you through the basics of its steps and tools, in detail.



Chapter 1: Conscious Parenting Toolset

It had been an extremely long day. Sarah hadn't showered for days and felt (and looked) like a zombie.

It was bedtime for Mary, who was three-years-old. She was...well...running around wild and crazy would be the closest description.

Sarah's husband was out of town on business, so she was doing the single parent shuffle.

As Sarah tried to make a path to Mary's bed, she'd put a toy in its place. Right behind her, like a shadow, Mary would promptly take the toy back out again.

Sarah asked her to stop several times and each time Mary gave a mischievous look that clearly said, "Make me."

This went on for a few minutes and Sarah found herself getting close to her boiling point. As Mary reached for another toy, Sarah firmly said "No" and grabbed a toy from her hands.

The waterworks and meltdown started immediately.

Before she could stop herself, she heard ... her mother! "Stop that crying or I'll give you something to cry about!"

Sarah thought, "OMG! I swore I'd never utter that phrase! I sound like my mom!"



There comes a time in every parent's life when something from your past, *your* parents, escapes your memory banks and finds its way out of your mouth. Despite your best intentions...your positive attitudes...your efforts to undo any aspect of your own upbringing you didn't like, and to relearn more effective parenting...these old tapes keep replaying!

Why is that? How can you break free from old programming to create new, more-positive ways to parent *your* children? How can you lay a strong foundation for your parenting and know what to say and do in moments like these, so you don't repeat old, ineffective patterns from your past? With the Conscious Parenting Toolset.

For decades, generations even, we've known that our upbringing influences our parenting. It wasn't until this millenia, however that scientific research into the brain, mind-body connection, and consciousness finally advanced to the point it can explain not only *how* this "programming" happens, but why it's so difficult to reprogram and create new habits.

While the rest of this book will mostly look at what's happening "above the surface," where it's easily observable, this chapter is going to take a dive into the unseen to reveal these secrets.



The Power of Beliefs

Let's start at the beginning of your parenting journey. No, not when you *became* a parent, but when you were born and your *parents* became parents. *That* is when *your* education as a parent *really* began and you've been learning ever since.

It's important to look at what you have already learned about *being* a parent. Then decide whether you want to *consciously choose* to continue thinking, saying and doing what you've learned, unconsciously, or make some changes and learn some new ideas.

Your parenting decisions are based on your beliefs, many of which were programmed in at a very early age, without your conscious awareness or agreement. These form the foundation of your parenting, so let's look more closely at what's really happening under the surface in your parenting.

Your beliefs about parenting are the foundation on which you make *all* your parenting decisions. Those beliefs are based on how you were parented, as well as other experiences you had, mostly as a child.


When those experiences occur between ages 0-6, brain scientists say the brain wave frequency is similar to an adult in a hypnotic trance. So whatever you heard, saw, and felt got programmed right into the subconscious mind, without any filtering or choice.

Then, the meaning you gave an experience was likely determined by your cognitive and emotional development.

So infants interpret their world through the lens of whether an experience shows if they can trust. Toddlers who are becoming self-aware and are ego-centric interpret experiences as though they are at the center of them, as in "Whatever happened must be my fault." (More on developmental stages in Chapter 11: PU Toolset.)

CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMING

ALSO, from age 0-6, children are "ego-centric," or interpret/filter their experiences with their Self as the central focus.

<p>What people say →</p> <p>What others do →</p> <p>What you experience →</p>		<p><u>Interpretation:</u></p> <p>It's my fault.</p> <p>I am responsible.</p> <p>This is about me.</p> <p>This is "normal."</p>
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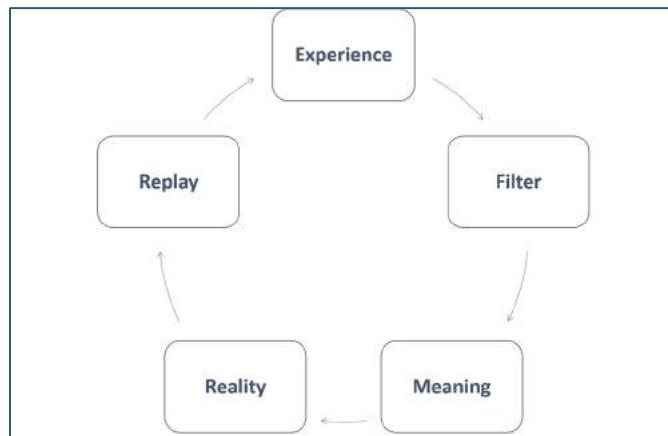


These beliefs then become your subconscious programming, which runs on auto-pilot, in the back of your mind, replaying these “tapes” like an 8-track tape that keeps looping. It is then those *subconscious* beliefs that become your operating system programming (like Windows, Apple or Linux operating system for a computer).



Lastly, you have an amazing part of your brain called the Reticular Activating System. Its sole purpose is to sort through all the data coming at you, filter out anything *your beliefs say are irrelevant* and bring to your attention whatever you believe is important.

What do you think determines this importance? What you are focusing on! So when you focus on problems, you see more evidence of the problem. When you focus on solutions, you think of more ideas that might work.



So, your programming (beliefs) determines what information comes into your brain, which is then interpreted according to the filters you have, which is the *meaning* you perceive. This is why each person actually sees reality from a totally unique perspective than anyone else!

You know this is true, because you’ve experienced times when more than one person saw the same event but interpreted it differently, even swearing

the actual *facts* are different! This is why eyewitness testimony, once thought to be the *best* form of evidence, has been shown to be one of the *least* reliable, for these reasons!

Now, as if that wasn’t enough, brain researchers estimate that (a) most subconscious programming is negative, and (b) it is controlling the average person’s thoughts, feelings and habits, about 97-99% of the time. So really, you aren’t usually *consciously choosing* your responses, despite your best intentions.

That’s why you might hear yourself saying something to your children and say to yourself, “Oh, my gosh! I can’t believe I just said that! That was what my mom/dad used to say. I said I’d never say that to *my* children.” Then a self-inflicted guilt trip often begins, which is also usually part of your childhood programming.

This entire process, which you’ll learn more about in chapters 9: Keep Your Cool Toolset and the last one, explains why good intentions, positive thinking, and being more spiritual will only take you so far as long as your old programming is running the show.

The good news is that you can *choose* your parenting beliefs and a parenting style based on the outcomes you want, not old habits. Then you can start intentionally re-programming your beliefs and learning new language and action skills, so your thoughts, words and actions are all in alignment.



Three Parenting Mindsets

There are three parenting mindsets every parent operates out of, based on what's happening in the moment:

- Conditioned parenting
- Reactive parenting
- Conscious parenting

Conditioned parenting is doing whatever your parents did, without thinking about it. It allows old subconscious programming to determine your responses, even if they aren't the most effective or what you *want* to do.



Many parenting traditions that get passed down through the generations are based on inaccurate or outdated belief systems. Some started for a legitimate reason, but today that reason doesn't exist or there's a healthier or more effective way to accomplish the same goal.

These old ways are not necessarily *wrong*; in fact, they still might seem to work or at the least seem harmless, but this is often only in the short-run. The negative side effects often don't show up until later. By then, undoing them can be challenging.

Like anything in life, if you allow old programming to control your thoughts and decisions, it can often lead to ruts and bad habits that can be hard to break. It's a lot simpler to create new programming by learning beliefs and skills consistent with the goals you want to reach and practicing them consistently, until the new neural pathways develop and are your "new normal." This might not be *easy*, but is the healthiest approach to change what isn't working.

This does *not* mean you have to give up your treasured cultural traditions! Think about, "What is the *goal* of that tradition?" Can you meet that goal in a *healthier* or more effective way?



Reactive parenting is often your "fall back" style when you are stressed, run out of options, or a trigger button gets pushed. It can also involve doing the *opposite* of what your parents did, because you *don't* like how you were parented.

Reactions almost always result in the problem escalating and getting worse, or accidentally giving the child a pay-off, which causes the problem to happen again.

As for trying to break negative parenting cycles by doing the opposite, any extreme may be just as ineffective; you just might not realize it until you see the negative long-term side effects.

To raise emotionally-healthy, well-behaved children, you need to *respond* effectively, instead of reacting. Parents Toolshop shows you how to avoid quick fixes that may stop the behavior in the short-run, but have negative long-term side effects.



Conscious parenting involves more than having “good intentions,” which won’t take you far if not supported by skills.

It’s choosing the outcomes you want, then investing time and energy learning the skills that will help you achieve your goals.

It’s thinking of the long-term, in the now in each moment, and choosing a response that will take you one step closer to your vision of the parent and family you desire to become.



Conscious parenting is also balanced and holistic; engaging your thoughts and feelings, logic and intuition, biology and spirituality.

The skills conscious parents use are usually simple to understand, easy to use and so effective, you usually start seeing immediate results. Most importantly, the results are long-lasting.

Are you Ready to Change Your Family “Dance?”

Change always starts with your beliefs — and from beliefs (and thoughts), come your actions. Your child is simply responding (or reacting) to your words and actions. Change *your* words and actions, and your child will naturally have to adjust.

You *can* expect that some of your parenting beliefs *will* be challenged in this book. If you read *all* the book, *in order*, and consistently apply what you are learning, you *will* see results.

Nevertheless, you want to learn effective parenting for *yourself*, not to change your child.

When you take responsibility for your own growth and start using the skills, it will set the wheels of change into motion. As you change and *choose* your emotions, actions, perceptions, and words, others will usually respond in more positive ways. These responses are more predictable than you may imagine, though not guaranteed, since each person has free will. If you don’t get a quick fix or see immediate results, stick with it. Over time you *will* see positive change in yourself and others.



Think of change in families being like a “dance.” When you are in the “lead” and change your steps in the “usual” dance, a few toes may get stepped on, by accident. Soon, though, others will follow your lead, because the new dance is a more beautiful, flowing one that everyone enjoys!

Choose to Commit to Reaching Your Goals

To reach any goal, you must line up your thoughts, words and actions in the same direction. If any one of them is out of line, you are less likely to achieve your goal.

The Universal Blueprint® Parenting Success System includes suggestions for what to *think, say and do*. This *Jump Start Guide* offers healthy parenting beliefs and practices you can consider using. The Advanced courses and resources explain the science of subconscious programming and how to reprogram *any* habit you want to break or trigger button you want to defuse.



So your Mission, should you decide to accept it, is this:

Stop and think: Many parents think they need to say something immediately to their children, but that simply is not true, unless there is a safety issue. When a challenge arises, pause, and take a deep breath before responding. This gets oxygen to your brain, so you can think more clearly. This, in turn, helps you move from a conditioned or reactive mindset to a conscious mindset.

Choose a helpful response: In most cases, there is more than one possible helpful response. The key is to *choose* your response *and* have it be a healthy, helpful, effective one. Those are the options the Universal Blueprint® for Parenting Success leads you to, when you follow it.

Deliver it effectively: Often, the *way* you say or do something can completely change the *meaning* it has or message it sends. So The Parents Toolshop® offers suggestions for *how* to say something, to avoid being misinterpreted. The good news is that the skills aren't difficult to learn or use. In fact, many of the changes you'll make are simple, small, and subtle, and you usually see positive results right away!

Many parents who choose to accept this mission start seeing immediate results, even before they learn a single tool! That's because simply stopping and being more consciously aware and choosing a response is *always* more effective than reacting.

Parenting Mission Statement

*When I experience a problem
with my child I will:*

STOP!

THINK for 1-10 seconds

CHOOSE a helpful response

DELIVER the response effectively

FOLLOW through

What's Next?

Now that you are a more conscious parent, you want to use a parenting style that will help you achieve your good intentions. That starts by setting your goals and choosing the parenting style that will best help you reach them. You'll do that in Chapter 2: Parenting Styles Toolset.

Action Steps:

Before reading Chapter 2, Parenting Styles Toolset, do these 2 tasks from the Action Guide:

- If you haven't downloaded the Action Guide, do so at: www.ParentsToolshop.com/AG
- Take a parenting style quiz and opt-in to get the free bonus report at the end, which tells you how to score the quiz.
- Identify your Top Ten Parenting Goals.

While you are there, you can also read how Sarah, the mom in the opening story, could handle those bedtime hassles and tantrums, which are two common parenting challenges.



Chapter 2: Parenting Styles Toolset

Ron and Becky have an “opposites attract” relationship that usually balances out nicely. Where she is more emotional, he is more logical. She is more of a perfectionist; he is more laid back. When one is down, the other is up, and can help lift each other’s spirits.

They discussed parenting before they had children and thought their differences would again balance each other out. Instead, they seem to drive them apart and land them on opposite sides, which creates a lot of arguments over the “best” way to raise their three children.

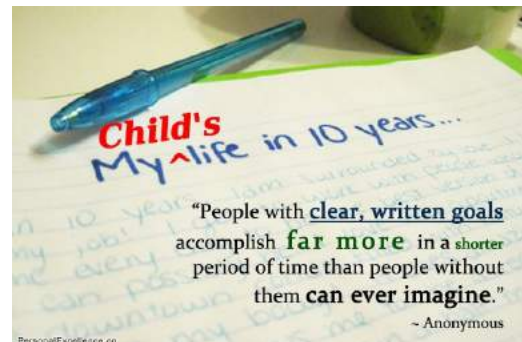


Becky is often the stricter parent, doing most of the discipline, so she ends up being “the bad guy” while Ron gets to be “the nice guy.” When Becky tries to get Ron to back her up, it sounds like criticism or nagging and he gets resentful.

The stricter Becky is, the more lenient Ron gets, to try to balance things out. But now they seem on opposite ends of the spectrum, seesawing back and forth. At first, this confused their children, and still frustrates their younger children. The oldest, however, has figured out how to play them against each other to get what they want.

Now that you understand how your beliefs and parenting mindset are the foundation on which you base all your parenting decisions, it’s time to look how they create your parenting “style.” The “basic” teachings about parenting styles are to take these 4 steps:

1. Set your parenting goals
2. Understand what the different parenting styles are, their basic beliefs, and the long-term outcomes of each, then ...
3. Choose your parenting style (rather than falling into it unconsciously out of habit and programming), based on the outcomes you want to achieve.



4. Learn the tools *and underlying beliefs* of that style and master its tools.

By the end of this chapter, you will know *what* your parenting style is, *why* that’s your style and you will choose whether you are going to adopt (or further master) a Balanced parenting style.

The good news is that if you already have the intention to be a healthy, effective parent and are willing to continue putting forth your best efforts, you now have the opportunity to *choose* a parenting style based on the outcomes you want (not old habits). No more guessing, trial and error, or wondering if you are “on the right track.”



Set Your Parenting Goals

Have you listed your parenting goals as suggested in the Action Guide? If not, do that now. ...

Since I taught my first parenting class in college in the 1980's, I've been asking parents this question in the first session, "What skills and qualities do you want your child to have as an adult?" Amazingly, even though I've now trained over 50,000 parents worldwide over the past 30-plus years, they all give about the same 10-20 answers. It doesn't matter their race, religion, education, or ethnicity. They generally want children who are:

- Self-confident
- Emotionally and socially mature
- Self-motivated
- Independent
- Responsible
- Cooperative and helpful
- Self-disciplined
- Assertive, with good conflict-resolution skills
- Respectful of self and others
- Good problem-solvers and decision-makers

So if most parents share similar *individual* goals, why are still often disagreements on *how* to reach these goals? Maybe because so many people have a belief that "good" parenting is a matter of *opinion*. Although each parent certainly has the right to their own opinion and choices, parenting research has been consistent and clear about the long-term effects of different parenting styles and which tools can best help parents reach these goals.

Valid, trustworthy research usually involves hundreds, if not thousands, of parents from diverse backgrounds, and studies them over a long period of time, to see both short- and long-term outcomes. That kind of research was done on Parents Toolshop® programs, to assess our outcome results. It's also the type of research our programs and resources refer to. So as new research has come out over the past 30-plus years, it has usually *confirmed* our teachings.

When we look at parenting research, we see many lists over the years of desirable skills and qualities for children to have. One quality that most parents don't include on their own list, but that is critically important is *resiliency*, which is the ability to recover quickly from difficulties.

This trait is important for *all* children, because adverse childhood experiences can range from mild disappointments to more-severe trauma. We want these experiences to make children stronger, not break them and damage them for life.

In 2015, the American Academy of Pediatrics sets forth a list of "The 7 C's of Resilience." So we want to be sure we include these parenting goals among those we focus on achieving:

1. Confidence
2. Competence
3. Character
4. Connection
5. Coping
6. Control
7. Contribution

How you achieve these individual goals is by raising children in a "healthy family," which was defined back in 1983 by Dolores Curran in her book *Traits of a Healthy Family*. She did a unique strengths-based study of hundreds of families who produced children with the skills and qualities that are listed above. She found "healthy" families had 15 common characteristics.



A “Healthy” Family...

1. Communicates and listens.
2. Affirms and supports one another.
3. Teaches respect for others.
4. Develops a sense of trust.
5. Has a sense of play and humor.
6. Exhibits a sense of shared responsibility.
7. Teaches a sense of right and wrong.
8. Has a strong sense of family in which rituals and traditions abound.
9. Has a balance of interaction among members.
10. Has a shared religious core.
11. Respects the privacy of one another.
12. Values service to others.
13. Fosters family table time and conversation.
14. Shares leisure time.
15. Admits to and seeks help with problems.

Next, you want to look at your long-term goal of preparing children for self-sufficient adulthood, which is a **societal goal**. Ask yourself, “What kinds of skills and qualities does my child need to succeed as an adult, work in the business world, and contribute something positive to our society and world?”

With the internet, which affects just about every industry and profession, we have a *global* workplace and economy. So our children will likely need the following traits and skills:

<u>Personal Traits or Qualities</u>	<u>Skills Needed in the Business World</u>
• Self-discipline	• Decision-making
• Self-motivation	• Effective communication
• Cooperation	• Time and stress management
• Honesty	• Conflict-resolution and problem-solving
• Reliability	• Organization
• Confidence	• Cooperating as a team player
• Willingness to take “healthy” risks	• Following rules, yet recognizing unethical requests
• Respectfulness toward self and others	• Creative thinking, offering suggestions and ideas for improvement
• Commitment to community service	

Now that you have individual, family, and societal goals, you want to choose the parenting style and techniques that best accomplish these goals.

The Five Parenting Styles



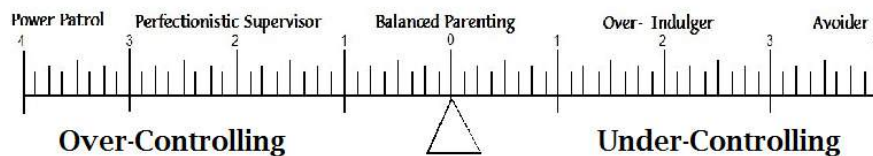
Imbalanced parenting beliefs are like setting a house’s foundation partially on rock and partly on sand. The foundation might seem level when you pour the cement and it dries, but as the house is built and people and furniture move in, the underlying weakness will, over time, cause cracks in the foundation and the house will start to sink.

Similarly, if your parenting style is “imbalanced,” it can lead to long-term problems. If you have a “balanced” parenting style, you still have a wide range of options available to you, and each is healthy and effective in helping you reach your long-term goals.



Did you take the parenting styles quiz? If not, do that now. ... Which style are you? Which style would you like to be?

As the free report explains, Parents Toolshop® identifies five parenting styles that research has shown are likely to produce certain predictable outcomes. Here are the names of each, which Parents Toolshop® coined in 1992, and descriptions of each, as one parent might display it.



Greg was a **Power Patrol**. He was a military man who wanted obedient children, so he maintained a position of rigid control, which worked in the short run. Long-term, he felt distant from his youngest daughter, who was so fearful of him she was blindly compliant, afraid to make mistakes and incapable of solving problems. His teenage daughter was rebellious and resisted any type of control or rules. Through a Parents Toolshop® class, he learned to balance his parenting style. He taught his children *self*-control by setting bottom-line limits and allowing some choices within them. He had to learn to watch his tone of voice and body language so he was firm, but not intimidating, so his children would behave out of respect, not fear.

Shanna was a **Perfectionistic Supervisor**. She often micro-managed her children's lives and thought her children's behavior was a reflection on her. When she realized her children felt that nothing they did was good enough and were afraid to make mistakes, she took a Parents Toolshop® class. She balanced her style, by allowing her children to make decisions within her bottom-line limits and find their own way of doing things. She stopped using guilt trips, lectures, bribes and sticker charts to manipulative and control their behavior. She encouraged her children to learn from their mistakes, instead of expecting perfection. She now sees them developing the skills they need to succeed in life, without her hovering or micro-managing.

Nancy was an **Over-Indulger**. All she wanted was happy children, so she gave them whatever would make them happy and rescued them from conflict and disappointment. Her good intentions robbed her children of opportunities to experience real life and as adults they had a



hard time getting or keeping a job. They were spoiled and expected to have life handed to them on a silver platter. They got involved in drugs and Nancy took custody of her grandchild. She was determined not to make the same mistakes, so she took a Parents Toolshop® class. She balanced her parenting style by keeping the warmth and nurturing, but set more limits. She taught her grandchild healthy coping skills. She was supportive and loving, but didn't take over or bail him out. She saw her grandchild the happiest when he earned his accomplishments, which has developed a sense of self-motivation Nancy's adult children never had.

John was an **Avoider**. He wanted parenting to be easy and conflict-free, so he withdrew and either denied or avoided problems. He sought the easiest solution to every problem, even if it's wasn't the most effective solution. These quick fixes caused huge long-term problems. John's teen thought he didn't care, so he didn't either. He tried to get away with everything and denied responsibility for his actions. When his son was referred to drug court, John took a Parents Toolshop® class. He balanced his style by making an initial investment of time, energy and skill. He taught *all* his children better decision-making skills and held them responsible for their poor choices. Now an adult, his son mentors other troubled teens and parenting the younger children has been *much* easier!

Michelle was a **Balanced Parent**. She wanted to raise self-sufficient, *self*-disciplined adults, so she taught her children values and skills. She wasn't having any major problems when she attended a Parents Toolshop® class. Even before the first session, after reading the first few chapters of *The Parents Toolshop® book* to prepare for class, she had already made changes and seen improvements at home. She was finding win/win solutions by listening to her children and involving them in problem-solving. She quickly saw their confidence soar and they were getting along better with other children. To become more balanced, she simply needed to become the kind of person she wanted her children to become --- and learn a few key skills to help make her job easier.

So which style are you? You will have one pre-dominant parenting style, based on either a conditioned mindset (how you were parented) or a conscious mindset you use when you are on-the-ball, paying attention, and trying to plan responses. You will also usually have a "fallback" parenting style, which pops up when a trigger button gets pushed, you are in a reactive mindset, tired, frustrated, or run have out of options.

Although the outcomes of each style are fairly predictable, based on long-term research, they aren't necessarily guaranteed. Outcomes manifest in direct proportion to how consistently you and your parenting partners follow a particular parenting style. If partners' styles are different, the more extreme or predominant parenting style the children experience is usually the one for which you see the most long-term outcomes.

For example, a rare occasion of spoiling a child won't turn the child into a brat and teens may rebel against controlling adults who aren't their parents. If a particular style is a daily, consistent occurrence, however, then the likelihood of getting the predicted outcomes increases.



The Parenting Freeway



Imagine parenting as a journey or trip. Your decision about which parenting style to use is like choosing the freeway you want to take. Some parents spend a lot of time going around and around in circles, repeating themselves and using trial and error to figure out what works. **You want to choose the freeway that will take you the most direct route to your chosen destination, without the fewest detours, roadblocks, or potholes.**

If you are like the majority of parents, you want to accomplish the goals identified earlier. So you want to have a Balanced parenting style. If you realize that's not the style you are currently using, you are in the right place to learn the concepts and tools to move you there.

By getting in the Balanced zone and staying there, no matter what happens, you will:

- Have the best chance of reaching your parenting goals, because you will:
 - Identify what your long-term parenting goals are,
 - Learn the skills you need to reach those goals and
 - Consciously choose the beliefs, thoughts, words and actions aligned with those goals.
- Avoid starting new problems or escalating existing problems with imbalanced parenting styles.
- Be a positive role model for your children, which will also help them be better parents to your grandchildren!
- Avoid double standards that confuse children and lead to rebellion and resentment.
- See positive changes in yourself and your children simply because your perceptions change!
- Get more cooperation with your parenting partners and prevent arguments about who is too soft or harsh.

What's Next?

Now that you have laid the foundation of your parenting by setting your goals and choosing to build your family using a Balanced parenting style, the next step is to get a blueprint for *how* to do that! You get that in Chapter 3: Using the Universal Blueprint®.

Action Steps

Remember to go to the Action Guide for more detailed information about parenting styles and for action steps you can take to apply what you learned in this chapter to *your* family.



Chapter 3: The Universal Blueprint® Formula for Parenting Success

All Ming wanted was a pleasant family trip to the children's museum. That's not what she got.

First, her toddler kept calling out, "Look at me!" The first dozen times, she looked and praised what he was doing.

When she paid attention to her other children, he'd do something naughty, to get her attention. If she tried to stop him, he'd run away to get her to chase him. If she ignored him, he'd act so badly she had to go to him to make him stop. Everyone was staring at him and glaring at her!



When they went to the interactive activity area, her six-year-old got so frustrated trying to build a tower out of Legos®, she just threw them and stormed away crying.

Then, her teen started arguing with her in the gift shop, loudly, because she wouldn't buy an expensive item.

To cap it all off, her toddler had a meltdown when he got tired and hungry. That was the last straw. Ming just called it a day, loaded everyone into the car and headed for home.

Ming's trip to the museum is a classic example of how one behavior, tantrums in this case, can be more than one "type" of problem. Her toddler's tantrum in the activity area was for attention. Her six-year-old threw a tantrum out of frustration. Her teen threw a tantrum to get Ming to give in. When her toddler had a meltdown tantrum, Ming finally left.

Ming's story illustrates the importance of not having a one-tool-fits-all solution to common challenges, such as "just ignore tantrums." **If you don't identify and resolve the cause of the behavior, it often gets worse.**

It's obvious the *cause* of each tantrum was different, so an *individualized* response would be best. While there is not *one response* that works to stop all tantrums, there is *one plan* you can follow that leads to an *individualized* response for *each* child: the Universal Blueprint®. (*Note: you can get more information about responding to tantrums in the Action Guide.*)

This chapter gives you the basics of the entire system, then each chapter that follows goes into each question, step and tool in more detail. This is a whole-to-part approach. If you are a part-to-whole learner, you might not feel like you totally understand how to use the system by the end of this chapter. That's fine! Most people don't!

As long as you know the basics, "What are the 3 questions and 5 PASRR steps?," you are ready to start practicing using it. *That's* where the magic happens, as you apply it to individual situations. The more you practice using it, the more powerful (and em-powering) you will realize it is.



Where you are in the Universal Blueprint®



Once you have laid the foundation of your house, you are ready to start building or remodeling it. For that, you need a blueprint to follow.

In parenting, *The Parent's Toolshop*® is the *only* place you will find a Universal Blueprint® for Parenting Success system. It's a universal parenting *plan* you can follow to build (or rebuild) your family, and to prevent challenges or find effective responses to problems that arise. Most importantly, you use it in a completely customizable way that fits *your* values and rules, and your children's needs.

You'll *learn* how to use the Universal Blueprint® in this chapter. Then you will learn how to use the tools in the Prevention Toolbox to prevent problems from starting. When a challenge does arise, you will pursue your "mission," by stopping to think for 1-10 seconds. During that time, you will *use* the Universal Blueprint® problem-solving formula to identify the problem *type*, its root *cause*, and plan a step-by-step customized response, using tools from the Prevention Toolbox and other Toolsets at other steps in the response formula.

Remember the analogy of parenting being a long road trip? Choosing a Balanced parenting style gets you on the most direct path (freeway) to your end destination --- your healthy parenting goals.



What Route To Take to Your Goals?



Trial and error



Ask for directions



Use a GPS

Universal Blueprint® GPS System
GPS = Guidance to Parenting Success

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When you need to get off the freeway, to reach a specific destination (goal) or solve a problem (running out of fuel?), you want to find the most direct route to your destination. For that, you have several options:

- **You can use trial and error** --- which can lead to making a lot of wrong turns and being confused and overwhelmed.
- **You can follow a path recommended by someone else** who's been there before, but there might be better routes to take since they made the trip, a more direct route than the one they found, or include points of interest you are interested in that they aren't.
- **You can get a GPS (Global Positioning System) device and have it map out the most direct route** and include any places you want to see along the way.

When you set your parenting goals, it's like setting your GPS to the destination location.

Your parenting style is the freeway you are using as your main route.

When problems arise, The Universal Blueprint® is like a GPS (Global Positioning System) that maps out where to get off the freeway and provides directions to the best route to your desired destination.

So, essentially, the Universal Blueprint® is like a Guide to Parenting Success (GPS)!



How to Use the Universal Blueprint®

The Universal Blueprint® truly is a “formula” for parenting success. It involves three key parts:

This system works like a combination lock, where you must:

1. Know *which* numbers will open the lock.
2. Enter these numbers in the correct *order*.
3. Turn the dial in a *specific direction* as you enter the numbers.



The key combination in *this* formula is 3 + 5 + 5:

- **3 Questions** to ask yourself, *specific to your situation or child*. This tells you which *type* of problem you are facing, so you can get on the most appropriate path for *that* situation. +
- **5 Steps** you might take along that path, *in a specific order*, to respond effectively. +
- **5 tools** to master and use that prevent *or* stop problem behavior, *if you follow specific directions* for getting the best results.

= **An effective customized response to any parenting challenge**

In this chapter, you'll learn the two main parts of the Universal Blueprint and the whole rest of the book you'll go a bit deeper in understanding each type of problem as you go through each Toolset, learning about the top five five-star tools you can use to respond to each problem type. Ready?

The Three Problem Identification Questions

In parenting, there are an almost-infinite number of potential parenting challenges you could encounter. How prepared do *you* feel today to handle them all? Probably not much, because like most parents you probably believe it is *impossible* to be prepared for every possible scenario. So you just have to wait until a problem arises *then* figure out what to do, using trial and error.

Not that you might not educate yourself or collect a few tools, but you'd still use trial and error to figure out which tool to use and maybe even how, until it either “works” or you give up and try something else.

In *The Parents Toolshop*®, thanks to the Universal Blueprint®, each of those gazillion individual parenting challenges will fit within one of five problem “types.”

Using the driving analogy...when a problem arises, you get off the freeway. At the bottom of the ramp, there are five possible paths you can take.

In real life, you look at a map to see which route gives you the most direct path to where you want to go or enter your destination into a map or GPS device. In this system, the answers to the three questions become a GPS (Guide to Parenting Success) system telling you which path to take.



Now, do you think you can learn how to identify and respond helpfully to five types of problems?

Of course you can. Feel the pressure easing already?

Do you remember the mission you committed to in Chapter 1?

Whenever there is a problem, you will:

STOP and **THINK** for 1-10 seconds,

PLAN an effective response and

DELIVER it effectively

In the first step of this mission, use those 1-10 seconds to *ask yourself* up to three questions, to figure out what *type* of problem you are facing. That's what helps you plan the most effective response.

There are several ways to remember these questions. I'm including pictures of hand signals we teach parents in our classes. The Action Guide has a link to a video of the dance we do using them.

Question 1. "Is this a Child problem or a Parent problem?"

When problems arise, break them into their smallest parts. For each part, ask this question.

To determine who "owns" the problem, consider the *issues* involved and *who is ultimately responsible for handling them*. In general:



"Child" problems" don't involve *any* of the SHARP-RV issues *and* usually involve *at least one* of the following: Peers, Emotions, Siblings or School, which we'll call "PESS issues." (Hand signal = point AWAY from yourself.)

These are issues that, ultimately, children are responsible for, such as: learning how to manage their emotions, handle their schoolwork, and resolve conflicts with siblings and peers. While the parent may play a *role* in teaching the child *how* to do these tasks or provide *support and guidance* in *how* to solve conflicts or make decisions, it's with the long-term goal that children eventually know how to do this *independently and responsibly*.



"Parent" problems will involve *at least one* of the following issues: Safety, Health, Appropriate behavior, Rights, Property, Rules or Values, which we'll call "SHARP-RV issues." (Hand signal = point TO yourself.)

These SHARP-RV issues are, ultimately, the parents' responsibility to handle. For example, it's a parent's responsibility to make sure their child is safe, healthy, learns appropriate behavior, etc. While the child may play a *role* in following the parents' requests or rules, it's not the child who is ultimately *responsible* for setting their own rules, keeping themselves safe, etc.

The standards for the SHARP issues are generally accepted among all parents and society as a whole, while the RV issues may vary from family to family. For example, society generally considers rudeness or public nudity to be *inappropriate* behavior for children, and recognizes parents might have different rules about much screen time children get or bedtime routines.



Question 2. If there is Problem behavior, ask "Is it Unintentional or On purpose?"

To know the difference, consider “Has *this* child has *consistently* shown *mastery* of the skills needed to behave in *this* situation?” Your answer might be different from another parent’s or with another child. *This* is how (or why) the Universal Blueprint® can be *totally* customized to each individual situation and child.



Problem behavior that’s Unintentional is a “PU problem,” because it results from an accident or a child's lack of knowledge or skills. The child may not have learned or mastered skills due to his or her age, developmental stage, personality, or a medical condition. (Hand signal = plug your nose, like you are smelling something stinky, like a dirty diaper. This is a reminder that situations, like toilet training accidents may be **Problem** behavior, but are **Unintentional**, because children haven’t mastered skills.)



Problem behavior that’s “On purpose” is a “PO problem,” because the child's behavior is *not* a result of *any* of the PU factors above *and* the child *has consistently shown mastery* of appropriate behavior skills, but *deliberately* misbehaves anyway. Hand signal = put your hands on your hips, like you are P.O.'d. (That's **Peeved Off**, if you want to stay G-rated!) This reminds you of how you *feel* when children deliberately misbehave.

Question 3. If the Problem behavior is “On purpose,” ask “what is the purpose?”



The hand signal for this is to throw up your hands, like you don’t know the answer. That’s because it is a multiple-choice question with four possible answers:

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Attention, | 3. Revenge, or they are |
| 2. Power, | 4. Giving up |

The way you answer these questions engages your logic, emotions *and* intuition, so it’s an integrated, comprehensive, holistic approach to conscious parenting. You’ll get guidelines for answering this third question in Chapter 12: PO Toolset. For now, figure out “What does the child gets from the behavior?” Then compare it to those four goals. Which fits closest?

NOTE: It’s important to answer these three questions based on *that* child at *that* second in time.

You might answer the questions differently for different children. One minute, it could be one type of problem, the next it could change. This often happens is when parents react to PU behavior, giving it an unintentional payoff, so the child repeats the problem behavior on purpose (PO).

Here is a list of the 5 problems and the acronyms we’ll use for each:

<u>Symbol</u>	<u>Type of problem</u>	<u>Description</u>
NO =		There is No problem or a problem could develop
C =		The Child has a problem
P =		The Parent has a problem that does <i>not</i> involve problem behavior
PU =		The problem involves Problem behavior that is Unintentional
PO =		The problem involves Problem behavior that seems to be “ O n purpose. “



Combo Problems

While not a separate problem *type*, you can also experience more than one problem type at a time, so we'll call these combination problems:

C/P = A Child problem *and* Parent problem that does *not* involve misbehavior.

C/PU = A Child problem *and* Parent problem involving Problem behavior that's Unintentional.

C/PO = A Child problem *and* Parent problem involving Problem behavior that's On purpose.

Note: You *always* want to address the Child part first, to de-escalate the situation and to identify, address, and resolve the core issue. If you use the PASRR Formula you always will.

The 5 Steps of the PASRR Effective Response Formula

Remember your Mission from Chapter 1?

Whenever there is a problem, you will...

STOP and **THINK** for 1-10 seconds,

PLAN an effective response and

DELIVER it effectively

When you stop and think, ask yourself the three problem-identification questions, to figure out what *type* of problem you are facing. Then, to PLAN an effective response, you go to the next part of the Universal Blueprint®, called the "PASRR (pronounced "passer") Effective Response Formula."

Prevent the problem from starting or worsening

When there's a problem:

Here's what to SAY

Acknowledge the child's feelings

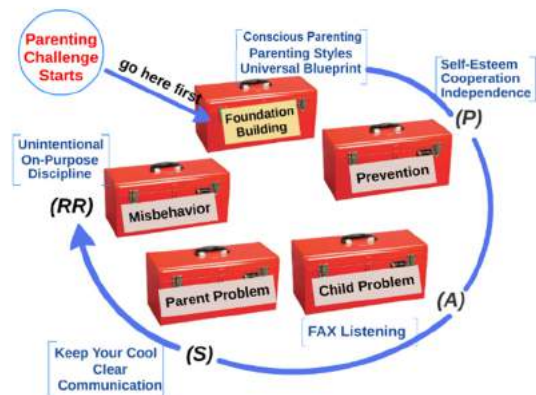
Set limits or express concerns

Here's what to DO

Redirect problem behavior

Reveal discipline

Now, follow through!



There are three critical mistakes many parents make without the PASRR Formula. These mistakes can, at the least, result in an ineffective response, and at worst can make matters worse!

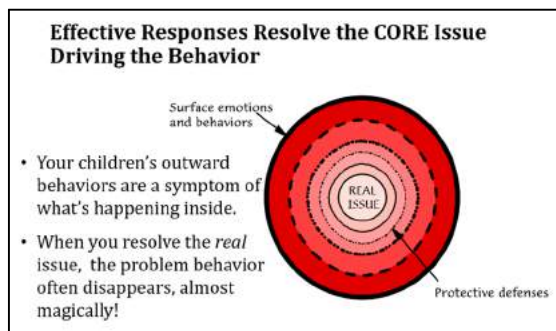
- Using effective parenting tools in a random order.** Certain tools are most effective to use in certain situations and before or after other tools. While you're trying to figure out the magic combination, you're getting more confused and frustrated! The order of the PASRR Formula is very specific and has been tested and found to be effective for 25+ years by tens of thousands of parents worldwide. Why reinvent the wheel?
- Skipping steps can create new or additional problems.** If you skip any steps, it may seem your response "didn't work," when all you needed was maybe one extra word or phrase or to switch the *order* of them.



Most parents only use two steps: they express their concerns and threaten punishment, as in, “You’d better quit (the problem behavior) or I’m going to (the punishment.)”

In The Parents Toolshop®, we often refer to problems as onions, because they can have many layers. The surface is often just a symptom of a deeper issue. We’ll explore this concept more in the Problem Toolboxes. With regards to the PASRR Formula, you can see that the three steps most parents skip are actually critical to their success:

- Because they skip prevention, new problems occur and previous problem usually reoccur.
- Because they don’t acknowledge feelings, the situation often escalates, there is *more* drama, and the core issue isn’t resolved. So the same issue may show up again, in different ways.
- Because they don’t redirect the behavior, the child either never learns better, the situation escalates or the problem behavior gets a payoff!



3. **Giving long lectures and/or quick punishment are *not* effective.** Plus, if they are communicated like that sentence above, they simply create a negative, critical threat that, in itself, *teaches nothing!* It might instill fear and get some quick action, but children aren’t *learning* anything that will result in *self*-motivation or *self*-discipline.

Usually, you can move through the PASRR formula in three to four sentences, tops! If that seems like a lot, think about how many sentences you are currently saying when you lecture, nag, remind, or repeat yourself! Aside the number of words, they aren’t strategic, constructive or educational statements and aren’t positive, loving communication that *builds* and deepens your relationship.

Plus, you don’t have to say the whole formula at once. You can take one PASRR step in a half a sentence, or two steps in one sentence. Then wait to see the child’s response. If needed, go to the next step. No need to repeat yourself!

Because this response formula covers ALL the bases, from prevention to discipline, you can actually prevent *future* problem behavior each time you use the steps *in order*. Even better, you can file ALL the effective parenting skills you have and learn into the Universal Blueprint® organizational system, then plug them into the PASRR response formula at the appropriate step.

The Top 5 Five-Star Tools

Last, but not least, are the best tools to use at each step, in *specific ways*, to get the greatest benefits. There are more than five *great* tools, 150+ actually. These five, though, are the most important, basic, versatile, practical communication tools *every* parent needs to know and use. Since this is the short, basic *Jump Start Guide*, these are the only ones we’ll focus on, plus a few bonus tools.

What’s truly amazing is that these are the same five tools that specifically prevent the five types of problems, redirect the five types of problem behavior and flow well with the five best discipline tools! Later chapters will explain the basics of using these tools. (See the last page if this chapter to see where they will go in the master decision-making flowchart.)



Pulling Together the Universal Blueprint® Formula

Although you will answer the three questions first, then follow the PASRR formula, here is a “blended” description of how they work together.

NO Problems. Hopefully, you will be in the “No problem zone” most of the time. Nevertheless, there is a *lot* you can do to *prevent* problems from starting! In fact, four of the five five-star tools are in the Prevention Toolbox!

Step I. Prevent the problem from starting or worsening. Plan ahead. Tell children what they *can* do and notice when they do it. Offer children choices in limits and teach children the skills they need to be responsible and independent. Teach children to be *self-disciplined* by helping them understand *why* negative behavior is a problem and *the benefit to them* of the positive behavior you want to see. (This doesn't mean bribes or rewards! Focus on the intrinsic value.)

Because these tools prevent problems from starting or worsening, you can use them anytime.

When there is a problem, stop and ask Question 1: Is this a Child problem or a Parent problem?

Step II. Acknowledge the child's feelings or perspective about the problem, before you share yours.

In Parent problems, this may take half a sentence.

In Child problems, you will use a three-step process to guide children through the process of discovering their *own* answers. This helps them learn *how* to solve problems responsibly and independently. (You'll learn that tool in Chapter 7.)

If it's a "Child" problem, stop at this step.



Step III. Set limits or express concerns. If this is a "Parent" problem, it will involve at least one SHARP-RV issue, so calmly and respectfully bring this issue to the child's attention. A few options are to describe what you see, feel or the possible negative outcome of the behavior. If you've said these in the past, you can simply use one word, write a note or give a non-verbal signal.

Just because a situation is a Parent problem does *not* mean the parent is automatically responsible for *resolving* the problem. The parent *is* responsible for bringing the problem to the child's attention and making sure it gets solved — and the child may need to play a major role in the solution.

If there is no Problem behavior, stop at this step.



If there is problem behavior, ask Question 2: Is the Problem behavior PU (Unintentional) or PO (On purpose)?

Step IV. Redirect problem behavior.

- If there is **PU behavior** (Problem behavior that's Unintentional), teach skills, have realistic expectations and understand it may take time for children to master the skills you are teaching. Don't excuse this problem behavior, just understand it is unintentional and be sure your response teaches skills.
- For **"On purpose" behavior** (Problem behavior that's On purpose), figure out what purpose the problem behavior serves for the child and show the child how to reach that goal through positive behavior.



Step V. Reveal discipline. Regardless of whether the problem behavior is PU or PO, you may need to hold children accountable for their poor behavior choices. Do this in a way that teaches children the value of positive behavior. Focus on your child *learning from* mistakes instead of *suffering for* them. You can show the child how to make amends or reveal consequences. (You'll learn more options Chapter 13.)

When you flow through the steps, using two to four sentences in all, it sounds something like the following example. This example offers *one* option you could choose at each step.

Prevent the problem.

"You can (one acceptable option) or (another acceptable option). You decide."

If a problem arises:

Acknowledge the child's feelings or perspective.

"It (looks/sounds/seems) like you are feeling/wanting _____."

Set limits or express concerns

"(Negative behavior) can (state the negative effect/rule/value)."

Redirect problem behavior

"If you want to (what the child wants), you can (acceptable alternative) instead."

Reveal discipline or take action

"If you choose to (negative behavior), I'll know you've decided to (reveal discipline)."

If the child does it again, simply **follow through!**

Again, you can move through the PASRR steps with each attempt to resolve a problem, or you can take the steps quickly, with each sentence (or half sentence).



By using the Universal Blueprint® you will:

- Know which steps to take in your response. This will prevent you from accidentally skipping steps, which would make your response less effective.
- Choose the best tool to use at each step. There are many tools at each step from which you can choose. You'll get less frustrated because you have more options.
- Stay organized and clear-headed, instead of haphazardly trying random tools.
- Master the most effective, practical skills at your disposal. You might understand the philosophy of effective parenting, but unless you learn the special language and actions to apply that theory, you won't get the best results.
- Find positive solutions. By focusing on what you *can* do and having choices at each step, you can replace any old or ineffective habits with healthy new skills.
- Because this formula covers ALL the bases, from foundation-building to maintenance, prevention to discipline, you can actually prevent problems from escalating and eliminate *future* problem behavior!
- As you see the system work, you feel more confident, competent and free – free of overwhelming feelings, free of confusion, and free to fully enjoy parenting and your children again.



The rest of this book will offer practical language and action tools you can use at each step of the PASRR formula. **Each step you learn builds on or uses the previous steps and tools. So read every chapter in order.**

These tools will help you accomplish the last part of your Mission:

Whenever there is a problem, I will...

STOP and **THINK** for 1-10 seconds,

PLAN an effective response and

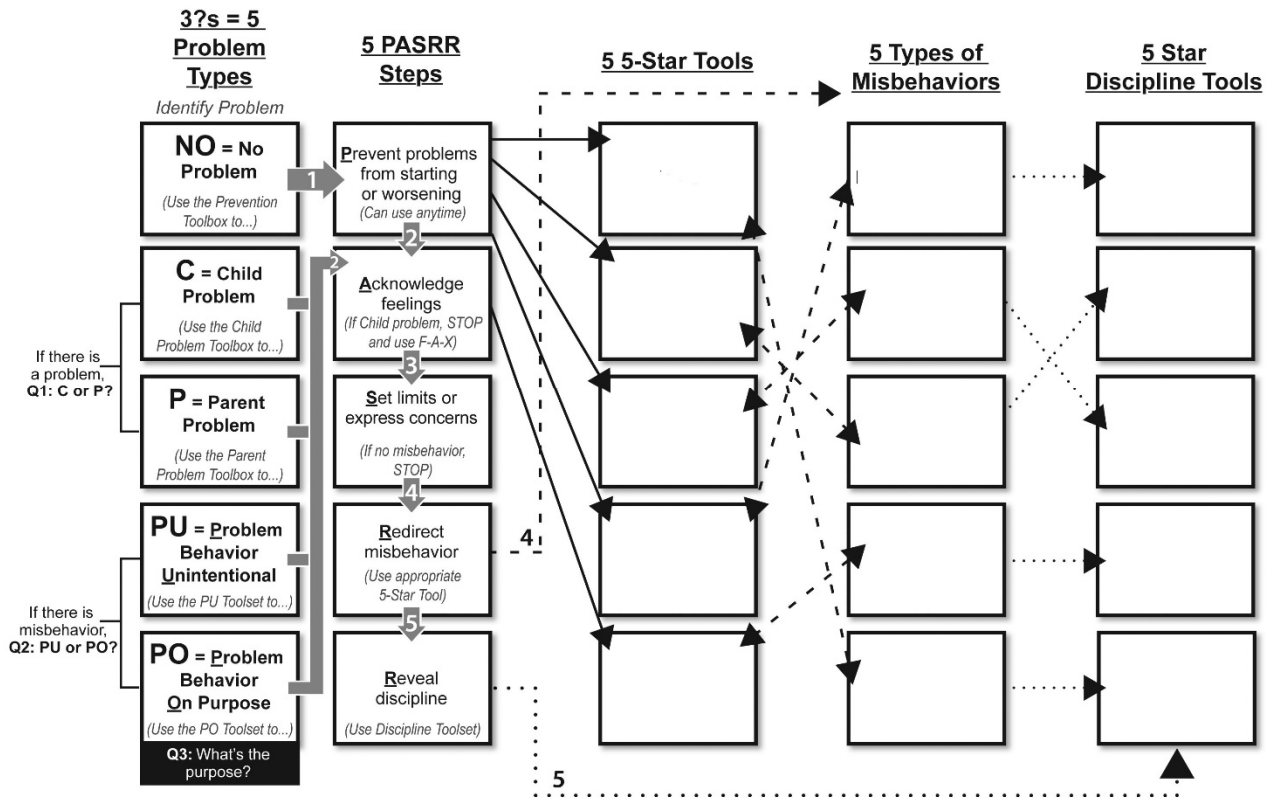
DELIVER it effectively



Throughout the rest of this book, we'll fill in the flowchart on the next page, which shows where we are now.



Summary of Universal Blueprint®



Universal Blueprint® updated graphic ©2015 Jody Johnshon Pawel, LSW, CFLE Parents Toolshop®

What's Next?

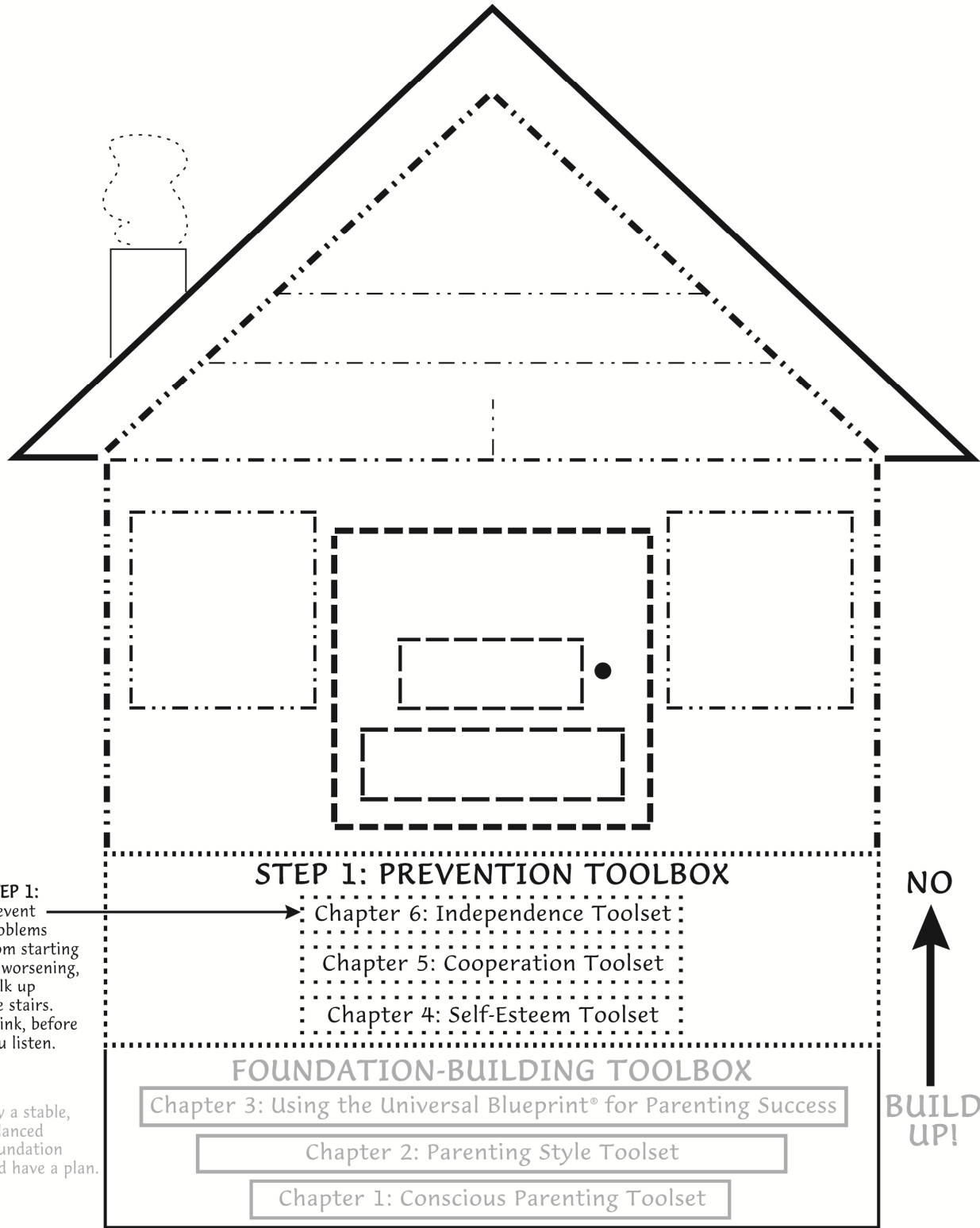
Now that you have set your foundation (a Balanced parenting style) and have a blueprint to follow, you are ready to dive into the Toolboxes, Toolsets and Tools! The first place to start, of course, is the Prevention Toolbox, because you want to prevent as many problems as possible! That Toolbox also has four of the top five five-star tools that you'll fill in on the flowchart above. Before you head over there, though, review your action steps, so you know how to *apply* the Universal Blueprint® to *your* family.

Action Steps

Remember, this is the *Jump Start Guide*, so it doesn't have detailed explanations, examples, stories, etc. The advanced book has *all that and* the universal Action Guide has links to existing resources where you *can* get additional information, *if you choose*. For example, you can get a link to the flowchart above, a video with hand signals for the three questions, and additional resources and information on tantrums. You also get practice exercises to apply the Universal Blueprint® to *your* family. You'll also get PASRR Formula responses to the Top Ten most universal parenting challenges. Here's the link one more time: www.ParentsToolshop.com/AG



Section II: PASRR Step 1: Prevention Toolbox



STEP 1:
Prevent
problems
from starting
or worsening,
walk up
the stairs.
Think, before
you listen.

Lay a stable,
balanced
Foundation
and have a plan.

STEP 1: PREVENTION TOOLBOX

- Chapter 6: Independence Toolset
- Chapter 5: Cooperation Toolset
- Chapter 4: Self-Esteem Toolset

FOUNDATION-BUILDING TOOLBOX

- Chapter 3: Using the Universal Blueprint® for Parenting Success
- Chapter 2: Parenting Style Toolset
- Chapter 1: Conscious Parenting Toolset

NO



BUILD UP!

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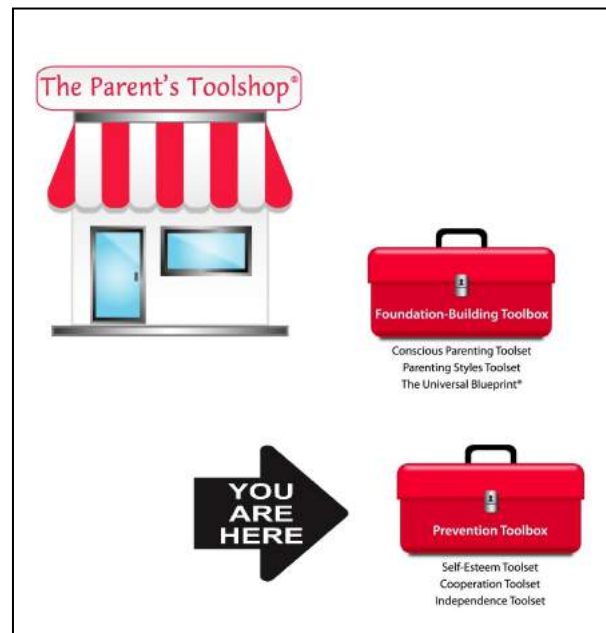


The Prevention Toolbox

The diagram to the right shows where you are in the Universal Blueprint® PASRR Formula: Step 1, **Prevent** problems from starting *or worsening*. This is easier than waiting until problems pop up and trying to stop or undo them, right?

Also, there have been many research studies over many decades that identify core needs that all human beings have, beyond survival needs like food, clothing, shelter, etc.

It is especially important for children to have these core psychological needs met or it can cause new problems, such as developmental delays or children becoming discouraged and misbehaving on purpose.



A child's psyche and development can also be negatively impacted by trauma. Studies show the more resilient a child, the better the child can handle trauma without it having devastating, lifelong effects.

The tools in The Parents Toolshop® parenting system help parents meet these core needs, which helps children develop positive qualities and character traits, including resilience, and prevents discouragement that leads to intentional problem behavior. (See Advanced Parents Toolshop® programs and resources to learn about these core needs, the research, and *all* the tools.)

The top five five-star tools, specifically, prevent the five types of problem behavior, which is our focus in this book. Four of those five-star tools are in the Prevention Toolbox, within its three Toolsets:

- **The Self-Esteem Toolset** builds children's self-esteem, without creating praise junkies or big egos. This helps children develop confidence, character, and resilience.
- **The Cooperation Toolset** fosters self-motivation, and prevents power struggles and rebellion, all without bribes, stickers, or threats. These tools help children contribute, develop character, connection, and feel like they have some control in their lives.
- **The Independence Toolset** teaches children the life skills they need to succeed and allows enough freedom for them to practice them responsibly. This helps children develop competence, confidence, coping skills, and other positive character traits.

Within each Toolset, there are *dozens* of tools that can help you prevent problems from starting or worsening. This *Jump Start Guide* will show you how to use the top five five-star tools in the most basic ways. They, alone, often result in surprisingly instantaneous improvements! Best of all, these are the same tools you can use at a later step of the PASRR Formula, to *redirect* problem behavior.

You can use the Prevention Toolbox in *any* situation, with *any* child, *any* time! You don't need to use *each* tool in *each* situation, just those that are appropriate for the goal you are seeking: to build self-esteem, get cooperation, or foster independence. This prevents *many common* parenting challenges. For those that remain, simply continue on to the next step of the PASRR Effective Response Formula.



Chapter 4: Self-Esteem Toolset

Christine, age twelve, is an honor student. She's excited to come home and show her parents her report card. She had to work super-hard for her A's this term, especially the astronomy report she did.

When she shows her report card to her mother, she gives her a hug and says, "I'm so proud of you. You are my honor student for sure!" Her father gives her a high-five, saying, "I knew you could do it!" and pays her \$10 for each "A."



For some odd reason she can't quite pinpoint, Christine feels less happy about her grades than she did before she showed them to her parents!



Her brother, Billy, is usually nervous about bringing his grades home, because he doesn't always understand what he's learning. This time, though, he knows he worked as hard as he could and is happy he brought up some D's to C's.

When his parents see his improved grades, his mother says, "See what you can do when you try harder?" and his father says, "You did a good job bringing up those grades, but you still need to work even harder to bring them up more. We know you have the potential to do better."

Billy's smile droops to a frown as he lowers his head and walks back to his bedroom.

Why did Christine and Billy have such unhappy reactions to their parents' efforts to praise them for their good or improved grades? Have you ever gotten an unexpected reaction to saying something positive to your children, like giving a compliment, only to have them argue about it or deny it was good? Or see a smile go to a frown? Are you concerned about your children's self-esteem?

Well, this Toolset will explain *why* certain seemingly-positive phrases can backfire and what to say that will be both positive *and* encouraging, without building big egos or praise junkies.



The Self-Esteem Toolset has 28 practical tools for preventing discouragement, which you'll learn in Chapter 12 is the root cause of intentional (PO) problem behavior. It also contains the first five-star tool, which is a skill *all* parents need to know and use to notice positive behavior and build self-esteem. This *Jump Start Guide* will teach you the basics of that tool and one related bonus tool. You can learn more tools and advanced uses of them through more-advanced Parents Toolshop® resources and trainings, if you choose.

What Is Self-Esteem, Really?

First, it's important we (you and I), use the same language and definitions when discussing self-esteem, because there is a *lot* of parenting *misinformation* and advice about building self-esteem, even from "experts" and "research-based" content. That's because *they* don't know these definitions and use the terms interchangeably, which results in inaccurate or confusing advice. You need to be an educated consumer of parenting information, because not everyone uses these same terms.

Also, you will see the value of making the little tweaks you are going to learn. Once you understand these nuances, you'll understand how what most parents commonly say with the *intention* of building self-esteem will accidentally get one of the other outcomes.

Once you know these definitions, you can read *any* information about building self-esteem and as you read the detailed explanations about why it works or what to say, you can decide *for yourself* if what they are telling you to do will really build self-esteem. That's because not every positive statement builds self-esteem!

Here are three key definitions you must know before learning the tools that build self-esteem:

- "Self-esteem" is how you *feel* about your *inside* qualities, your worth as a human being, as *you* judge it.
- "Self-image" is how you *think* you appear to others on the *outside*, including whether you think you are "popular," "pretty," or "smart," based on *others'* judgments.
- "Ego-esteem" is thinking one is (or is trying to be) *better than* others. It's a self-centered insecurity people cope with by building themselves up and putting down others.



Which do you *most* want to build in your children? Most parents say in unison, "self-esteem!"

Which do you *least* want to build? Most parents say in unison, "ego-esteem!"

If you had to *choose between* self-esteem and self-image, which would you say is the more essential of the two that you want to be *sure* your child develops. Most parents say in unison, "self-esteem!"

So would you agree self-esteem is essential, self-image is icing on the cake and you want to avoid building ego-esteem? If so, then you are ready to learn *how*.



What Builds Self-Esteem, Without Egotism?

There are two positive-language techniques parents are often told to use to develop their child's self-esteem, but only one of them really accomplishes that goal.

"Praise" uses judging labels that focus on pleasing others. For example, "You did a good job," "I like how you...", "I'm so proud of you," "You are smart," "You're so pretty," etc. It also tends to be rather empty, due to its vagueness. For example, the child may think, "What was good?"

Children can only get praise for doing a "good job" if they actually do something "good." Since it focuses on the parent or someone else's *judgment* of what the child did or their approval, **it actually builds self-image.**

When children are young, they want their parent's approval, so praise seems to "work." It soon starts having *inverse* results, such as school-age children becoming *de*-motivated, resistant if they feel it's being used to manipulate them, and teens being *more* susceptible to peer pressure, because they are used to making choices to please others!

In general, **praise builds self-image. If parents compare the child**, saying the child is better than others or "the best," or never address any negative aspects of a child's performance, **it builds ego-esteem.**

"Encouragement," which uses positive, descriptive words that foster internal evaluation, builds self-esteem. For example, "I noticed you sorted and washed the laundry by yourself — without being asked! That was so helpful!" Encouragement allows the receiver to judge their *own* work and the descriptions give them guidelines for setting standards and self-evaluating their work in the future.

The Five-Star Tool for Building Self-Esteem: D.I.P.

The first of five five-star tools that are super-essential and consistently get positive results takes the first letter of the three parts of encouragement and creates a reminder about how to build self-esteem in children. Just "give them a D.I.P. a day!"



Think of building an ice cream cone, starting with the bottom scoop. First, be positive, then focus on the internal, then say it. Together you create a D.I.P.:

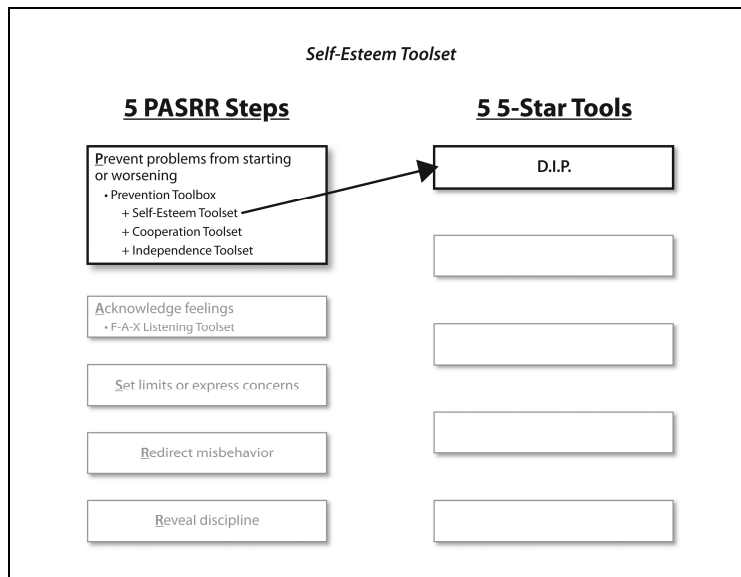
1. Describe what the child did, any effort, improvement or steps taken.
2. Focus on the Internal qualities they showed, benefits they or others gained, and the *child's* feelings about what they did or who they are.
3. Notice the Positive aspects of what they did.

Praise is still positive, just not as effective at fostering self-esteem as encouragement. You also want to avoid using praise alone, without descriptive encouragement, or it builds ego-esteem.

Since this is the *Jump Start Guide*, I'm not going into detail about what research says this, how they did the research, etc. You can read the advanced Parents Toolshop® books for this information or check out links in the Action Guide.



Next, fill in your flowchart with this first five-star tool, like the diagram below.



Now, here are some quick tips for giving a D.I.P. or descriptive encouragement:

- Instead of simply saying “good job,” *describe* what made it “good.”
- Instead of saying “I like how you...,” which focuses on *your approval*, describe *what* you like, without that phrase.
- Instead of saying, “I’m proud of you,” describe what the child did that impressed you. Also, avoid saying “you *should* feel proud (or another feeling),” which leaves people feeling “wrong” if they *don’t* feel that way. Tell yourself not to “should on other people,” as a self-reminder.
- Avoid comparing children, which creates resentment and does *not* motivate children. Whatever you want to say to one child you can say without any reference to the other. To each child, individually, describe what he/she did, any improvements and give credit for any effort.

Want some examples for turning praise or discouragement into encouragement? Here are a few, although these aren’t the only possible encouraging statements you could say:

Praise

- “You did a good job on the lawn.”
- “I’m so proud of you!”
- “I like how you fixed your hair.”
- “Your room finally looks clean.”
- “See what you can do if you try?”

Encouragement

- “Thanks for mowing the lawn. It looks so clean and green!”
- “You have good reason to be proud of yourself!”
- “Wow! Look at your hair! Did you do that yourself? That must have taken some fancy finger work?”
- “I see your toys and dirty laundry are all where they belong! I know that took a long time. You showed persistence in sticking with it.”
- “You worked and worked and never gave up. Look at how far you came!”



Bonus Tool: Give a “D.I.P. Sandwich.”

Parents often ask, “How can I be encouraging when what my child makes a mistake, did something imperfect or needs improving?” If you are praising you can't say “good job,” because what they did *wasn't* good!

Instead, most parents use “constructive criticism,” but if you think about it, that's a contradictory term: constructive means to build up and criticism tears down. It sounds like this, “You did a good job, but ____.”

You know you've heard this phrase yourself. As soon as you hear the “but,” what do you know is coming?

Criticism! Instead of getting the benefits of encouragement, which promotes good feelings and self-motivation, the defensive walls go up and motivation goes down.

Instead, you can give constructive *feedback* by building on D.I.P. and giving a **D.I.P. Sandwich**.

1) Start with encouragement, using D.I.P. to describe what the child did well.

Avoid words like *right* and *wrong*, *good* and *bad*. Use words like *more effective*, *less effective*, *helpful*, and *unhelpful*.

2) Pause...to allow children to experience the good feelings of accomplishment. \

Decide how important it is to point out the negative *now*. Usually, it's fine to let children enjoy their good feelings and address imperfections later. Because children feel encouraged, they are more willing to notice areas for improvement on their own.

The key is that there is a *pause* between the positive comment and the lesson to improve.

3) Use questions instead of pointing out the imperfection, so children identify *for themselves* areas to improve.

- a) Ask children how *they* feel about their work. If they are dissatisfied, ask what they would do differently or to improve. Show faith in their ability to figure out a way.
- b) Give a tip, “Sometimes it's helpful if...” or share how you do it, “What I do is...” Avoid *pushing* “your way.” Just speak for yourself and offer it. They may do it that way later.
- c) Most of all, avoid criticizing, giving advice or telling them what to do and especially avoid stepping in and doing it *for* them, correcting their mistake! This sends the message they are incompetent.

4. You can end with another D.I.P., if you choose, for a *real* “D.I.P. sandwich.”

An important self-esteem tool is to use mistakes as opportunities to learn, so each part of a “D.I.P. sandwich” is to be positive, *especially* addressing imperfections using positive, encouraging language. This is not a sugar-coated criticism or disguised slam.





Here's an example of a D.I.P. sandwich you could give if a child did the laundry and a black sock stained the white clothes:
 "Thanks for doing the laundry without being asked! That's self-initiative!" (*Pause a few seconds for that to sink in...*)

"Uh-oh! Looks like this black sock hid in the whites when you sorted. Do you know how to get the stains out? I'd be willing to show you." ... *Pause for response ...*

A final D.I.P. after ... "Now you know how to prevent and solve a common laundry problem."

Benefits of Boosting Self-Esteem

D.I.P. and D.I.P. sandwich are only two of the 28 tools you can use to build self-esteem, without boosting big egos or creating praise junkies. If you want to learn more tools from the Self-Esteem Toolset, you can access an Advanced Parents Toolshop® resource or program.

When you use the tools in the Self-Esteem Toolset:

- You won't get arguments or denials when you give a compliment.
- Children tell *themselves* they did a "good" job. They no longer need constant praise, reassurance and attention to feel validated. They can encourage themselves anytime!
- Children feel good about what they did, so they do it again! No bribes or threats needed!
- You start noticing more of your child's good qualities and positive behavior; and because you notice, your children use them more often!
- Children learn to trust their own judgment, so they make responsible decisions and avoid becoming people-pleasers who "follow the crowd." This helps them avoid giving in to negative peer pressure, especially as a teen.
- You can see literally the change in your child's confidence and self-motivation. Seriously, watch your children's reactions to getting a D.I.P.! You'll see smiles erupt, postures improve, and a glow appear on their faces as their confidence grows.

What's Next?

Those are just a few of the benefits of improved self-esteem. Another is increased self-motivation. There are other tools that help this, too. In the next chapter, The Cooperation Toolset, you will the next *two* five-star tools and a couple bonuses. With them, children often do what you ask the first time you ask, without bribes, nagging, power struggles or threats!

Action Steps

Before you turn the page, go to the Action Guide and practice using the Self-Esteem Toolset. First, think about how to encourage Christine and Billy, in the opening story. The Action Guide has some ideas for you. Then do the practice exercises, to apply these tools to *your* family.



Chapter 5: Cooperation Toolset

All Carol wants is to hurry to get the shopping done so she can get home to make dinner after a busy day at work.

As she puts items in her cart, her four-year-old son whines in the grocery store because he wants a toy he saw hanging on a hook.

Her 8-year old daughter keeps running off and coming back throwing items she wants into the cart, even though they are not on the list.



Other shoppers start looking at her. Carol tells her son, “That’s enough! Stop your fussing.” Then turns to her daughter and says, “Don’t run up and down the aisles, and stop grabbing things and throwing them into the cart. Look what you’ve done! Now the bread is smashed!” Those who weren’t staring before are now!

Carol feels embarrassed by her children’s behavior. “Stop it!” she yells at the children. This causes her son to carry on more and now her daughter is arguing that she wants the food she put in the cart, because her mom never fixes anything that tastes good.

Carol just wants this to stop, so she bribes her children by saying, “If you stop right now and are good during the rest of our shopping, I’ll get you one toy and I’ll pick up some food on the way home since you don’t like what I’m fixing.”

Wouldn’t it be great if you knew exactly what to say and do to get children to cooperate the first time, without resorting to yelling, bribes, or threats?

Well, that’s exactly what the Cooperation Toolset will help you do!

The Cooperation Toolset has 15 practical tools for getting children to cooperate without bribes, rewards, incentives, power struggles or defiance. It also is the only toolset with two five-star tools, which you’ll get in this chapter, along with a couple of awesome bonus tools!

Since the original *The Parents Toolshop*® book was published in 2000, there has been a lot more research done on issues such as competition versus cooperation, the long-term effects of external motivators, and what fosters self-motivation, to name a few. Every single one of them confirms what Parents Toolshop® has always taught and you are about to learn. (You can access advanced Parents Toolshop® courses and bonus resources for more details.)

So let’s take a look at cooperation first from a high-level philosophical perspective and then drill down into super-practical tools that are every parent’s favorite tools!



The Freeway to Cooperation

In my workshops, I ask parents, “How many of you want your children to do what you ask them to do, when you ask them to do it, preferably the first time you ask?” Just about every hand goes up, along with mass laughter! This is a rather universal parenting goal that doesn’t always reflect a desire for power and control.

Then we do a fun exercise that reveals the different ways parents try to get their children to do what they want them to do. (Go to the Action Guide for links to the video.) Most of the tricks, tactics and techniques parents admit to using fit into one of two major approaches:

- *Demand* respect and *make* children mind, usually with a superior attitude and threatening tone of voice. It can also, however, involve “catching more flies with honey than vinegar” tactics, like bribes and incentives. Whether positive or negative, the parent’s goal is to get the child do what the *parent* wants done. The motivation for the child is *external*, to avoid punishment or gain a reward, so when those are gone, so often is their motivation.
- *Engage* cooperation, with an attitude and tone of mutual respect. It fosters *internal* motivation, by helping children understand the *value* behind the request (the *why*), so they *choose* positive behavior. Then, they are *choosing* to do what has been requested, not because of a threat or reward, but because they understand the value of it.

Both are major freeways that might lead to children doing what you want them to do, quickly, but they are very different. Engaging cooperation has exclusively positive long-term outcomes, while “making kids mind” can start power struggles and lead to resentment, rebellion and revenge. It’s the freeway that has more potholes, detours, and potential dangerous areas you could get stranded.

Making children mind also leads to “blind submission,” which can be quite dangerous. In the past, our parents might have said, “Because I said so” or “Because I’m the adult and you are the child” to get *us* to mind. Today, however, it’s not safe for children to do something strictly because someone in authority told them to do it. Far too many authority figures have used their position of authority to gain children’s trust or trick them into following their orders and then victimize them.

A similar long-term consequence of “making kids mind” is that older children and teens are more likely to follow the crowd and give in to peer pressure. Why? Because they’ve not been taught how to think for themselves and will do whatever the person or people *they perceive as authority figure(s)* tell them to do. As children grow to teens, their peers become more influential than their parents. In peer groups, there’s usually a “leader,” and that leader could be a “mean girl” or “bully,” who pressures teens to go against their better judgment, just for the sake of approval and acceptance.



Whether an adult or peer, children need to *respect everyone*, not just people in authority, and think for themselves when being asked to do something. If the request makes them feel uncomfortable, on a gut-feeling intuitive level (not just that they don't feel like doing it), encourage them to listen to their inner voice. This is especially true if their intuition is telling them this could be dangerous, unethical, or immoral. They need to know how to assertively refuse requests, to buy themselves time to talk to their parents first or to get to safety.

Do Rewards and Bribes *Really* Motivate Children?

If you want to take the Cooperation “freeway,” you’ll need to give up some handy but addictive parenting tricks. These include “behavior modification” techniques that focus *exclusively* on using *external* motivators like threats, bribes, rewards, sticker charts and incentives.

There is an activity we often do in live Parents Toolshop® workshops that result in a flip chart full of ideas for “getting kids to do what you want them to do.” Bribes almost always appear at the top of the list.

What is a Bribe or Reward?

- **Bribes** are gifts or payments designed to manipulate or influence others to take a particular action, *in the future*.
- **Rewards** give a payoff, *after the fact*, for behaving in a desirable way.

Because these are such a common tactics, this is one of the only sections of this book that addresses what *not* to do and why. Of course, the rest of the chapter and book are all about what *to* do instead.

In the “old school” of parenting, parents were told to use “rewards and punishment” to mold children’s behavior. While many parents easily recognize the value of avoiding the negative techniques, namely threats and punishment, external motivators such as bribes, rewards, sticker charts, and incentives often aren’t avoided, because they seem to be positive.

Plus, they work! In fact, that’s actually the problem; that they *do* appear to work. But they *only* work short-term. Here are just a few of the many long-term negative outcomes research consistently shows behavior modification techniques get (See AlfieKohn.org):

- Children start believing they should *always* get a tangible payoff for behaving or helping.
- They quickly get to a point that they will *only* do something *if* there is a bribe/reward.
- The bribes/rewards have to *constantly increase* to motivate them.

Just keep in mind that some “research-based” tools do work, but only work in the *short-term*. Other tactics that “work” aren’t healthy parenting practices. So here’s a rule of thumb to keep in mind:



"Just because IT "works" (now), doesn't mean you should do IT!"



If your child is being noisy and you duct tape her mouth shut, it would "work"! But that doesn't mean you should do it!

If your child won't sit still and you duct tape him to a chair, it would "work"! But that doesn't mean you should do it!

**Look beyond quick fixes.
Does it fit the SHARP-RV?
Are their negative long-term consequences?**

There's a fine line between bribing and motivating a child, so look at three things:

1. **What is *your* motive?** If you are trying to manipulate, you are probably bribing. Ask yourself *why* you want the child to do this. *State this value in your request*, to foster *internal* motivation.
2. **Who is *suggesting the tradeoff*?** Usually, *when parents suggest*, "If you do this for me, I'll do that for you," children interpret it as a bribe. *If children ask* for something and the parents states the condition under which they can have it, it is not a bribe. It teaches values such as "work before play" or "healthy food before sweets."
3. **What words are you using?** Generally, "If ____, then ____." statements tend to come off more like bribes. For example, "If you eat your peas I'll give you some dessert." "If you finish cleaning your room, you can play with John."

If you say, "When (or "As soon as ...") ____ then ____," children are less likely to interpret the statement as a bribe. For example, "When you have eaten your healthy food, you can have some dessert." "As soon as your room is clean, you can play with John."

All *external* motivators are someone or something *outside* the child that provides the motivation. When parents foster *internal* motivation, children internalize the value of rules and requests and cooperate even when no external person or thing is present.



What is the Best Tool for Preventing and Stopping Power Struggles?

So far, you have one of the five five-star tools: D.I.P. The Cooperation Toolset is the *only* toolset that actually has *two* five-star tools...so here is your *second* five-star tool: "Offer Choices within Limits."

This tool gets a five-star rating because it can prevent and stop one of the most common and frustrating aspects of parenting --- something every parent has experienced at some time or another --- power struggles. They go something like this:

You say, "Please do ____."

Your child says, "I don't want to" or "Do I have to?" or "In a minute."

Maybe you wait a few minutes then ask again.

They balk, refusing to do what you asked or delaying or making up a lame excuse to avoid doing it.

You get more frustrated and use more firm requests...then demands...eventually threatening punishment if they don't do it NOW!

They start negotiating. You want to be reasonable. Before you know it you realize you've been going round and round in circles.

You finally pull out your trump card and say, "Just do it because I said so!"

Feeling locked in a power struggle can be one of the most frustrating aspects of parenting. It takes your energy away from other things and, over time, can negatively affect your relationship with your child.

Of course, you don't mean to get into a tug-of-war with your child – but it happens – unfortunately all too easily. Did you know that there is one tool you can use that will greatly reduce the odds that power struggles will occur in the first place? Further, if you do find yourself in one, this tool can get you back on track.

This tool is one of the most ***effective and useful tools*** you can use; it's called ***offering choices within limits***. It is ***the second of five five-star tools (*****)*** you'll learn and need to use and master to get maximum results.



Photo from Mike Brooks on Flickr

When you encounter any resistance, or to prevent resistance, use this tool. All you do is shift the focus from arguing or negotiating to the possible options within your bottom line rules or limits. Here are a few guidelines for offering choices effectively.





Don't give a choice if there is no choice. "Do you want to take your medicine?" sounds like the child has a choice. Instead, say "Do you want to take chewable medicine or liquid?" Also avoid saying, "The trash cans need to be brought in, *okay*?" "Okay" sounds like you are asking if the child *agrees* with your request. Say what you mean, "Do you understand?" or "Did you hear me?"

State your bottom line, which is the minimum standards that must occur, what is non-negotiable. Then offer choices within those limits. The most common mistake parents make when using choices is not being at their bottom line, which can lead to children feeling like everything is negotiable.

Here's an example of what I mean: If you say, "You have to take a bath at seven o'clock for twenty minutes, with no bubbles and four toys", you could potentially get into a power struggle about each request. What is your bottom line? Most parents will say, "To take a bath." But if you say, "you need to take a bath" and the child says, "Can I take a shower?" any reasonable parent is going to say, "Sure!" Now the child thinks taking a bath is negotiable and may try to negotiate every request. Instead, ask yourself, why was a shower okay? Because it still got the child clean.

So let me ask you again, "What is your bottom line?" The child getting clean is your *real* bottom line, a bath or shower are the choices for *how* they get clean. *That's* the importance of getting to and stating your bottom line.

Your bottom line is usually one of the "SHARP-RV Parent problem issues." (See Chapter 3.) There is no negotiating these bottom lines: Safety, Health, Appropriateness, Rights, Property, Rules and Values. You can stand firm. *Then* shift the focus to the choices within the bottom line.

Never argue about the choices. Simply state your bottom line, stand firm on that, and then continue to shift the focus to the choices within that bottom line, to find a win/win solution.

Choices involve the following types of statements:

- "Which would you like?"
- "How many do you want?"
- "Are you going to ___ or ___?"
- "When do you plan to ___?"
- "You can ___ or ___, you decide."
- "How do you plan to ___?"
- "Do you want to ___ or ___?"
- "What ___ do you want to use?"

Make the choices respectful to both the parent and child. The statement, "Either quit throwing the ball in the house or I'll take it away," is a threat, not offering a respectful, fair choice. An effective, mutually respectful choice would be, "You can either play with the ball outside or with another toy inside. You decide." This respects the parents' safety concerns *and* respect the child's need or desire to play.

Allow the child to offer choices. "We can have meatloaf or fish for dinner, unless you can think of something else that's nutritious and delicious." Remember to state your bottom line, unless there are truly unlimited choices. Avoid forcing children to pick one of *your* choices. Any choice that meets your bottom line is okay. Your goal is to reach a win/win solution.



If there is not a choice about *if* something will happen, offer a choice about *how* or *when* it can happen. When you set reasonable limits and then shift the focus to *how* or *when* children can meet these limits, they still feel they have some power — their choices. When facing a win-all/lose-all risk or getting a guaranteed win-some/win-some solution, most people (especially children) will choose win/win.

Helpful Hints:

1. If you say “Do you want milk or juice” and your child says, “I want both,” you can say, “Which one *first*?”
2. If you offer a choice and your child responds with “neither,” you can simply state the bottom line and let *the child* figure out the options.
3. If you *know* the child knows and remembers the bottom line, just offer the choices.
4. *Indecisive* children sometimes feel overwhelmed by choices. Keep choices simple and use them less often. Still encourage them, however, to make decisions, try new things, and take risks. This is an important skill for them to develop.
5. When indecisive children finally choose, confirm their choice. Say “Okay, you want cereal, right? Once I pour the milk on the cereal, I expect you to eat it.” Be clear about what you are willing and unwilling to do.
6. If children don't like the choice they made (or you made in example #3 above), acknowledge their disappointment and remind them that they can choose another option next time.



One final note about choices: Some parents have so much success using choices within limits that they use it in *every* situation. They forget that in some situations another tool may be more appropriate. Don't overuse choices or feel you have to give children a choice about *everything*. Use them when you need a win/win solution to prevent or stop power struggles.

On the flip side, if you get into a power struggle and reach the point you are tempted to say, “Because I said so,” it's time to take the next step of the **PASRR Formula**! Say one last sentence that **Acknowledges** the child's feelings and **Sets** your limits, then **Redirect** the behavior by focusing on the choices one last time.

Then **Reveal** discipline, which could be “either you decide or I'll decide for you,” or “either you can ____ or I'll know you've decided for me to ____.” If they still don't decide, do *not* go out of your way to *intentionally* pick something they don't like as punishment for not making a choice. Try to pick what you think they would like or what best meets your bottom line.

Then, disengage emotionally and maybe even physically, by walking away. Let the child decide what step come next. If needed, follow through on the discipline, using the language of choices in this example. If they complain, remind them they can make the choice themselves next time.

To expand more on this now would be premature as there are still some critical concepts and tools to learn about each PASRR step, PO behavior for the purpose of power, and The Discipline Toolset. For now, work with this.



Why Do Children Do What You Just Told Them *Not* To Do?

Now, on to the *third* five-star tool, which you *can* use to prevent defiance and engage cooperation. This tool is, hands-down, parents' favorite, because *they* feel more positive using and it gets amazing results, *fast and* usually forever (not just a quick fix)!

You and just about every other parent has probably experienced this:

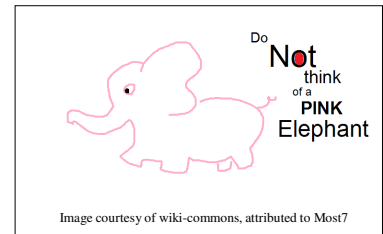
You tell your child, "Don't run, you might fall."

He/She proceeds to run...and, of course, falls.

Then you scratch your head in exasperation and say, "Didn't I just tell you *not* to do that? Why don't you ever listen?"

Ever wonder why this happens? (Watch the video in the Action Guide for full details.) Here are four brain-based reasons:

1. ***The mind operates in pictures.*** If I say "apple," do you picture the letters a-p-p-l-e or imagine a round juicy apple? The picture, of course!
2. ***The mind doesn't hear negative commands, it just sees the picture.*** If I say, "Don't think of a pink elephant," your mind immediately pictures a pink elephant. It doesn't hear "Don't." It simply pictures the image I describe. So if you say to children, "Don't spill your drink," they picture spilling their drink.
3. ***If you see it, you are more likely to achieve it*** — positive or negative, success or failure. If you can see yourself doing something in your mind, you are more likely to do it. For example, a track coach doesn't tell a hurdle jumper, "Don't trip over the hurdles!" He wants the runner to imagine being light as air, as graceful as a gazelle, and clearing the hurdles with ease. So when children hear, "Don't spill your drink," they picture spilling their drink and then what often happens? They spill their drink!
4. ***Negative commands require double-processing.*** In order for children to comply with negative commands, they have to figure out what *not* to do, then flip that around to what they are supposed *to* do, if they even know what that is, then figure out HOW to do that! Not only is this very confusing, especially for young children, but they have to figure out this mystery in a matter of seconds, because if they don't stop doing whatever they are doing they know they will probably get in *more* trouble. This then adds to their stress, which constricts the blood vessels in their brains, which then prevents oxygen from getting *to* their brains, which then causes them to have difficulty thinking logically. So it's practically a lose-lose situation for them!



Saying "don't," "stop," or "quit" and describing negative behavior offers no helpful information children can use to figure out what you want them *to* do! In fact, it focuses on and *pays attention only to the negative behavior*, which is very discouraging. It can also give an unintended pay-off that can cause intentional attention-seeking behavior.



The same thing applies to “no” rules,” such as “No running!” Whenever possible, you want to flip your attitude, thoughts, and words from negative to positive. **Describe the behavior you want to see, so children will see it in their minds — and then do it!**

We call this tool “*Don’t Say Don’t.*” It is the third of the top five five-star tools (*****) you need to use and master to get maximum results. Here are four examples:



NEGATIVE COMMANDS

- “Don’t play so loudly!”
- “Stop arguing!”
- “Quit whining.”
- “No splashing!”

POSITIVE STATEMENTS

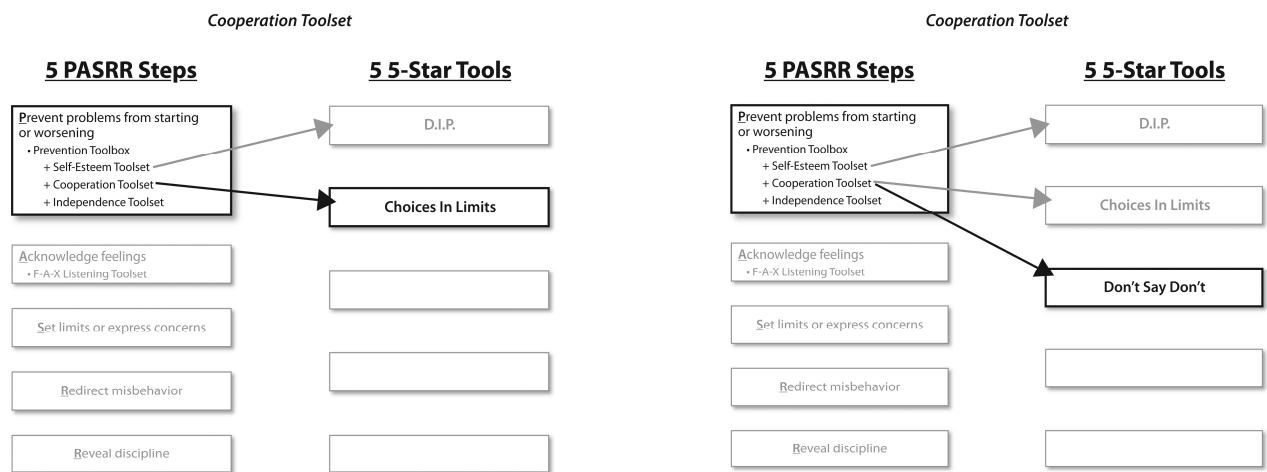
- “Use your inside voices,” or “Play quietly.”
- “Find out what you both need and make an agreement.”
- “Talk so I can understand you.”
- “Keep the water in the tub.”

If you have trouble flipping a “don’t” around, imagine how difficult it is for children! If you **start your sentence with “You can” and use action verbs**, like “move,” “put,” or “keep,” you’ll create positive directions easier and your children will understand faster.

Now, I have to warn you, this tool can be awkward to use at first. It involves a lot more than saying “Don’t,” “No,” “Stop” and “Quit” *politely*, as in “Please don’t...” Your investment of energy and focus, however, will be *well worth* the effort.

Out of all 150+ tools, this tool is quite possibly *the* most effective tool for getting cooperation and is *definitely* the tool parents see the most immediate results from using! I have enough parents’ stories to fill a book about the amazing, usually-instantaneous positive results they’ve gotten from using this tool.

Now, fill in the next two spaces on your five-star tool column of the flowchart:



How to Deny Requests without Tantrums, Drama or "But, WHY?"

Closely related to *making* requests using positive words is how to *deny* them, too. I call this tool, which is a bonus tool for you, "No No's." To start, take this short quiz? (Don't worry—there are no right and wrong answers *and* the answer is right below the question!)

1. When you have to deny a request, how do you usually do it?

- a. "No, because I said so."
- b. "No, and that's final!"
- c. Give a lecture, listing your reasons
- d. Try to negotiate an answer they will accept.

Answer: If you are honest and like most parents, you've probably tried all of these at one time or another.

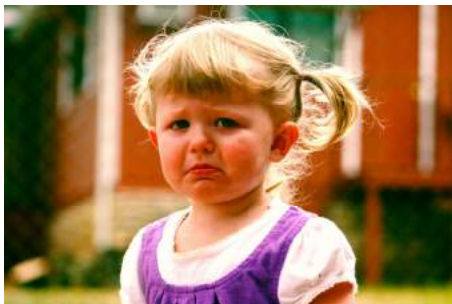
2. When you say "No, you can't have that, which of these reactions does your child usually have?"

- a. Asks, "Why?"
- b. Throws a tantrum.
- c. Tries to negotiate or talk you into saying "yes."
- d. Gives a drama performance.
- e. Argues.
- f. Stomps away and pouts.
- g. Says, "Okay."

Answer: These are the most common reactions children have to the word "No." So chances are your child has probably reacted all of these ways at one time or another.

3. True or False? All toddlers will go through a "no" stage and all teens will rebel; it is an inevitable developmental stage.

Answer: False. Children do *not* have to go through these stages. It's almost totally dependent on how parents handle their own power-and-control issues and communicate their limits.



As soon as you say "no" or deny a request, children usually stop listening to your reasons, start defending themselves, or convincing you how much they want something.

Every parent must deny requests now and then. The way you word your refusal can determine whether you get a negative reaction from children or teach them the Rolling Stones are right: "You can't always get what you want!"

Children learn how to get what they want by using methods they have seen others use successfully. They are very impressed with the way parents can get what *they* want by using the word "no." So they try using it — but parents don't like *hearing* "no!" To prevent or stop this problem, change how and/or when you say (or mean) "no" by denying requests using positive words. There are several ways to do this:



Give a conditional "yes." This has nothing to do with permitting something you don't want or "tricking" the child. It simply tells the child under what circumstances it can be a "yes." For example, instead of, "No, you can't have candy now." say, "Sure, after you eat your dinner." It's important to give the condition first or immediately after the "yes" or else children will stop listening and head towards what they want. Also, incorporate the value, such as, "After you eat healthy food you can have sweets." If there is *never* a time when the answer could be "yes," then chose a different tool.



Offer an acceptable alternative. When you take something dangerous away from a baby, you usually trade it for an acceptable toy, right? When you want to redirect children without saying "no," you can say, "You *can* do ___," or "Well, you can ___ instead," or "I'd prefer you ..."

Give information. Children can't read your mind. If you have a good reason for denying a request, you can give a *brief* explanation, without getting long-winded or repeating yourself.

Take time to think. Children are great at pressuring parents for a quick response—and you can get yourself into agreements you wish you hadn't made. Tell children you *will* answer them, after you have a moment to think over their request. Respond in a timely manner, so children trust your word and know they don't have to nag you.

Acknowledge feelings before setting limits. When you acknowledge feelings first, children know you understand how they feel and are still listening when you deny the request. For example, instead of, "No, we can't stay at the playground. We need to go home now," say, "It's hard to leave someplace when you are having so much fun isn't it," as you proceed to leave.

Use wishes and fantasy. If what you are denying isn't a heavy emotional issue ("Can I visit grandma in heaven?") lighten things up with some humor and imagination. Say, "I bet you wish you could stay at the playground forever! Wouldn't it be fun? Where would you sleep?" Or "Wouldn't it be great if cookies were so healthy we could eat them *for* dinner? I'd have a giant chocolate chip cookie. What would you have?"

Save "no's" for dangerous issues. There will be times when "no" is the first thing that comes out of your mouth, such as, "No! Don't touch the iron!" There will also be times when a request, such as "Can I stay out all night?" is just too dangerous to grant. When your children's moral or physical well-being is at stake, you must take a firm stand, because **safety trumps all!**

When you use "no" sparingly, children take notice and usually respond appropriately. One of the most dramatic stories a parent ever shared was about using this tool.

At the beginning of every T.I.P.S. class, parents check in, sharing how they used what they learned at home with their children. After this chapter, just about every parent says, "I can't believe how much I say, "Don't, No, Stop and Quit! Almost every parent has a story of a dramatic change they can't believe could happen so easily, just by making positive requests.

One session, Bonnie said, "This tool saved my child's life this week." I thought she was being melodramatic!" She said more firmly, "No, I'm serious."

She explained, "We live on a busy street corner. All day long I'm yelling, "Don't go in the street," or "Stop! Get back here!" He rarely listens, so I am constantly running after him.



This week, I used “Don’t Say Don’t” and told him “play in the grass” or “stay back from the street,” and he minded me! I couldn’t believe it.

Last night, while putting the bikes away, I saw him out of the corner of my eye heading for the street. I couldn’t think fast enough and yelled, “Stop!” For the first time in a long time, he actually stopped! Probably because I hadn’t said it all week!

Within seconds of him stopping near the curb, a big truck came barreling around the corner. Jody, I swear that truck would have hit and killed him if he hadn’t listened and stopped. I’m still amazed that he did.



Whether a “no” accidentally escapes your lips or is quite deliberate, always try to use one of the other skills before or with the “No.” Again, you aren’t permitting something you don’t want; you still *mean* “no.” You are just using positive words to deny the request.

A few parents have wondered whether using this tool will cause children to not understand or accept “no” from others who *do* use no. What’s fascinating is that because it helps children understand there are rules, the rules have reasons, and there is a reason *why* the answer is no, they will often seek out on their own what the “why” is, not in a challenging way, but within themselves. This, then, leads to children who are actually more *self*-disciplined than children who *only* obey when being corrected and frequently test limits.

Wording requests or denying them in positive words increases the child's self-esteem, reduces the parent’s frustration, decreases the need for discipline or punishment, improves communication skills, increases cooperation, and teaches children self-control and how to practice power in positive ways. It prevents and stops all kinds of common problem behaviors.

In fact, I’ve lost count of how many parents I have bumped into years after taking the class who said, “I kept waiting for my toddlers to go through the ‘terrible twos’ or ‘no phase,’ but it never came. I know it’s because I used ‘Don’t Say Don’t’ and ‘No No’s’.”

What’s Next?

Although there are almost a dozen more tools in the Cooperation Toolset, you have learned the two most important, five-star tools, “Don’t Say Don’t” and “Choices Within Limits,” and one bonus tool, “No No’s,” which together help you tell children what they *can* do. To learn the other tools, access an Advanced Parents Toolshop® resource or program.

In the next chapter, the Independence Toolset, you’ll get the fourth five-star tool and discover how to help your children develop positive character traits, like being responsible, and important life skills, including *how* to do what you just asked them to do.

Action Steps

Before you turn the page, go to the Action Guide to practice applying the Cooperation tools to *your* family and Carol’s (the mom in the opening story). There are lots of bonus resources, too!



Chapter 6: Independence Toolset

Jackie loves being a mom and is sad her children are growing up so fast. She can hardly believe her children are now ages 4, 11, and 16. She readily admits she likes babying her youngest, Abby, even still calling her “my baby.” She likes doing things for her and doesn’t want her to grow up. She knows this probably isn’t good, but she’s afraid to let go.



Her middle child, Colleen, doesn’t balk when Jackie asks her to help with chores, but she also doesn’t do them correctly. She sits in her room staring at the mess, for hours, without making progress. Jackie isn’t sure if she’s intentionally delaying or just can’t get her act together. She does tend to be a procrastinator. But if Jackie pushes her too hard, she explodes! Jackie doesn’t understand why, because she’s been a good role model, rarely getting angry, and expressing it appropriately.



As soon as school pictures were taken, sixteen-year-old Marshall cut his hair in a Mohawk. Jackie didn’t approve of the idea, so he had a friend help him cut it. He is very opinionated, constantly corrects her, and questions why he can’t have fewer or more lax rules. He also argues about doing chores and doesn’t care if his allowance is docked for not doing them. When he does do them, he doesn’t do them the way Jackie wants them done, always finding some way to do them “his way.” Jackie thinks he’s just rebelling, like all teens do.

In your list of parenting goals, you probably included several life skills, like good decision-making, self-supporting, and budgeting; and qualities, like being responsible and independent. The Independence Toolset *supports you* in reaching these goals, by *supporting your children* in learning these skills and developing these qualities, so they successfully launch into adulthood.

Specifically, the Independence Toolset in this *Jump Start Guide’s* offers tips for three key areas, which you see Jackie facing with *her* children:

- Letting go as children get older and not doing too much *for* them or babying them,
- How independence looks at different developmental stages, especially the teen years,
- Fostering independence and responsibility in children, including chores and allowances.



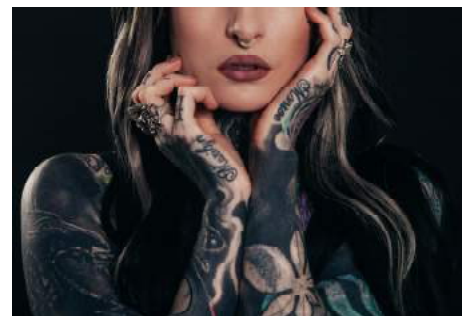
Key Principles of Independence

Independence is a healthy parenting goal for obvious reasons, like having adult children who are self-reliant and not living in your basement as adults! Most developmental psychologists agree that **autonomy**, which is the ability to have *some* control over what happens in your life, **and independence, are among several psychological needs all human beings have.** When this need is unmet, it can lead to dependency, discouragement, and anti-social behavior.

Independence is a lifelong developmental process. You may only think of toddlers and teens, but children are learning responsibility and life skills each day, every day, every year, through every developmental stage:

- **Infants** are learning trust, because they *are* dependent. When they become mobile and begin learning self-care, they transition to the next stage...
- **Toddlers** are learning how to care for themselves, including feeding, toileting, etc. As they become more *physically* independent, they transition to the next stage...
- **Pre-schoolers** are learning and mastering more self-care skills and becoming more *socially* independent, including making new friends.
- **School-aged children** make a major leap of independence when they enter school. They must be responsible for getting ready in the morning, their schoolwork during school and after hours and more responsibilities at home.
- **Pre-teens** start becoming *emotionally* independent, beginning the process of “individuation,” which is essential to become an adult. They start caring more about and being more influenced by their peers than their parents.
- **Teens** are becoming *financially* independent as they get jobs, learn to drive, and transition into their post-high-school careers. They are now fully engaged in the individuation process, where they are figuring out who *they* are and how they are separate from others, especially their parents.

Individuation is often mistaken for rebellion, which is a reaction to control. It is a critically important developmental task, and if teens have healthy ways to individuate, they don't need to rebel. Consequently, contrary to popular misperceptions and stereotypes, ***not all teens will rebel, but they all will individuate, in their own way and time.***



- **Young Adults** are still developing until approximately age 25, so these years are often spent transitioning into living independently and supporting themselves. If you understand individuation and have been allowing for it in healthy ways, you will be in absolute *awe* of your children during this stage, watching them blossom into their own unique individual adults and seeing them launch into the world. Celebrate them!



What are Parents' Responsibilities?

The original *The Parents Toolshop*® book highlights **the difference between being responsible for your children and being responsible to your children**. When you are responsible *for* your children, doing things *for* them that they are capable of learning to do for themselves, you can delay their independence and even cripple them as adults, because they can't do things for themselves that you will expect them to do.

Children don't just magically develop life skills at age 16 without anyone teaching them or getting any practice. Sure, some adults get thrown out into the world unprepared and manage to be self-sufficient, out of a necessity to survive, but that's different than having supportive parents who teach them important life skills and help them develop healthy independence.



When you are responsible to your children, you guide, teach, and mentor your children while allowing them the freedom to practice these skills. This is a gradual healthy process that gives your children room to grow mentally, socially, physically, and spiritually, so one day they can live separate from you and function well as adults. So resist the urge to do too much *for* them.

All of this takes time, practice, and patience. As your children learn more skills, you can feel more trusting that they can responsibly handle themselves. Many times, parents say “When you show me you can be responsible for XYZ, then I’ll know you are ready for more freedom.” But if you don’t *teach* them XYZ how will they ever learn how to be responsible for that?

It’s crucial you teach skills first, then give enough freedom to practice them and time for skill mastery. Otherwise, it’s like telling a job applicant, “I’m not hiring you because you don’t have experience.” How are you supposed to get experience if no one gives you your first job?

While it takes a little extra time and effort to teach children skills, it saves you *lots* of time and frustration down the road, because children are able to do things for themselves, skillfully. You also avoid power struggles over what they are and aren’t ready to do.

*“Give a man a fish and he’ll eat for a day.
Teach him to fish and he’ll eat for life.” --- Chinese Proverb*



How Can You Foster Responsibility and Independence in Children?

The Cooperation Toolset gave you tools for helping children feel autonomous, by offering children choices in limits. Those tools help prevent power struggles, but what if the child is *willing* to do something, but doesn't know *how*?

The Independence Toolset has 23 practical tools for teaching children skills, fostering independence and teaching children responsibility *without* taking over, doing things *for* them, rescuing or micro-managing them.

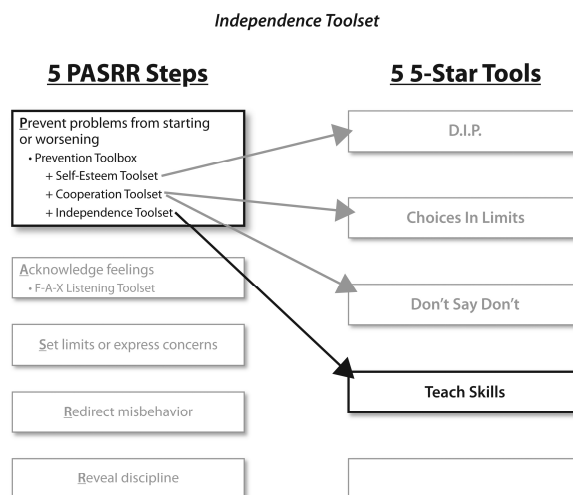
To prevent problem behavior, especially unintentional misbehavior that results from a *lack* of skills, you want to Teach Skills, which is the *fourth* five-star tool. Skill-building is an important tool for fostering responsibility and independence. When used regularly, it can prevent many problem behaviors, which prevents many situations from ever getting to the point of discipline!

“Teaching Skills” is somewhat self-explanatory when you think about teaching tasks like cleaning a room, skills like getting dressed, or behaviors like being polite. Here are ten tips for teaching children tasks, skills and behaviors, although you do not always have to use all ten ideas each time:

1. Plan Ahead.
2. Explain the value of the skill.
3. Break the task into smaller steps.
4. Let children watch.
5. Let children try.
6. Let children do things their way, within quality guidelines.
7. Offer choices.
8. Work together.
9. Make it fun and “child-friendly.”
10. Offer encouragement at every step.



Now, add “Teaching Skills,” your fourth five-star tool, to your flowchart, too!



How Do You Teach Children “Invisible” (Internal) Skills?

There are only two tools from the Independence Toolset in this *Jump Start Guide*. The next tool, “Openly Model Behavior,” is a bonus tool, because it’s one of the most powerful, effective, yet often-unknown tools to most parents, and it needs some explanation.

You just learned how to teach your child skills, tasks and behaviors. For example, if you want to teach your child how to treat others with respect, you would *show* the child, through your own behavior and coaching, how to treat others with respect. This is called “modeling behavior” or “being a good role model.”

What about **skills and behaviors that are invisible, unobservable or internal processes**, like being patient, not procrastinating or managing their anger? How can you teach children these skills and behaviors? If you are simply a role model, **it looks to the child like you are doing nothing** --- you are calm, doing what you are supposed to do, and not getting angry! In reality, you are talking yourself through a challenging situation, using *internal* skills. Here’s an example:

You are driving along with your child in the car when another driver cuts you off in traffic. In the past, you might have flipped a finger or blurted out a cuss word, but you are trying to set a better example. After all, you know your child would imitate you, right? So instead, you control your anger and say nothing, taking a deep breath and talking to yourself in your own head, to calm yourself down.



What did the child observe? Nothing! Except maybe that you took a deep breath. What actually happened was a very quick, but internal process of experiencing a rush of frustration and aggravation, talking yourself through your feelings, and deciding not to say or do anything obvious about it.

So when you use internal skills such as self-motivation, anger management, time management, and decision-making, “Openly model behavior” to make these internal processes observable. You do this by simply *saying aloud to yourself* the steps you are taking in your mind — knowing a “sponge” is soaking up what you are saying. You aren’t lecturing *them*; you *talk to yourself, in front of them*, for their benefit.

For example, you might say out loud, “Wow! I can't believe that guy just cut in front of me! That was dangerous! I feel like honking my horn or calling him a name, but that won't help me or him. I just need to take a deep breath and calm down. Maybe he's in a rush to get somewhere and isn't thinking about others. Good thing I was paying attention!”

By revealing your internal thought process, your children have a model to follow the next time they need to talk themselves through a frustrating situation.



What's Next?

You have learned just two of the 23 tools from the Independence Toolset and how to apply them at different ages and stages. (You'll get more information about developmental stages in Chapter 11: The PU Toolset.)

In all, The Prevention Toolbox contains 66 tools, including four of the Top Five Five-Star Tools. Using a combination of these tools 24/7 will usually bring a significant decrease in many of the daily parenting challenges you are currently experiencing.

If you generally **use the tools you learned in the Prevention Toolbox in the following order**, you'll be *amazed* at how much easier life flow and how much more positive and confident both you and your children feel:

1. **Give a D.I.P.**, to notice children being "good," describing their qualities or feelings.
2. When they aren't "good" or you make requests, **describe what you want them TO do**, like a picture. (Don't' Say Don't)
 - a. *Deny* requests using positive words (No No's)
3. **Teach skills**, so they know *how* to do what you want them to do.
 - a. If it's an **internal skill**, "**openly model**" behavior.
 - b. **Offer choices** for when and how they can do it, not *if* they do it.
 - c. If they do it imperfectly, give a "**D.I.P. Sandwich.**"
4. Remember, it takes time and practice to master skills, so **give them enough freedom** for them to do so. Continue giving D.I.P.s, to acknowledge their effort and improvement.

The results *you* get will depend on how many tools you use, how proficiently you use them and whether you use them consistently, long enough to see results. **If you don't get results or face a challenge, remember these are only the tools from the Prevention Toolbox. You can use these tools all the time**, to *prevent* problems, and can also use them as part of an effective *response* to problems, by taking the next step in the PASRR Formula.

Those steps are where you are heading next, as you head into the "Problem" Toolboxes. There, you will get the last of the top five five-star tools and start looking at how to effectively respond to parenting challenges, using the Child Problem Toolbox.

Action Steps

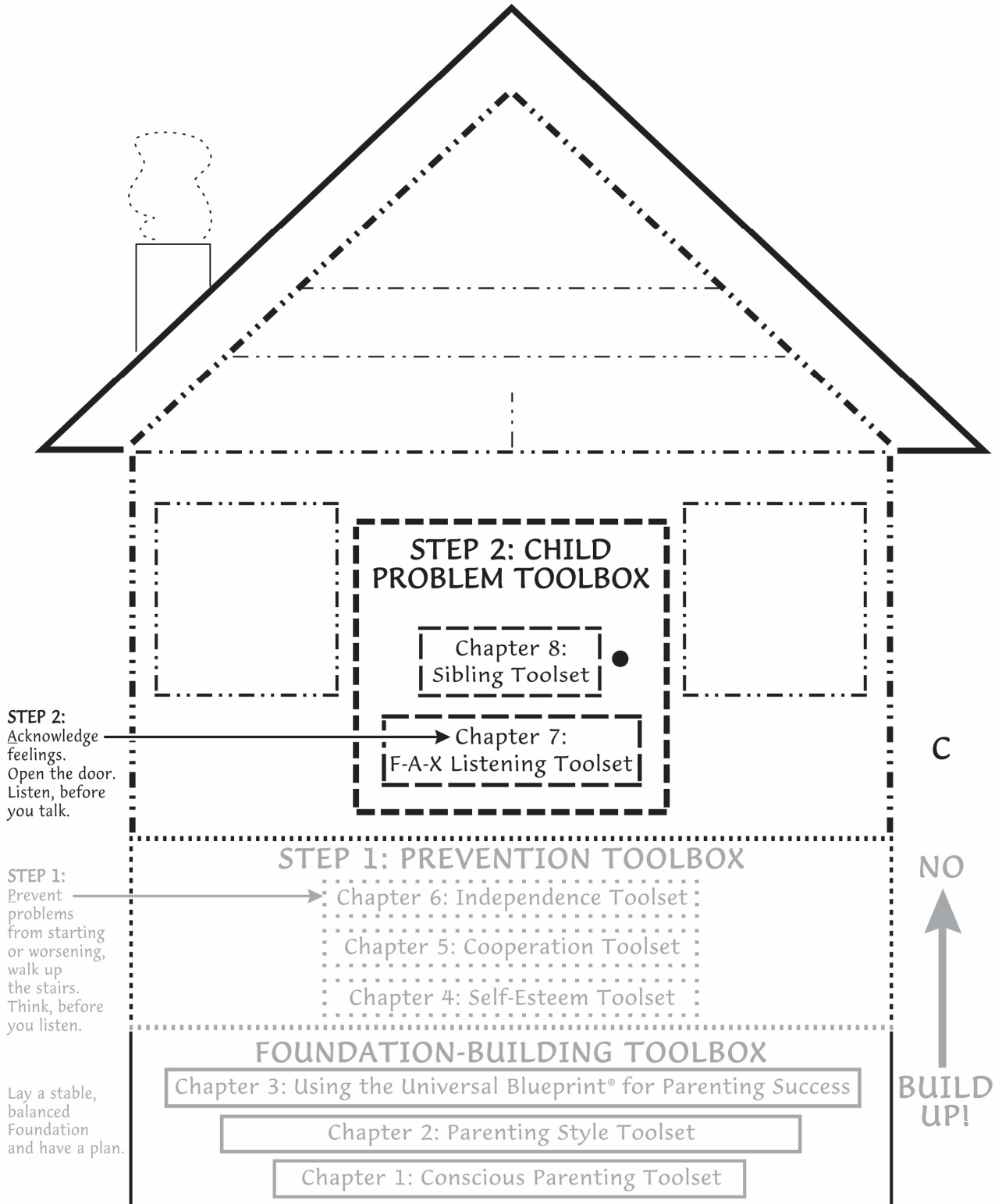
Before you head into the "problem zone," go to the Action Guide and do some practice exercises, so you can think fast on your feet when using the Prevention Toolbox.

The Action Guide also has ideas for what Jackie could do to foster independence in her three children. It also has links to bonus resources, like links to a three-level allowance plan from in the original *The Parent's Toolshop*® book, along with a list of age-appropriate chores.

These are your core tools and you will be using them for both prevention and intervention, so you want to master them well. Even take a week off of reading and just practice these tools.



Section III: PASRR Step 2: Child Problem Toolbox



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Step 2 of The PASSRR Formula: The Child Problem Toolbox

Welcome to Child Problem Toolbox! To the right is an image showing you where you are in the Universal Blueprint® Problem-Solving System / PASRR Formula:

If you recall, you use the Prevention Toolbox all the time, especially when there is No problem. In the previous section, you learned the four five-star tools to use in the first step of the PASRR Formula:

Prevent problems from starting or worsening.

When a problem arises, you are no longer in the “No Problem Zone,” so you start asking the three *problem type* identification questions.

To answer the first question, “Is this a Child problem or a Parent problem?” you consider whether any of the following P-E-S-S issues are involved: Peers, Emotions, Siblings and School.

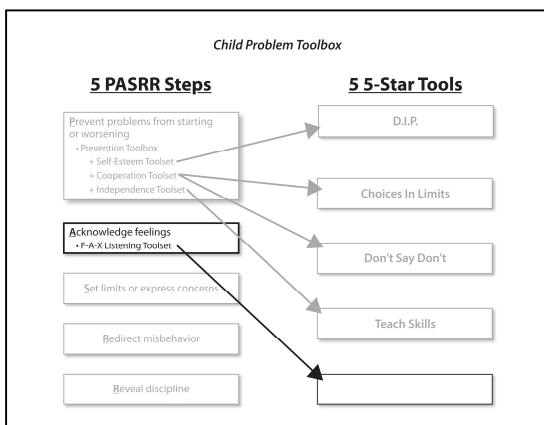
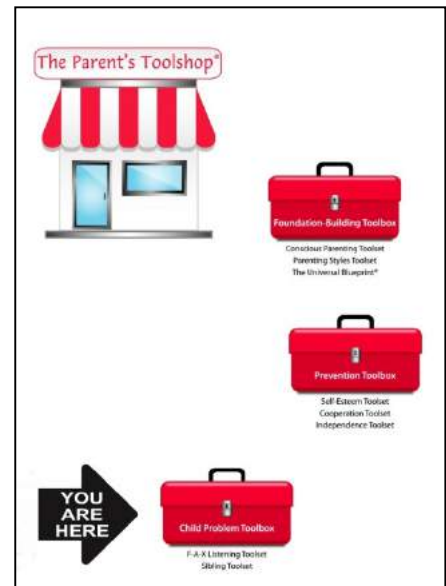
In nearly *every* response to *any* problem, you’ll take the next step in the PASRR Effective Response Formula:

Acknowledge the child’s feelings.

When facing a Child problem, you STOP at this step of the PASRR Formula and use a more *extensive* process that helps children work through their feelings and guides them through the process of making decisions and/or solving their own problems. **This three-step process is called F-A-X Listening, which is the fifth (and final) five-star tool.** *****

The Child Problem Toolbox contains two Toolsets:

- **The F-A-X Listening Toolset** teaches children how to work through their emotions, identify the underlying issues driving their emotions and behavior and to explore solutions to it.
- **The Sibling Toolset** offers practical tools and tips for preventing or resolving conflicts between two or more people, such as siblings or peers.



This PASRR step and Toolbox focus *exclusively* on *Child* problems. If you have a Parent problem, whether it’s the whole problem or part of a combo problem, you *still* want to start your response by acknowledging the child’s feelings, which may only be a half-sentence. Then, you’ll get your turn to express your concerns in the *next* step of the PASRR Formula, “Set limits or express concerns,” which could be in a matter of *seconds*. You’ll learn more about that step in the Parent Problem Toolbox.



Chapter 7: F-A-X Listening Toolset

Tanya came home from school upset. Some of the girls at school wouldn't let her hang out with them in the middle school cafeteria because they saw her talking to some of the athletes. They actually told her, "You have to choose between us or them. You can't be friends with both groups."

Tanya was devastated; she started crying as she told her mom what happened. Her mom remembered her own feelings of rejection and anger at the cliques she had to deal with as a teen. She told Tanya, "I know just how you feel. Don't let them bother you. Just be friends with whomever you want. They don't deserve to have you as a friend."

Tanya became even more hysterical. She said, "You don't understand! Either way I lose friends! I swear, I can't tell you anything!"

Tanya's mom was shocked at this reaction, but explained it away as hormones and immaturity. She tried putting things in perspective for Tanya, saying "Every girl has gone through what you are going through. You are strong. You'll get through this."

Tanya rolled her eyes, gave an exasperated sigh and ran off to her room, slamming the door shut.



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Have you ever gotten an unexpected reaction to your efforts to help your child solve a problem?

Have your best intentions ever backfired and shut down communication, maybe even resulted in your child storming out and literally slamming a door shut?

Have you ever wondered why they reacted that way?

When your children experience a problem, especially one that causes strong emotions, there can be many things going on, on many levels. So what all *is* going on and how can you open the door to communication with your children, so they'll share their lives with you and engage in conversation? More importantly, how can you assure they'll make good decisions and solve problems responsibly, not impulsively, when you aren't there?

The answers to *all* these questions are in the Child Problem Toolbox, which is not coincidentally represented by the door of the house in the Universal Blueprint® house graphic. You use the F-A-X Listening Toolset to open the door to communication, and to identify and address the many layers of what's happening. By responding helpfully when your children have a problem, you empower your children to learn how to solve their own problems, responsibly.



Is Your Door Open or Shut?

Do you want your children to share their problems with you, but think sometimes they are being too dramatic?

Do you care about what's happening in your children's lives, but just don't have time to sit and listen to their long stories?

Would you like them to cut to the chase, get to the point, and get over it (whatever "it" is at the moment)?



When your children share a problem, do you usually have words of wisdom to share, because you've "been there, done that"?

Have you ever wanted to rescue your children, take away their pain and make them feel better?

Despite your intention of having an "open door policy," these attitudes and responses are common among busy parents and unintentionally shut down communication, because they each send unintended messages:

- If you are too busy or impatient to listen, children may think you don't care, feel unimportant, and shut down.
- If you interrupt and don't let them finish, because [you think] you already know what they are going to say, children feel disrespected and cut off. They may resent you and not share anymore.
- When children have a problem and you try to relieve the pain, quickly, because it's painful for *you* to see them in pain, children may feel like *they* are "a pain." Or, if sharing with you makes you visibly uncomfortable, then they may stop sharing, so *they don't upset you!*
- When children are told to "calm down," or "you're okay," they may feel dismissed. Just telling them to calm down won't make them calm down. In fact, it implies they don't have a reason to be upset or are over-reacting, which can upset them more!
- If they hear "Don't feel that way," they get the message their feelings are "wrong," it's not okay to feel emotions, or that you don't really understand. They may either shut down emotionally or ramp up the dramatics, because they think you aren't hearing or understanding them.
- If you give advice, it sends the message you think they are incompetent or incapable of solving their own problems and need to be rescued.

Obviously, *none* of these messages are what you *intend* to send. Children often misinterpret these common responses, because of the *hidden non-verbal* messages inside each response.



So how can you respond in ways that don't shut the door on their feelings or end up with you taking over? Use F-A-X Listening.



Can You Keep the Ball in the Child's Court?

The first place you start responding to Child problems is by not taking over and solving them *for* children, which dis-empowers them. This is often the hardest part of responding effectively to Child problems and one of the first turning points your conversation can start heading down a less-than-helpful path.

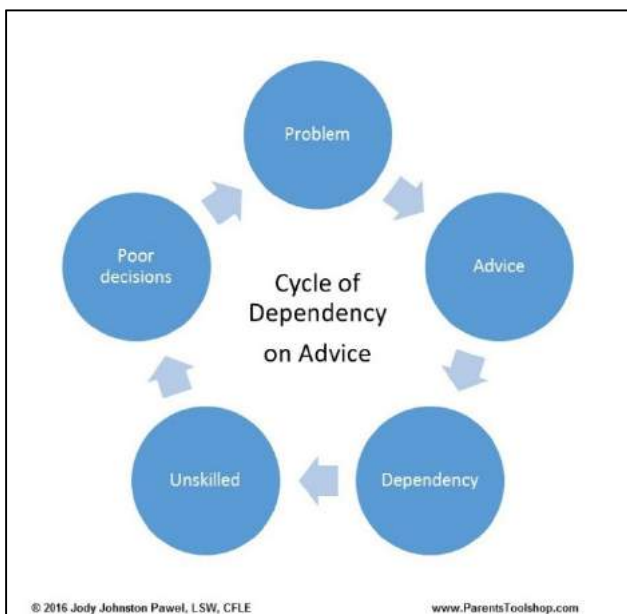
If you think about it, when children are upset, most parents are quick to start asking factual questions, like a journalist. But the only reason you need to know facts is if this is *your* problem to solve. It isn't; it's a Child problem, so you don't need to know the facts --- or at least you don't need to know them *now*, when your child is upset. **Focus on feelings first.**



The tendency to take over is often rooted in the belief that children aren't capable of solving their problems, because they are younger and less experienced than adults. I invite you to challenge or reconsider that belief. Considering the following...

Surely, good problem-solving or decision-making skills were in your list of parenting goals. That's because you know *everyone* needs to have these skills. Unfortunately, most children don't learn *how* to make decisions or a *process* for solving problems. As a result, they either impulsively do whatever comes to mind or struggle on their own.

When your child has a problem, you will usually feel empathy for your child and naturally want to help. You might assume the child doesn't have the skills, knowledge or life experience to solve the problem, so as a more-experienced adult you might give your child advice. If you want to protect your child from problems or make sure they do the "right" thing, you might even take over, rescue or solve the problem *for* the child.



Despite the good intentions, all of these approaches unintentionally rob children of an opportunity to learn *how* to solve problems and make responsible decisions, because someone else is doing all the thinking *for* them.

When children expect you to solve problems *for* them, it makes them less likely to take responsibility for their behavior and more likely to blame others for their problems.

Since they haven't learned *how* to solve problems or make decisions, they tend to be impulsive, which can lead to poor choices, irresponsible behavior and bigger problems!

Then, because they keep making poor decisions, it reinforces the belief that they are incapable of

making good choices, which leads to more advice-giving...and the cycle continues!



If you are inflicting yourself with feelings of guilt by seeing yourself in these descriptions, give yourself credit for having good intentions. Then make a commitment, today, to empower your children with the skills they need to become better decision-makers.

Start by realizing that all human beings are innately capable of solving problems. Think of fetuses in utero; when they are cramped they stretch. Babies have different cries to communicate their needs. Even young children *are* capable of solving *some* problems; they just need to learn *how*. As they mature and their skills improve, they can solve increasingly complex problems.

Keeping this in mind will also help you avoid swinging to the other extreme, assuming children of *any* age can “figure it out for themselves.” To simply say, “You’ll figure it out,” *before* they’ve learned *how* to figure “it” out, is a dismissive response that says to children that you don’t care or have the time to be there for them.

The balanced approach is to provide just enough love and support, without taking over. Teach your children *how* to solve problems and make decisions, using F-A-X Listening. Then provide guidance without pressuring them to do what *you* think they should do.



This balanced approach allows children to blossom like butterflies coming out cocoons. If you were to remove the cocoon, the butterfly doesn’t have to struggle against it and build strength in its wings to fly. And if it never gets out of the cocoon, because it’s too tight and there’s too much pressure, it never flies and dies.

Once you have a *willingness* to allow your children to get some experience solving problems, you need to *show* them you are open to hearing what they say, *without* judgment or taking over, and truly want to understand them, not just quickly stop their distressed feelings and get to a quick fix.

Do You Speak Language of Emotions?

Have you ever tried to calm down your child by telling them you went through something similar, only to have them get more upset --- *with you!*? Or tried solving the problem by asking factual questions to figure out what happened and then giving advice, only to have them get defensive? These unexpected reactions to your well-intentioned, rational, logical responses are caused by you not speaking the same *language* your child is speaking in that moment --- the language of emotions.

Most people believe (whether they are consciously aware of it or not) that “emotions are bad, unless they are good.” In other words, it’s only okay to express “good” emotions. “Bad” emotions are to be pushed down, ignored, or deflected.

Most human cultures devalue emotions --- children are trained to not feel their emotions, are squelched when they cry, and told to be tough. Then we wonder why there’s so much hardness, hatred and fighting in the world.



Emotions are a foreign language to most people. Yet they are probably *the* most important language for every human on the planet to learn to speak, hear, interpret, understand, and respect.

The language of emotions is what gives color to life. Imagine not knowing what joy feels like or not appreciating a joyful moment, because you've never felt sorrow.

Emotions are also the language intuition uses to whisper Truth to your heart, or to scream an alarm when you might be in a dangerous situation. When you feel hurt, betrayed, or angry, you are receiving a message that might be saying, "Be careful," or "Don't blindly trust everyone," or "Use discernment," or "That person violated my boundaries! I have a right to be treated respectfully!"

Yes, feeling pain isn't pleasant, so most everyone wants to avoid it, but numbness also affects how much joy and happiness you can feel, too. There is a balance.

So-called "bad" emotions may certainly *feel* unpleasant, because they signal that something is out of balance and alignment, which is something important to resolve. One way or another, the mind, body and spirit will always seek balance, so stuffed emotions will eventually fester, until they erupt, to bring about release and healing. So avoiding emotional pain almost always creates *more* emotional pain later!



The body's natural state is peace and a basic human need for healthy development is to feel loved and bonded to ones parents. If the parent-child relationship is in a chronic state of disconnection or conflict, however mild, "normal" or "typical" it may appear, it can create stress that the body (nearly every system) perceives as a form of trauma --- *even if no type of abuse is occurring!*

Trauma of any form can cause someone to shut down emotionally, or become emotionally numb, which can all lead to long-term problems, such as using drugs and alcohol to numb emotional pain, depression, self-harming, and even the development of late onset personality or mental disorders.

None of this is necessary when all that's needed is to learn the language of emotions! We, as a species, can be more fully human and have richer lives by fully experiencing emotions, which doesn't have to involve drama, crying or extreme reactions.

Well, maybe sometimes -- but once you understand emotions, how to move *through* them, and how to teach this process to your child -- those unpleasant emotions become fleeting *and meaningful*. They provide jewels and gifts, instead of pain and trauma.

Start by understanding that when children don't understand their feelings, are afraid of them, or don't know how to express them, they can become more dramatic. When children understand their emotions and how to express them, they usually calm down faster and know how to work through and release their emotions quicker. The F-A-X Listening process helps you support your children through this process.



What is the Core Issue?



In the Parents Toolshop® we say that “Child problems are like onions,” because they have lots of layers. The negative emotions and behaviors you see on the surface are often only symptoms of a core issue, which is surrounded by defensive layers protecting that vulnerable core hurt.

Often, it feels too risky to reveal the true hurt, or maybe the child (or person) doesn't know how. So the symptoms show up as problematic behavior or extreme emotional outbursts.

When parents react to and try to stop these surface emotions and behavior, it doesn't address or resolve the real problem. And if the real issue isn't resolved, it *will* come back, possibly even expressed in a different way.

It's like having a disease that causes a rash. You can put cream on it and it will go away, but eventually it comes back. Cure the dis-ease and the rash disappears forever!

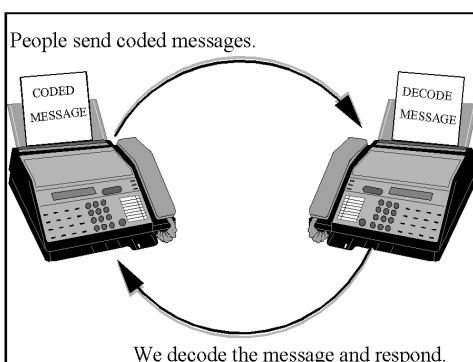
The first two steps of F-A-X Listening support children (or adults) in processing their surface emotions and behavior (non-verbal expressions of emotion), to identify the core issue. The last step wraps up this discovery like a gift, then puts it in the child's (or person's) court, to explore solutions to it. So let's look at those three steps in more detail.

The F-A-X Listening Process

When children have a problem, you want to guide and support them *without taking over*. You can do this by taking the next step in the PASRR Formula, using *the final five-star tool*, called F-A-X Listening. This second step of the PASRR Formula is the one step most parents skip and then pay the price, because problems often escalate into dramatic performances. As a result, F-A-X Listening is possibly *the* most important skill for solving problems and improving *any* relationship.

F-A-X Listening is a three-step *process* that stands for:

- **Focus on feelings**, which teaches children how to work through their emotions,
- **Ask helpful questions**, which identifies the core problem that needs solved, and
- **X-amine possible solutions**, to make responsible decisions, instead of impulsive ones.



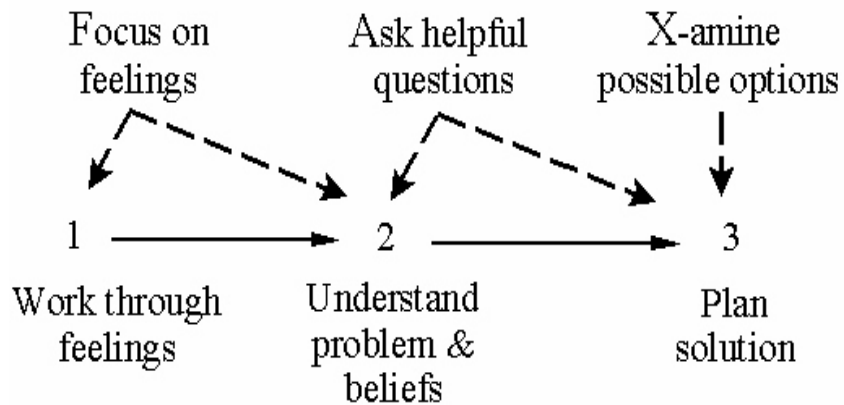
F-A-X Listening is named after a fax machine (remember those?), because it works similarly. The only difference is that fax machines use the same “code,” so the code received through the phone line is always decoded correctly.

Humans speak in an emotional “code,” but the person receiving the message, the listener, usually uses *their* code to decode what the person is saying.



There are often multiple ways to interpret what someone is saying, so it's important to check whether you decoded and interpreted the correct *meaning*. That's the first step of F-A-X Listening.

It's important to take each step of the F-A-X Listening process *in order*, as each step helps the person with the problem move from emotions, to logic, to a solution. This is the natural progression people always follow, they just might spend different amounts of time at each step, depending on whether they are more emotion-based or logical.



You don't have to take all three steps each time, but will always want to take the *first* step as your *first* sentence in *any* response to a problem. When you skip this step of acknowledging the child's (or other person's) feelings *first*, the core issue often never gets identified, let alone resolved, so the problem usually continues or may get even worse.

Here are more details about *what to do* at each step of F-A-X Listening.

Focus on Feelings

People, adults and children alike, have difficulty thinking logically when they are emotional. That's because the bio-chemical changes (which you'll learn about in Chapter 9: Keep Your Cool Toolset) that cause *feelings*, (the physical sensations of emotions) are things like increased blood pressure, which can cause irregular breathing, which can cause less oxygen to get to the brain, which can cause irrational or impulsive decision making.

Venting emotional energy helps get the logical brain back on-line, so the logical brain can start figuring out what to do. It's a healthy process you want to encourage, instead of stuffing feelings.

To do so, show you are sincerely interested and willing to listen. This can be challenging if your child's comments push your buttons. (You'll learn how to reprogram those in Chapter 9: Keep Your Cool Toolset.)

When children are opening up to you, no matter how small or big the issue, it's *especially* important to pay attention. Put down what you are doing and give your full attention. Be willing to listen to the small stuff. It's a test whether children can trust you with the big stuff.



You don't have to *agree* with the child's feelings, opinion or perspective. Just acknowledge it; that is where your child is at *now*. Just show you *understand* what *their* perceptions and feelings *are, in that moment*. They could very well change or completely disappear in the next second, *especially* when they are noticed and heard.

You also don't always have to *say* something. Just "be there," *fully present*, to show you care, even if you don't know what to say.

When you *name* a feeling, children feel reassured. They may say to themselves, "If this feeling has a name, it must be normal for to feel it!" This helps them calm down. It also teaches them a word to use to verbalize that feeling in the future, so the child will be more likely to express feelings appropriately, rather than acting out their feelings through problematic behavior or being overly dramatic.



When children share their feelings or stories...

STOP...LOOK...LISTEN... and NAME the emotion.

Stop what you are doing.

Make eye contact and be fully present.

Listen to what the child is saying, both non-verbally and verbally.

Name their feeling, first in your mind, then to them.

Summarize what they said and how you think they *might be feeling*. Avoid asking, "How does that make you feel?" Children usually think, "Well if you'd been listening it would be obvious!" In words that are *authentic to you*, say something like, "You sound (feeling) because (summarize what happened)." Here are a few options:

- "Sounds like you'd really like ..."
- "I bet you wish ..."
- "I can tell that you want ..."
- "Did that feel ...?"
- "I see you (describe their body language). Are you are feeling ...?"

If you interrupt with advice before you've shown you understand, children may clam up, thinking, "How can you give me advice if you haven't even heard me out?" If you show you are *trying* to understand, but are off-base, children will often clarify by sharing more.

When to Move On to the Next F-A-X Step?

This first step of the F-A-X Listening process is what you want to use as *the first words out of your mouth* in the first step of the PASRR Formula response. Sometimes just acknowledgment is enough.

If children continue talking about *feelings*, continue reflecting what you hear. This is what peels off the layers to reveal the core issue underneath. *This* is the *real* issue they need to solve.



As long as it seems deeper layers are being revealed or released, keep going. If any of the following start to happen, though, move to the next step, “Ask Helpful Questions”:

- Children start talking about facts: who, what, when, where, etc.
- Children seem to be “stuck” in the emotions or repeating the story.
- The child seems to be using emotions to get undue attention.
- There is a problem that needs a solution.

Ask Helpful Questions

When children open up, they may tell you things you don't want to hear. You may be tempted to shut down communication by getting upset, telling them what to do, or minimizing their issues by saying, “It's not a big deal. Don't let it get to you. Let it go.”

Your advice might sound wise to you, but to children their issues *are* a big deal and they don't know how to “let it go.” Often, this will be when you see “dramatic” behavior.

If you invite your children to open up, you have to be ready to handle whatever comes out — and learn how to bite your tongue and not jump in.



One of the most important parenting skills is knowing how to ask *helpful* questions. Whenever you are tempted to lecture or give advice, ask questions instead.

Helpful questions invite more feelings or information. People can't simply answer yes or no. They are *not* fact-finding questions that “grill” children. Helpful questions “put the ball in the child's court” and help children *think for themselves*. “Why” questions usually make people feel defensive, so avoid them. Instead, use “what” and “how” questions, to develop thinking and judgment skills.

Here are some examples of helpful questions:

- ▶ “You look (feeling). What happened?”
- ▶ “What do you mean when you say ...?”
- ▶ “Could you give me an example of ...?”
- ▶ “What did you think at the time?”
- ▶ “What caused that to happen?”
- ▶ “What did you learn from that?”

When to Move On to the Next F-A-X Step?

At this point, it will be clear if the child just needed to just blow off steam or better understand what was happening. If that's all they needed, they will show you their needs were met and they are done.

If they need to find a solution, don't offer advice. Instead, guide them through the problem-solving process, which is the last step of the F-A-X Listening process.



X-amine Possible Solutions

When children need a solution, the quick and easy approach is to offer advice. This deprives them, though, of an important opportunity to learn *how* to make decisions and solve problems. To respond to them in a way that helps *them* develop these critical life skills, follow this three-step process:

1. **Brainstorm:** Ask one more helpful question, as a bridge to problem solving. Ask, "What do you think you could do?" or a similar question that puts the ball in their court and non-verbally expresses confidence in your children's ability to find a solution to their problem.

Listen to the child's ideas. Write them down (or have the child write them) without commenting on or judging the ideas. Keep asking, "Any other ideas?" or "What else?"

Be patient with the process and comfortable with silence while they think. If the child needs time to process or think, respect their space and don't push. Just encourage them to *write* their feelings and ideas.



2. **Evaluate:** Now look at the ideas. For each, ask "What would happen if you did that?"

This is where the child can weed out inappropriate or unhelpful solutions, by considering the consequences of his or her actions and options.

This is THE most important step to take if you have children who make impulsive decisions. It slows down their impulses and helps them consider more than one idea and the long-term outcome of each *before* acting on any idea.

If you see a potential problem with an idea that your child doesn't think of ask, "... And *then* what would happen?" If you need to give a hint, you can. For example, "Yes, hitting the bully on the school bus might make him stop bugging you. And what would happen when the bus driver sees you do that?"

If their solution would violate a SHARP-RV issue, use the Communication Toolset in the Parent Problem Toolbox (Chapter 10) to *briefly* express your concern, then quickly put the ball back in their court.

3. **Decide:** Ask the child to choose a solution. "So, what do you think is your best option?" Or "Which option do you want to try *first*?"

Yes, I said "try" and I'm going to disagree with Yoda of *Star Wars* and others who discourage the use of the word "try." I get the point that if you say, "I'll try," it's not making a real commitment and gives you an out. This is a different contextual use of "try." Here, it accurately implies that there may be more than one solution or play they can *try*, to see how it works. It's not written in stone, and they can learn from the trial and tweak their plan.

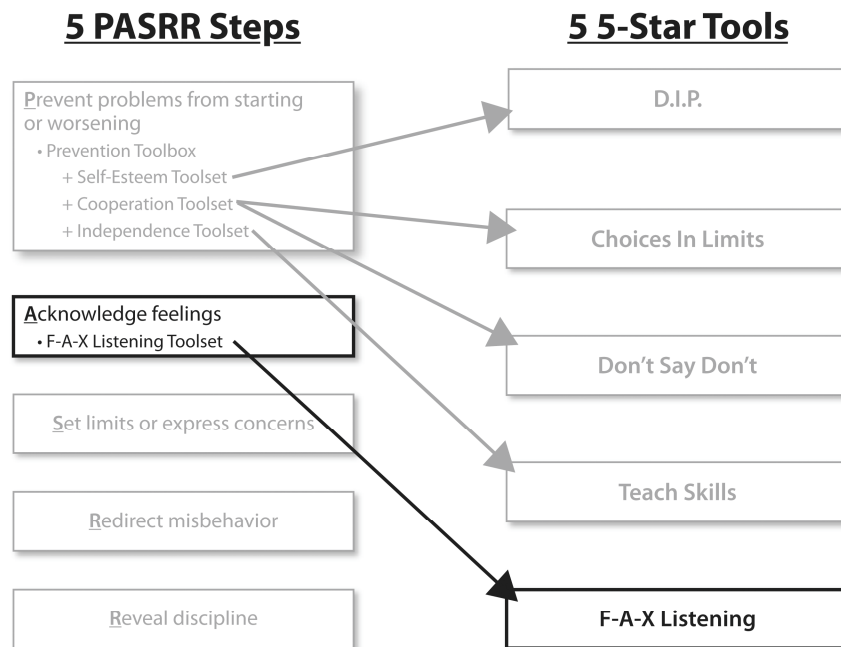


The next step is for them to formulate their *plan*. You can support and guide them, without taking over, by asking some more open-ended questions. For example, you can ask, "What will you do?" "When will you do it?" "How will you say that?" Role play, if necessary, so children know *what* to say or do the next time this happens.

Wrap up the F-A-X Listening process by asking them to follow-up. "When can you let me know how things went?" In the example above, if the child doesn't volunteer information within a week or so, you can ask, "How are things going on the bus? Did you try your plan?"

Keep in mind that your goal is *not* to make sure your children choose the *best* solution in the *fastest* time. The only way children will learn to solve their own problems is with practice. **Your goal is to make the time to guide children through the process of finding their own solutions, so they learn how to do this independently and responsibly, even if their solutions are imperfect.**

F-A-X Listening Toolset / Last of the 5-Star Tools



Pay it Forward

If you didn't learn the language of emotions or effective problem-solving as a child, being a parent provides you with the opportunity to learn these skills yourself. Then you can teach them to your children, by guiding them through the F-A-X process of working through their feelings, identifying the problem, and brainstorming solutions to try.

Your children will have a learning curve, too. They need to learn the language of emotions, so they can express and work through their feelings in healthy ways. Their critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills will also be rusty at first. These skills use muscles that need to be flexed, built and strengthened.

Resist the urge to jump in with advice, solutions or to rescue them from the problem. You won't be there every day of their lives ready to save the day --- and if you were, you'd be doing your child a great disservice.

Start teaching your children these skills now, when their problems and decisions are probably less critical and life-threatening than they may be later. It's for those times, which will likely happen when you aren't there, that you want them to be able to think on their feet and independently make responsible decisions.

Life doesn't come with a script. So while The Parents Toolshop® can provide you with some formulas to follow, they are simply ideas to get you started. You will want to learn the *process* well enough so you can go with the flow. Then you won't be thinking about what's the "right" thing to say --- because there isn't such a thing. You just want to be more effective than less effective. If you do, you'll start connecting with your children on a deeper level and talking about feelings and topics that matter.



What's Next?

In Chapter 8: Sibling Toolset, you will get new, additional tools for listening and problem-solving, specifically for preventing and responding effectively to sibling *and peer* conflicts. Yes, parents of only children, you'll want to read that chapter, too!

Action Steps

Next, go to the Action Guide for more tips and resources for becoming a better listener and problem solver, which include bonus resources such as:

- A Cartoon Feelings handout
- A Problem-Solving Worksheet
- Applications to common Child problems
- ... And more!



Chapter 8: Sibling Toolset

Jimmy, 8, and Judy, 4, seem to compete over just about everything, from who gets to sit next to the bedtime reader to who cleaned their room faster or better.

You might think this is better than messy rooms and bedtime hassles, but their parents, John and Anna, are fed up with the constant conflict. The bickering is literally non-stop.

Meal time is the worst! Judy usually complains, "He got more than me!" to which Anna usually explains, "You are smaller and younger." Or she counts or measures, to prove the servings are even.



When Judy races to sit next to her dad at dinner, Jimmy complains that he loves Judy more than him. John insists "I love you both the same," but that doesn't seem to make Jimmy feel better.

At least once a day things get physical, especially at the dinner table, with one of the kids, usually Judy, grabbing food off the other's plate, to make things even or for revenge.

Anna tries to reinforce Jimmy's better behavior by saying things like "Judy, why can't you keep your hands to yourself like Jimmy?" or "Jimmy, you are such a good big brother. You sure put up with a lot."

It seems nothing John and Anna do makes any difference. In fact, things are actually getting worse. John was close to his brothers growing up, like best friends, so he wants Jimmy and Judy to get along. Anna was an only child, so she's not sure what to do.

Are you so tired of being a referee to your children's bickering, arguing and fighting that you are ready to blow a whistle and say "STOP!!!"

Would you like to have just one car ride without listening to "He's looking at me!" or bickering so loud it drowns out the music?

What about or one peaceful dinner? Bedtime? Chore time? Or all the other times your children are together?

Do you just want your children to get along? When they do have problems, would you like them to work them out on their own, respectfully?

Then here are some basics you need to know, from one of the all-time-best books on the subject, *Siblings Without Rivalry*, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, the way I teach them in my workshops.



Is Sibling Rivalry a Given?

Hopefully your children get along better than Jimmy and Judy, but whenever two or more children live together it's a given there will be disagreements or conflict now and then. That's natural, "normal," and expected when two people have to live together. Rivalry, however, is not a given.

Whether conflicts turn into constant rivalry depends on:

- How the children perceive each other: a threat or support, enemy or friend, competition or partner.
- What parents say and do when the children *aren't* in conflict, to prevent problems and teach children how to get along.
- How parents handle disagreements between the siblings, whether they teach them how to resolve their own conflicts.

Obviously, the first factor, children's perceptions, are greatly influenced by the last two factors, which are dependent on how the parents behave.

Healthy Goals

You really can't force your children to love each other or be best friends. What you *can* do is teach them *how* to get along and constructively resolve conflicts with whom they live and play, because conflicts are inevitable.

Then, if they listen to and respect each other and know how to get along, they might become friends. At the least, they'll love and care about each other, even if they don't like each other or become best buds.



Top Five Best Sibling Rivalry Prevention Tools

The number one feeling that drives sibling rivalry is jealousy. Jealousy is often created by feeling envious about what another person has or how they are treated better. **Knowing this, parents often do things to *prevent* jealousy, but despite good intentions and well-meaning words, accidentally end up *creating* resentment between the children.**

Resentment sows the seeds of unhealthy competition, which leads to rivalry. This rivalry then pits children *against* each other instead of being *for* each other. So here are the top five ways you can prevent accidentally contributing to sibling rivalry.

1. When a new child joins the family, involve the other children:

- **Prepare for new arrivals.** With birth children, you have nine months. With foster or adoptive children you may have months or just hours. Either way, talk about what children can expect, including the unexpected. Ask for their opinions and feelings. Reassure them of your love.



- **Help the new child get oriented.** With birth children, have older siblings help you by delivering diapers, for example. With foster or adoptive children, have the older children show them around, fill them in on unspoken house rules, like “Momma Sue will tell you to clean up your own dishes, but she’s also kind of picky about how to load the dishwasher. I’ll show you how I do it.”



- **Avoid pushing the other children away, out of fear, or they may resent the new sibling.** Instead, try to find ways to involve the other children, such as reading a book to the other child while you nurse the baby. You can also color with one child while helping other children with homework, because you don’t have to give 100% full attention to both at all times.

2. Avoid the Fair & Equal Trap. Instead, give according to individual needs. It seems logical that if you want to avoid creating jealousy among siblings, which is often fueled by the belief that the other sibling got more of something, you might strive to make sure everything is fair and equal.

First off, this goal is totally unrealistic; life isn’t always fair or equal and you can become obsessed trying to make sure every little thing is fair and equal. Even then, your children can *still perceive* things as unequal. So it becomes a hopelessly frustrating never-ending goal that you can never reach.

Now, obviously, you don’t want to treat children *unfairly* or grossly *unequal*, because that’s the other extreme. You can, however, take a balanced approach and focus on treating children *individually and specially*. Here are some examples:

- Instead of saying, “I love you both *the same*,” describe why you love *that* child specially.
- Instead of buying “equal” gifts, give according to need to *that* child’s need or desire.
- Instead of spending “equal” time, spend quality time, being totally present in the moment.

3. Avoid Comparisons. Instead: When speaking to one child, make no reference to the other.

Parents often hold up one child to the other, as an example, thinking it will motivate the other. For example, “Look at how good Johnny cleaned his room! Susie, why can’t you clean your room like his?” This kind of comparison is sure to leave Susie feeling like you favor Johnny, don’t like or maybe even love her. She’ll also resent Johnny and maybe even treat him badly. And what did he do to deserve it? Nothing! He just cleaned his room well!

You’ve surely heard the saying that anytime you compare you can find something worse and better. No matter how you compare children, they will either feel better at the other child’s expense or worse, because they were on the short end of the comparison. It’s always a win/lose outcome.

Instead, you can give a D.I.P. or other form of descriptive encouragement to one child in front of the other child; just be sure to give a D.I.P. to the other! When children do “worse,” give them a D.I.P. Sandwich, then use F-A-X Listening to figure out *why* they did poorly and resolve *that* core issue. Often it will be a simple matter of teaching skills or using one of the other five-star tools.



4. Avoid *unhealthy* sibling competition. Instead: encourage cooperation and teamwork.

Parents also often set up “races” and other forms of competition between siblings, thinking it will motivate them or get them to move faster on a task. It might do both of these, but *also* pits the children *against* each other, as adversaries.



Children can also pit themselves against each other, so your job is to make sure both children are *choosing* to race or have other options.

Now this isn't to say you should never let siblings play competitive *games* or sports together! That's a more structured, hopefully healthy form of competition. What this suggestion refers to is setting them up to compete *for a place in the family*, or to be the *best or most loved* child.

You want to prevent competition in family *relationships*, as in children competing for the love of their parents. Instead, you want family relationships based on mutual respect, cooperation and teamwork.

So let children play competitive games and sports, teaching them how to be good winners and losers, along with the other positive lessons healthy competition can teach them. *Inside* the family, on a daily basis around the house, encourage siblings to work together as a team, teaching them how to help each other, seek win/win solutions and cooperate.

5. Avoid putting children in roles and using labels. Instead: help them become whole.

Putting children in roles and using labels is right up there with comparisons as something most parents do, if not outwardly, then in their heads.



You already know that negative labels and roles (like “my devil child,” “the trouble-maker,” “strong-willed,” etc.) can have a negative effect. Children will feel discouraged and “live down” to their label, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Why? If you believe they *are* that, they might as well *become* that.

Even “positive” roles and labels (like “angel,” “princess,” “the responsible one,” etc.) are still limiting. They also often add pressure to be perfect.

You want to see children as the whole people they have the potential to become --- and for them to see themselves and their potential, too. So treat your children, not as they are, but as you hope they will be. Encourage all of your children to take chances, explore their potential, discover their strengths, and pursue their interests, even if they aren't the best at it.



When to Intervene

It can be challenging to know *when* to intervene in a sibling conflict. If you are unsure whether to step in to referee a sibling conflict, ask yourselves the following questions:



1. Is one child being emotionally or physically hurt?
2. Is their problem disrupting the entire household?
3. Does this problem keep occurring and they can't seem to resolve it?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, it is time to step in and stop the hurtful behavior, by teaching your children problem-solving skills.

How to Intervene

Whether they are related or not, conflicts between children can be annoying and frustrating to the adults around them.

Whether stepping in the middle, yelling “foul” or “time out,” or sending them all to “the bench,” **anytime you put yourself in the referee role, taking over, solving the conflict for them, you are disempowering the children.**

Then, problems keep recurring, causing you to be involved, because they don't know *how* to resolve problems themselves, respectfully, fairly, and independently.



So teach them, using these three tools that de-escalate the conflict by acknowledging feelings.

First, remember that Child problems are like onions. That means the **fighting is merely a symptom of the feelings the children have but have difficulty expressing.** So you want to start by identifying and **addressing the feelings that are causing the rivalry or fighting.**

- **Acknowledge feelings.** Always start here. Remember in the previous chapter you learned that “bad” feelings aren't necessarily bad and that encouraging children to stuff those feelings will actually make them feel worse! Instead, allow them to feel how they are feeling and *acknowledge* the feeling(s).
- **Acknowledge wants and wishes.** You can also recognize what they want or wish would happen, without *making* that happen or giving in to whatever they want. Just the showing you *understand* what they want will usually de-escalate the situation almost immediately.
- **Creatively channel emotions.** To help children who are non-verbal or too angry to talk, say “*show me* how you feel” and direct them to a creative activity, like art or writing.

Now, let's be clear, **allowing feelings is completely different than allowing hurtful actions.** You can acknowledge each of the children's feelings *and* set boundaries that those feelings need to be *expressed* in a respectful, non-hurtful way. If they don't know *how* to work through their feelings, you'll show them how, using the tools in the next chapter, Keep Your Cool Toolset.



Responding to the 6 Levels of Conflict

Siblings Without Rivalry, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish, offer suggestions for responding helpfully if sibling (or peer) conflicts keep heating up.

1. Complaining

Use the listening tips above to acknowledge the negative feelings, without condoning hurtful words or actions. Avoid lecturing or moralizing about being grateful or pointing out the positive side. They don't want to hear that right now. Later, there might be an opportunity for this to come *from them*.

Also remember to not repeat any names the children might call each other, just the feelings. For example, if one child calls his sister "stupid," you don't repeat that name. You might identify the feeling that would lead to that label, such as, "You get really frustrated with your sister."

2. Normal Bickering

You can try ignoring it, but pay attention to how the children resolve the conflict, to be sure they are actually resolving it.

You can also set boundaries and reveal consequences. Tell them they can argue and bicker all they want but they have to follow three rules:

Be respectful, not hurtful. Hurting bodies or feelings isn't allowed.

Your arguments can't disturb others.

If you participate in the bickering and arguing you can't complain tattle about it.

Usually, you *don't* want to hold all siblings accountable (punish them all) for the actions of one child. Bickering is the one time you do, because it takes more than one person to bicker and argue. So hold both (or all) children equally responsible for disruptions. If either (or any) of them violates one of the three rules, both (or all) are sent to their rooms.

3. Situation is Heating up

Adult intervention might be helpful, so get them started on a path towards resolution and see if they can work it out without you taking over.

1. Acknowledge each child's anger, which may help calm them down.
2. Listen to each child's side with respect.
3. Show appreciation for the difficulty of the problem.
4. Tell them you believe they are able to work out a mutually agreeable solution.
5. Leave the room.



4. If They Keep Screaming

Say, "If you can't work it out and I need to step in, you might not be happy with my decision. AND, because I had to solve *your* conflict, we *automatically* need to sit down later to get some agreements for how you can handle it on your own." However you say this, shorter or with different words, it needs to *mean* the same thing and *both* parts are needed, which is why I capitalized "AND."



5. It's Getting Physical

If you're not sure if they are playing...ask! "Are you play fighting or real fighting? Let the children know. Play fighting is only by mutual consent.



6. It's Getting Dangerous

Safety trumps all! So take these steps quickly:

1. Describe what you see *while* you physically separate the children.
2. After they've calmed down, talk to them both individually, acknowledging their feelings.
3. Do some problem solving for what each can do in a similar situation in the future.
4. *Only* discipline *after* the situation has calmed down (and so have you), otherwise the children might misinterpret the discipline as punishment and resent you *and* the sibling.

Quick PASRR Responses

Sibling or peer conflicts often arise as you are walking out the door, in the car, or almost anytime or anywhere when you don't have time to *really* dive in to find the real issue and guide them in resolving it. That's because you are a busy parent! So here are a couple of quick responses that will de-escalate the situation, keep the ball in their court and give them the option of resolving the problem on their own.

1. Problem-Solving "On the Run." You can do F-A-X Listening in two sentences:

Sentence 1: Acknowledge each child's feelings and what the problem seems to be.

Sentence 2: Ask the children what *they* can do to solve the problem. You can also state your confidence in their ability to agree on a solution that's respectful to both.

2. "You solve it or I will, for now." State the bottom line: that they need to solve their own problems respectfully and peacefully. If they can't or won't, you will need to solve it for them *this time*, but they might not like what you decide. AND, if they put you in the position of solving *their* problem (like a referee), it shows they don't know how to do it by themselves, yet. This *automatically* causes a need for a F-A-X mediation session with you later, to come up with a longer-term solution to which they both agree.

These quick responses reinforce your bottom line, which is that they need to solve their own problems, but don't allow much time for teaching children *how* to do that. So you will keep having to be a referee until you *make* the time to teach, which you do by using mediation.



How to Mediate

To really teach children *how* to listen to each other, respect each other's differences, and find win/win solutions to their problems, use mediation. Mediation is basically doing F-A-X Listening with two or more people, taking each step with each person, back and forth.



1. Listen to each person and summarize what you heard. "So you feel ____ and you feel ____."
2. Identify the core issue, then wrap it up like a gift and put in their court to solve. "So it sounds like the real issue is..."
3. Then get ideas from each child, etc.) "So what ideas do you each have for preventing or solving that problem?"

Mediation can take five to twenty minutes. The good news is that you often only need to do it two or three times for your children to learn the process. Then, when you give Quick Response number two above and say, "Either you two resolve it on your own or we'll need to sit down later" they'll almost always immediately opt to solve it themselves! Mediation isn't a punishment and shouldn't be presented as one, but the reality is that it does take longer than if they solve it themselves.

If you think *you* are too busy to make time to do mediation, just think about all the time you are spending being a referee and when blow ups do occur how long it takes to get everyone calmed down again, including yourself! The long-term benefits far outweigh your investment of time.

Now, before you start to mediate, everyone needs to calm down. This also gives you time to review these notes about how to mediate and get the Problem-Solving Worksheet from the Action Guide. When you are ready to begin, follow these steps *in order*:

1. **(Focus on feelings) First acknowledge your children's feelings** by saying something like, "It seems you both are upset about this, but can't solve the problem on your own. I'm here to support you, not solve the problem for you."
 - a. **If it's one of the first few times you've done mediation, set or remind them of these ground rules.** (You can add more or reword them for younger children, if needed.):
 - i. When someone is talking, listen with respect. That's how you want to be treated, too. (This is a positive way to say "no interrupting.")
 - ii. Talk respectfully, especially about or to the other person. (This is a positive way to say "no name calling.")
 - iii. Each person will get a chance to talk *and* to respond to what each other is saying (rebuttal), so it doesn't matter who goes first.
 - iv. Everyone gets a say. Your goal is to understand each other. Even if you don't agree on the facts, you can agree on a solution that's respectful to both.
2. **(A) Then ask your children, "What is your view of the problem?"** You can vary this a bit, such as asking "What is it you need?" instead. Use the first two steps of F-A-X Listening, Focus on Feelings and Ask Helpful Questions to identify the *core* issue.



At this step, it is important realize or remember to not get caught up in the blame game or seek to know who did what. This is not helpful, can go in circles getting absolutely nowhere, and puts you the role of referee and judge. Instead, acknowledge each child's feelings or needs, such as "So you need ____ and you need _____. What can you do about it that would be a win/win (respectful) solution for both of you?"

3. **(X) Have them brainstorm ideas for solutions.** Guide them through the B-E-D problem-solving process. Remember that all ideas are okay to **B**rainstorm and there is no evaluation or criticizing during brainstorming. Once there are some ideas, *then* you **E**valuate each idea and have them **D**ecide on a plan they both agree to follow.

Encourage consensus decisions, where everyone agrees on a solution and to follow it. Avoid using voting or flipping coins, because there is always a loser. Only use it if both children consent to it and acknowledge the loser's feelings.

Once they have an agreement, follow-up later or remind them of their agreement, if needed.

Stages of Learning Problem-Solving Skills

Your long-term goal is for children to eventually do this problem-solving on their own, so you want to avoid taking over and gradually turn over the reins to them. You can do this by modeling the skills, then having them practice them. Here's how:

1. **Stage 1: You model how to listen.** The children speak to you. You listen to each child, reflecting back what you hear each saying. You identify the core issue, wrap it up like a gift and hand it back to them to solve.
2. **Stage 2: You start handing over the baton.** The children speak to you. You listen *and* have each child repeat back what the other child said, to make sure they understand each other's need and perspective. You ask *them* to identify the core issue. If they can't, wrap it up like a gift and hand it back to them to solve.
3. **Stage 3: Baton passed. They are now using and mastering these skills.** The children *speak to each other and repeat back* what the other child said. You ask *them* identify the core issue and then invite them to resolve it.

Practical Application

Now, let's apply what you've learned to the story at the beginning of this chapter involving John and Anna's children, Jimmy and Judy. Many of the conflicts in that example can be prevented, so let's take each incident or complaint and apply the most relevant tool from the Sibling Toolset.

Jimmy, 8, and Judy, 4, seem to compete over just about everything, from who gets to sit next to the bedtime reader to who cleaned their room faster or better.

Anna can either prevent this by teaching each child individually, not equally (see more below) or she can tell them to figure out a plan for taking turns.



Meal time is the worst! Judy usually complains "He got more than me!" to which Anna usually explains, "She's smaller and younger" or she counts or measures to prove the servings are even.

Anna can say something like, "If you are still hungry after you eat that, you can have more."

When Judy races to sit next to her dad at dinner, Jimmy complains that he loves Judy more than him. John insists "I love you both the same," but that doesn't seem to make Jimmy feel better.



Instead, John can say, "Each of you is so special in your own way. I love you because..."

At least once a day things get physical, especially at the dinner table, with one of the kids, usually Judy, grabbing food off the other's plate, to make things even or for revenge.

Anna or John needs to set boundaries, such as, "Keep your hands on your own plate," or "Only touch your food," or "If you ask first, that person can choose whether to share his/her food."

Anna tries to reward Jimmy's good behavior and motivate Judy change hers by holding Jimmy up as a role model, as in, "Judy, why can't you keep your hands to yourself like Jimmy?"

Anna wants to avoid comparisons like this. She can thank Jimmy for keeping his hands to himself or for being nice, *without* any reference to Judy.

What's Next?

As your children become better at problem solving, you will rarely need to get involved. This will reassure your children that they *can* handle their own problems and work through conflicts with others. This life skill will benefit them every day of their lives and reduce the arguing, stress and chaos in your home. So it is a win/win for you and your children.

Of course, since this is the Jump Start Guide, we are just scratching the surface here. There are programs and resources on the F-A-X Listening and Sibling Toolsets that will teach you more advanced information about each topic in this chapter and help you master it on a deeper level. The Advanced TIPS course and original *The Parent's Toolshop*® book also includes step-by-step responses to the top ten sibling conflicts that tell you exactly what to say and do.

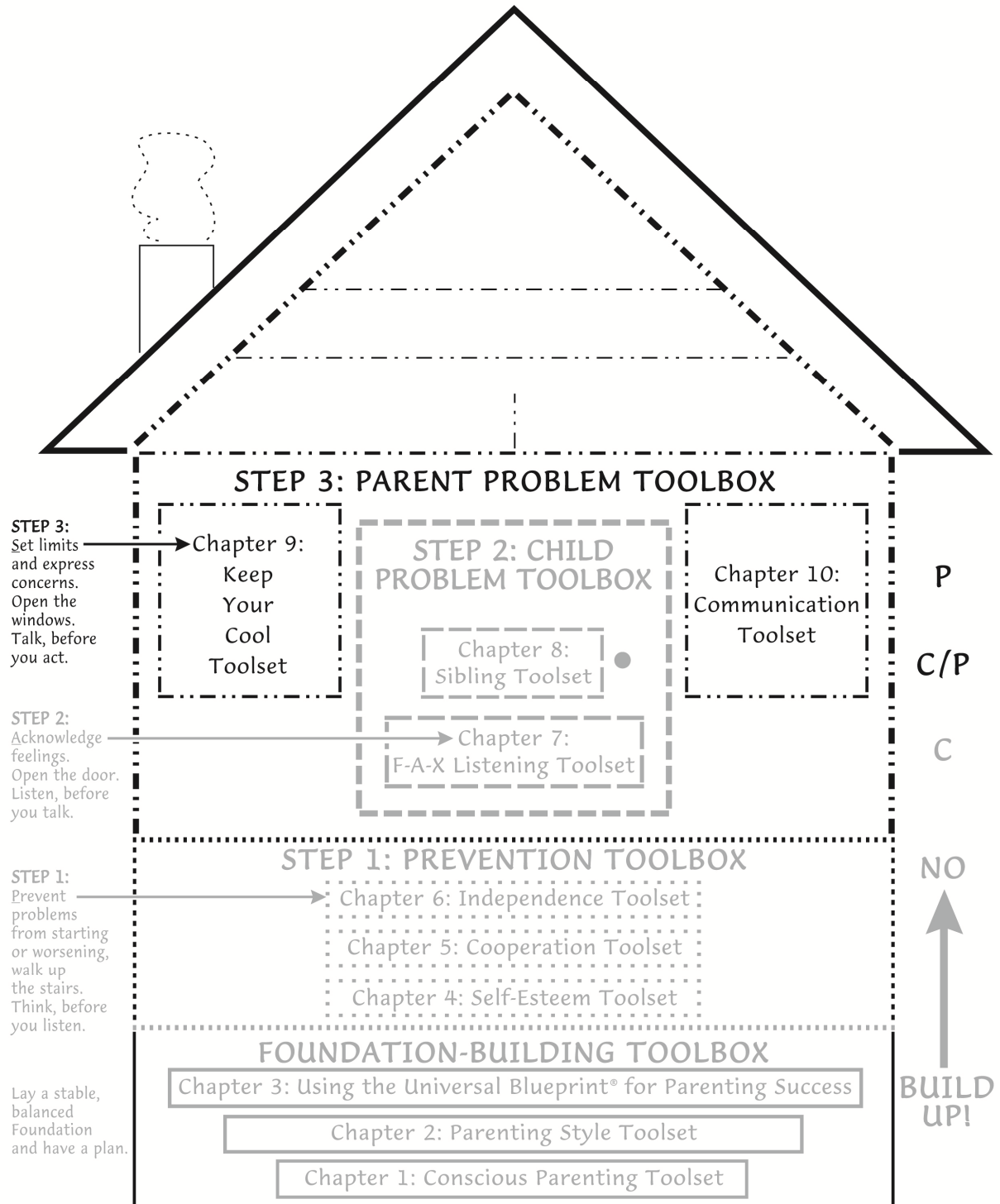
Action Steps

Practice using the one-liners and quick responses throughout your busy day and see if you notice fewer sibling conflicts. They aren't magic wands, so when conflicts arise, use the appropriate response for the type of conflict it is. As you respond, you are practicing while preparing your children for the day when you may sit down to do some mediation.

Now, go to the Action Guide now for more bonus resources and practice tips.



Section IV: PASRR Step 3: Parent Problem Toolbox



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Step 3 of The PASSRR Formula: The Parent Problem Toolbox

When you have a problem, you stop and ask first, “Whose problem is this?” Parent problems involve SHARP-RV issues that are ultimately the parent’s responsibility to solve, such as Safety, Health, (in)Appropriate behavior, Rights, Property, Rules and Values.

These are the most likely issues to create stress and cause you to blow up, yell, or say things in less respectful ways than you’d prefer. So this Toolbox contains two Toolsets that, together, can help you respond respectfully and helpfully to Parent problems:

- The Keep Your Cool Toolset
- The Clear Communication Toolset



Conscious Parenting Toolset
Parenting Styles Toolset
The Universal Blueprint®



Self-Esteem Toolset
Cooperation Toolset
Independence Toolset

The image at the bottom right shows the steps you take and Toolsets you use in nearly every Parent problem:

1. **Use the Keep Your Cool Toolset to calm down, ask your three problem-identification questions, and plan your response.** These are the first two steps of “Your Mission.” Then, to “deliver your response effectively,” take the next two steps, often in one sentence.
2. **Acknowledge the child’s feelings first.** This might only be the first half of your first sentence.
3. **Set limits and express your concerns** using the Clear Communication Toolset.



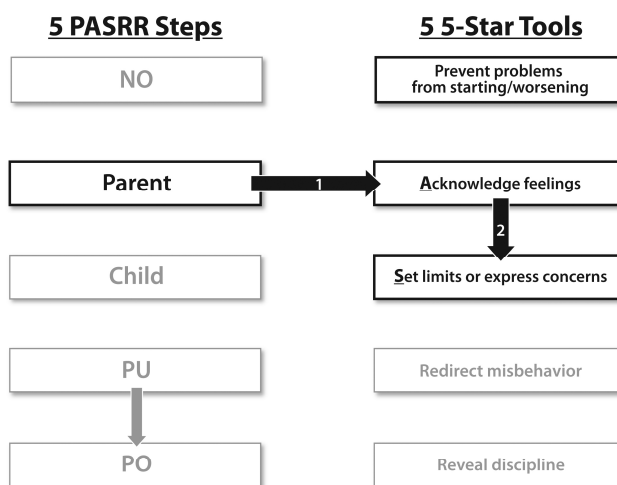
Keep Your Cool Toolset
Clear Communication Toolset



F-A-X Listening Toolset
Sibling Toolset

Responding to Parent Problems

Start by acknowledging feelings, then set limits or express concerns using Parent Problem Toolbox



Chapter 9: Keep Your Cool Toolset

Linda gets home from work to find her teenage son, Mike, in the family room playing a video game.

His coat is thrown on the couch; his backpack is on the floor.

As she walks down the hall, she sees he left the bathroom light on.

When she enters the kitchen, she finds a mess from where he made a snack for himself when he arrived home from school.



Linda spins herself around. As she stomps to the family room, she yells, “Geez, Mike, when are you ever going to learn to clean up after yourself? Do you think I am a maid around here? Turn off your game and clean up all your messes.”

She starts walking back down the hall, thinking he will follow her to the kitchen. Part way down the hall, Linda realizes he isn’t coming. She returns to the family room and without warning turns off the video game.

Mike explodes. “Hey, I was in the middle of a game! Now I have to start that level all over!” He grabs his coat and backpack and throws them into his room, then stomps into the kitchen, mumbling under his breath how mean his mom is as he wipes the counter.

Linda hears it and starts fuming inside. “Teens are so sassy and disrespectful,” she thinks to herself. “I never would have talked to my parents like this!” To Mike, she says, “That’s it! I’ve had it with your attitude. You can just spend the rest of the night in your room.”

Mike smirks and chuckles as he walks back to the family room, saying, “Fine with me! Like I want to be around you tonight anyway!”

Disrespectful children, whether they are teens or not, are a big trigger button for many parents. You can imagine how this situation could continue to escalate from here --- to the point it either gets hot and heated, maybe even physical, or Linda gives in.

There are actually several issues here, with both Linda and Mike. We’ll address these in the next few chapters. In *this* chapter, we are focusing on what triggers your anger, and what you say and how you act when you do.



The Two Levels of the Keep Your Cool Toolset

Welcome to the Keep Your Cool Toolset! You have probably been excited to get to this chapter, since you are might still be getting a bit stressed by situations or even triggered. You also got a glimpse of the effects your childhood and subconscious programming have on your parenting and want to know how to reprogram it. Well, the full Keep Your Cool Toolset could be a complete separate book and *is* a separate course. It has two main parts:

Part I, The Basics: The original *The Parents Toolshop*® book, published in 2000, offers great detail about anger *management*, so you can create individualized anger and stress management plans for you and your children. By keeping your cool when faced with challenges, you can respond effectively, instead of reacting in anger.

These are timeless, universal teachings *everyone* needs to have and use, but most people don't know, so they are "the basics." They help in the moment, immediately, while you are working on longer-term goals, like re-programming your trigger buttons. In the past, this could take months or years, but not anymore. Hence, the need for...

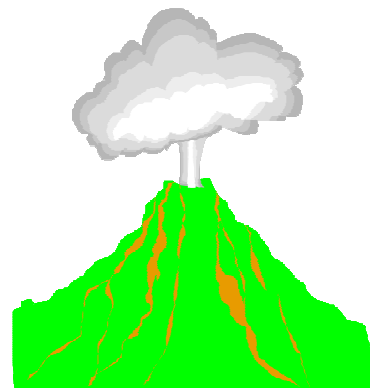
Part II, The Advanced. Since 2000, brain research, quantum physics, genetics, and even religious and spiritual fields have made mind-blowing discoveries with life-altering applications. We now know what's actually happening under the surface when you are stressed or angry, in your brain and body, and on a deeper subconscious level.

There are also now simple concepts and amazingly *fast* techniques for *eliminating* stress and destructive anger, and de-activating and re-program your trigger buttons, healing trauma and phobias, and stopping bad habits. When you use this knowledge and these skills in a conscious, intentional way, you can *create* a stress-free life that attracts the people and events *you want*, like a magnet.

The challenge is that this advanced information is a bit like of a can of worms that you can't just quickly open up, summarize, and then close. It requires processing and stimulates more questions. It also has concepts that are hard to put in words, so it takes some time to explain it all, especially in writing.

Since 2006, I've been incorporating this new information wherever possible in my live workshops and have created six- to twelve-hour-long courses to explain the concepts in easy-to-understand terms. I'm also including it in all new *advanced* Toolshop® programs and resources.

So this *Jump Start Guide* summarizes The Basics and gives a *very* short overview of The Advanced. If you want to learn more, go to the Action Guide for a list of Toolshop® programs and resources that teach it and links to videos that explain some of the concepts. So let's start with The Basics.



What IS Anger?

The first and most important step in responding to Parent problems is to keep your cool, because *all* the other tools you might use from here-on in your response can be turned into weapons *if* you use them in anger.

First, anger is a natural physical and emotional reaction to a *perceived* threat. It's part of how your body was created, to keep you safe, by creating an automatic response in your body to get you out of harm's way. This reaction can take on one or any of the following four responses:



- The **Fight** response is, "I'll fight back!"
- The **Flight** response is, "I'll run away."
- The **Freeze** response is to dissociate, as in "I'll mentally check out so I don't have to be aware of what's happening to me." Or being frozen in terror. Or "I'll shut down and play dead."
- The **Fawn** response is, "I'll try to gain favor by doing what you want, or want me to be, in order to save myself or get own basic needs met."

The first two are anti-predator adaptations. The last two can be, but are usually reactions to trauma.

So the first *belief* to shift is that “anger is bad,” and feeling guilty about feeling it, which creates a *complex* emotion that's harder to manage. **Anger is supposed to *protect* you, by keeping you alert.**

The problem is that in today's high-stress world, your body gets triggered into these responses by non-life-threatening situations that are stressful, but not dangerous. These prolonged or accumulated high-stress states can take a toll, so the key is to learn how to operate in this “new” world *without* getting stressed, which we'll explore later.

Next, consider that “anger is a secondary emotion,” according to Albert Ellis, author of *Guide to Rational Thinking*, who developed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. This means that when you experience an emotion and it's not resolved, it can intensify and turn into anger. For example: whether you feel hurt, embarrassed, humiliated, or challenged and defensive, if nothing changes you can eventually start feeling angry. And this shift can happen in a split-second instant!

Then, once you are angry, *all* anger *feels* the same, and it's more challenging to get in touch with your *primary* emotions and resolve them. Plus, since you *feeling* angry, you can't think clearly and are more likely to react unhelpfully than respond effectively.

So ideally, you want to *manage* or *prevent* your anger, so you are in touch with your primary emotion. This is *not* repressing or stuffing it. And, as you learned in the F-A-X Listening Toolset, **your primary emotions give you clues about *what's* happening, *why* it's happening, what the *real* core issue is, and connection to your intuition.**



Why Do You Get Angry?

It's vital to understand that anger and stress are *not* caused by other people or events, but by your *interpretation* of them. This is the core concept of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy; change the belief (*cognitive* perception) and it's easier to change *behavior* (response).

The thought or meaning you give events signals your body to create the biochemical reaction you experience as emotional *feelings*, including stress and anger.

So if you *consciously choose* your interpretation of an event, you could *prevent* feeling stressed or angry about it! This doesn't mean you will necessarily *like* what is happening, but will be in touch with your primary emotions and calm enough to *respond* helpfully, instead of reacting angrily.

When you get angry, *write down* what you are saying to yourself. You'll be amazed at your self-talk! Rewrite that self-talk with the following suggestions. (The Action Guide has a worksheet for this.)

ELIMINATE Unhelpful Beliefs by AVOIDING:

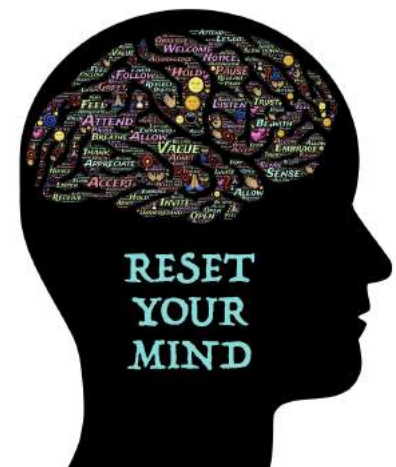
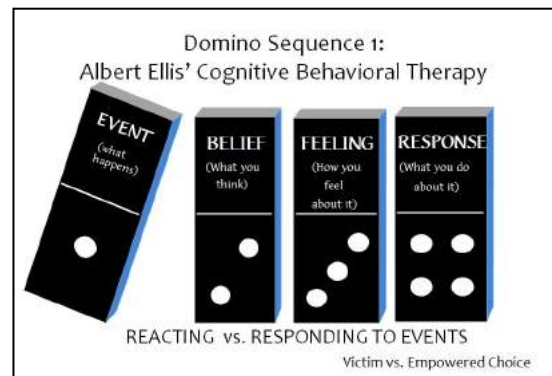
- **Absolute words**, such as *should, must, have to, need, always, and never*. These extremes keep us from thinking about other views, feelings, and responses.
- **Assumptions** about the other person's motives or how people are *supposed* to feel and act in similar situations.
- **Judging others' feelings/beliefs** as wrong or take their comments and actions personally.

REPLACE with and USE Helpful, Assertive Beliefs:

- **Use flexible, positive words** such as, *I can, I choose, I wish, I hope, I don't like, and I would prefer*.
- **Consider other points of view**.
- **Are objective** and nonjudgmental.
- **Focus on solutions**, rather than blame.

Watching *and choosing* your thoughts is critical! They alone determine what *path* you go down: peace or anger. In every event, the thought or interpretation of the event is what creates the emotion. That thought tells the body to create biochemicals so you *feel* the emotion that corresponds to the thought. Once you *feel* that way, it's hard to *unfeel* or respond differently.

You have a *choice* about the *meaning* you give an event, but your old belief systems can trip you up or make it hard to know what *else* you *could* think! This is where having others suggest different perspectives can be helpful! Then you can *choose* your thoughts instead of them controlling you.



How Do You Get Angry?

In Parents Toolshop®, we refer to two main types of anger “eruptions.”

"Smoldering embers" are caused by multiple stressful situations that slowly build up until they spill over or erupt. Using stress management techniques regularly, like deep breathing (through your belly, or diaphragm, not your lungs), exercise, meditation and prayer, or creative visualization, can all help reduce or eliminate this type of stress and anger eruption.

"Flash fires" are caused by events that push an emotional trigger button, which sets off a sudden eruption. Your children probably have a way of “pushing your buttons,” even though it’s not their intention to do so (at least not at first).



Briefly, trigger buttons get programmed in by your past experiences and stored as one or both of the following:

- In the subconscious mind, as memories and belief systems.
- In the body, as trauma. Both emotional and physical trauma creates “cellular memory.”

Because trigger buttons upset your natural calm state, your mind and body want to get rid of them, to restore your inner peace. **So these buttons get “triggered” as a reminder that they need to be healed and removed.**

SO BLESS YOUR TRIGGER BUTTONS!

Triggers buttons programmed in by subconscious beliefs can be reprogrammed by becoming consciously aware of your beliefs and choosing healthier more accurate beliefs. You can’t just “stop playing” old beliefs; you need to *replace* the belief and understand *why* that belief has *value*, so the mind accepts the new belief *more than* the old, ineffective beliefs.

Triggers buttons programmed in by trauma usually need to *also* address the “cellular memory.” This is how the memory gets stored *in the body*. This is what creates physical reactions to the trauma memories, like panic attacks, visual flashbacks, nightmares, phobias, rashes, etc.

In the past, it could take months or years to deprogram trigger buttons, if you could at all! The process usually involved *talking* about the trauma, which just re-traumatizes you! Today, there are scientifically-proven-effective tools you can use to shortcut that process into *minutes!* Best of all, you don’t have to *talk* about what happened *at all!*

There are links to a few of these resources in the Action Guide.



What to Do When You (or Your Child) Are Already Angry

Your goal is *not* to never *get* angry, which is unrealistic. **Your goal, is to experience *healthy anger*:**

- **Unhealthy anger** is destructive, hurtful, controlling, and revengeful. Over time, unhealthy anger loses its effectiveness and can become more severe and affect your relationships. Unhealthy anger creates poisonous bio-chemicals that can cause serious health problems.
- **Healthy, constructive anger** separates *feeling* angry from *acting* angry. It channels the energy that anger generates to resolve the conflict in a healthy way. For instance, when you feel angry about something, *channel* that energy to motivate you to take action on a solution.

Anger and stress management are *internal* skills, so modeling them doesn't teach them to your child. I never saw my parents get angry, even in super-stressful situations! I thought that meant I wasn't supposed to *get* angry. What "worked" for them, and me, was to "talk about it," but that didn't work too well when I suggested it to my pre-verbal toddler who experienced his anger as *physical* energy.

Our mutual need for healthy anger and stress management, that fit our different ways of experiencing it, is what caused me to start researching anger and stress management. I saw patterns in what I learned that resulted in my developing the following **formula for creating individualized anger and stress management plans**. Specifically, what is the best *place to go* and *activity to do* when you (or your child) are angry or stressed? Note: You can do these activities to *prevent* stress, too!

Where to Go?

Your "recharge style," or where you *get* your energy, determines *where* to go when you are angry or stressed. If you (or your child) are an:

- **Internal recharger**, you get your energy from within and will want to be by yourself or go to a peaceful, calm environment when you are angry or stressed.
- **External recharger**, you get your energy from outside yourself and will want to be around other people or go to a stimulating environment when you are angry or stressed.

What to do?

The type of "anger energy" you experience determines what kind of *activity* you want to do, to channel or release your anger/stress in a healthy way. If you experience:

- **Verbal anger energy**, often looks like yelling, screaming, cussing, or saying things you regret later. Channel this energy into a positive *expressive* activity, like singing or talking.
- **Physical anger energy**, often looks like hitting, throwing, stomping, or slamming doors. Channel this energy into a positive *physical* activity, like exercise or cleaning.
- **Verbal/Physical anger energy**, often looks like yelling and cussing while hitting and throwing things. Channel this energy and into a positive *physical* activity that's also *expressive*.



When you combine these differences in how people (adults and children) experience their anger and stress, you can see that each person will fit into one of the following six categories. While there are *many* options for what you can do, I've listed the most commonly helpful activity for each style:

POSSIBLE STYLE COMBINATION PLANS	Internal recharger	External recharger
Verbal anger energy	V/I. Go to your room and yell, write or draw.	V/E. Call a friend who will be supportive and talk.
Physical anger energy	P/I. Go for a walk/jog by yourself or clean.	P/E. Exercise outside or with others.
Verbal/Physical anger energy	VP/I. Pull weeds and grunt with each pull.	VP/E. Exercise with a friend/group where you can talk, yell, or cheer.

If you are an internal recharger and your child is an external recharger, they might come to you, needing your support in calming down. This can cause a recharge style clash. You may also be thinking that you can't always get away by yourself.

For both issues, you need to remember that you are the grown-up, so it's your responsibility to control your thoughts, emotions, and responses until you *can* get away and have some recharge time. If you think you are going to blow, make sure your child is safe and do your plan for 2-5 minutes. Do some deep breathing, and talk yourself through the situation. Then call a spouse or friend and arrange a time soon when they can watch your children and you can get out and relieve the anger/stress energy, before it builds up into a full-blown eruption.

Are these Time-Outs?

While the formula above *is* for a cooling off period or "a time-out from the action," it is *totally different* from traditional "time-outs," which you quite literally *never* want to use again, especially for discipline! That's because **traditional time-outs are NOT effective and NOT discipline.** (There's more about traditional time-outs in the Discipline Toolset.)

Use the formula above to *plan ahead* where to go and what to do during a cooling-off period. Then, if either of you gets angry, you go and do your plan. Then both you and your child can remain calm, even when there's a need for discipline. In fact, it's essential a cooling off period occur *before* discussing discipline, so you are calm and non-punishing and the child is calm enough to learn.

This is a good starting point, to just use these basics. A short-term goal is to at least start changing *what* you or your child yell/hit, until your healthier long-term goal of doing something *besides* yell/hit becomes a habit. Also, as children get older, you can help them look at *their* beliefs and use more advanced anger and stress *elimination* techniques, which require higher cognitive functioning.



When you use The Keep Your Cool Toolset, you can:

- Understand what *really* causes anger, so you are empowered to become a victor over it and not a victim to people and circumstances in your life.
- Think clearer, stay calmer and respond to situations, instead of reacting, in any situation.
- Have healthy skills to teach your children, so they can express their feelings appropriately.
- Avoid blow ups and escalations — which make problems worse, start new problems and can give accidental pay-offs to children. This, in turn, can cause problem behavior to change, worsen, or repeat, just to see if they can get the pay-off again.
- Yell and overreact less. Everyone stays calmer, thinks straighter and is less stressed. Less yelling leads to better parent/child relationships. It also leads to better health and longevity.
- Practically eliminate unhealthy anger from your life, without stuffing it or avoiding it.
- Remove or reprogram your trigger buttons, so things that other people say and do won't "hook" you anymore. You might not *like* what they do, but it won't upset you or cause you to react unhelpfully. Sometimes, when you no longer have the hook, these events and people seem to miraculously change or disappear from your life!
- Realize the magnificent process of how your body creates emotions, to appreciate them more.
- Understand the effects of stress on your health and learn techniques for reducing or eliminating it, so your health can greatly improve.
- Use all you've learned in an intentional, pro-active way, to change your life from being a series of reactions to situations and people to consciously creating the life of your dreams.

Once you understand the causes of anger and stress and how to prevent or move through them in healthy ways, you will find that situations that would have caused you stress or anger in the past either don't happen or don't upset you so much. You understand *why* it's happening, *what* to do (or not do) about it, and *how* to use the experience for continued self-growth.



What's Next?

Once you are calm, you will be better able to plan and deliver a helpful response, particularly what you say. To express *your* concerns assertively and non-blamefully, use the Clear Communication Toolset, which is the next chapter.

Action Steps:

Before you go to the next chapter, check out the Action Guide, which has practice exercises for creating personalized anger and stress management plans for you and your children, and links to more resources on both basic and advanced Keep Your Cool tools.



Chapter 10: Clear Communication Toolset

Tabby was having a garage sale with a friend. She and her son, Jaxon, age eight, came to the friend's house to help them set up. Her son came upstairs with an item that had just been broken.

Tabby jumped all over him! She said, "What have you been doing down there? What did you do?" He said, "I didn't break it, Jason did."

Jason's mother was sitting right there. Immediately, Tabby said, "Oh well, it's no problem."

Jaxon said, "Oh, it's not okay for me to break it but it's okay if Jason did?"



It's not uncommon to get more upset with your own children than others, because you are more emotionally involved with them. But they are also the most important people in your life, so you want to make every effort to take care of the relationship.

Think about this statement...

"If we treated our friends as we do our children, we'd probably lose some friends. Likewise, if we treated our children as respectfully as we do our friends, our relationships would surely improve."

You might say, "But we *aren't* their friends. We are their parents!" This statement does not mean to *be* friends *instead of* parents. It simply means to treat our children with the same respect we would our friends and to be *friendly* in the way we treat them.

You might say, "But friends don't repeatedly do silly, stupid things!" Well, what if they did? How would you handle it?" Chances are, you would probably make an extra effort to be tactful and courteous to your friend.

Children are human beings and therefore, for that reason alone, deserve to be treated with politeness, respect and dignity, even when they aren't treating *you* that way and you need to set limits or express your concerns. (The Action Guide has links to responses to back talk.)

Two wrongs don't make a right. If children are disrespectful or rude to you, it doesn't give you permission to be disrespectful or rude to them. That would be revenge. You are the adult and are still responsible for being a good role model of how to be assertive *and* kind.



The Clear Communication Toolset

You already know the Top Five five-star tools and how to keep your cool, so once you open your mouth to speak, not a lot should go wrong. Right?

Actually, this is when your old programming can rear its ugly head. You can end up saying:

- What your parents used to say, automatically without thinking, which might not be the most *effective* thing to say.
- Respectful words with a non-verbal delivery that is disrespectful or ineffective
- Something in a blameful way, which causes defensiveness, or as a shaming guilt trip.
- What *you* mean, but in a way that can be misinterpreted, so others take it the wrong way.

Argh! Communication may seem like a simple *language* issue, but there are so many ways we can unintentionally make things worse. It helps to learn some basic skills, which is what you'll learn in this *Jump Start Guide*.

Communication Styles

There are four styles of communication people tend to use; only one is healthy and effective:

- **Assertive** communication means you are speaking up, expressing your concerns or needs, and are doing it in a way that is respectful to others.
- **Aggressive** communication is speaking up for yourself in a way that is disrespectful to others.
- **Passive** communication is *not* speaking up for yourself, in an effort to avoid conflict.
- **Passive-aggressive** communication is using passive means to be aggressive or hurt others. Sarcasm and insulting humor are two examples.



Non-Verbal Communication

When you speak about your concerns, you must be careful. You can make matters worse by using a negative tone of voice or poorly-chosen words. Sometimes, you can send a completely different message, just with your tone of voice or emphasis on one word.



Here is an example from *Listening for Heaven's Sake*, by Gary Sweeten:

Actual words: "I didn't say your outfit looked silly."

Interpretation: "Someone else said it was silly."

Actual words: "I didn't **say** your outfit looked silly."

Interpretation: I may have thought it was silly, but I didn't say so.

Actual words: "I didn't say **your** outfit looked silly."

Interpretation: It wasn't you I was talking about.

Actual words: "I didn't say your **outfit** looked silly."

Interpretation: It wasn't your outfit that looked silly, it was you.

Actual words: "I didn't say your outfit looked **silly**."

Interpretation: I didn't say silly exactly, I said it looked unusual.



Avoid the Blame & Shame Games

Many adults were raised with blame, shame, criticism, sarcasm, etc. It's how adults and authority figures often expressed their dissatisfaction with children and institutions controlled *our* behavior. Maybe that's why it comes so naturally. They certainly aren't *helpful* or *effective* communication.

Instead, "I" messages were introduced in the 1960's in P.E.T.: Parent Effectiveness Training, by Thomas Gordon, which is what my parents first taught. In this formula, which is still being taught today, you are supposed to say this formula: "When you (describe the action), I feel (your feeling), because (describe the outcome of the behavior)." Sometimes it's recommended to add a request to the end, "...and I'd like you to request." **This formula is no longer recommended. Why?**

Although the intent is on point, long-term results show they get opposite results, such as:

1. They are *v-e-r-y* *l-o-n-g* sentences, which cause eyes to roll and ears to close. **Each part of that long sentence can stand alone or you can mix and match segments.**
2. The whole concept *behind* "I-messages" was to be non-blameful, but "You" is still in there, which points a finger of blame. **You want to completely take "You" out of your statement.**
3. Another purpose behind I-messages was to **own your feelings**, but the way the formula says "When you ... I feel ..." it still makes the receiver feel responsible for the speaker's feelings! This can then *easily* turn an I-message into a guilt trip or make children feel they are responsible for keeping their parents happy!
4. Adding the request to the end can be annoying or condescending, if the child already knows what to do. In that case, **not adding a request non-verbally conveys that you trust the child to take care of it.** Children will actually be *more* likely to take action than if you nag them.



Speak for Yourself!

The Clear Communication Toolset has 11 practical tools and they all relate to being respectful and assertive when *you* have a problem and need to set limits/boundaries or express your concerns. In addition to using I-message *parts*, you can borrow tools from *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen and Listen so Kids Will Talk*, by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish.



Use “I” language, not “I-messages.” You use the Clear Communication Toolset when there is a Parent problem, so you want to speak for yourself, owning your thoughts and feelings, saying “I.” When you use “you,” it is an invisible finger of blame pointing to the other person, which puts them on the defensive.

You *can* use “you” in Child problems when you use F-A-X Listening, as in “How do *you* feel? What do *you* think? What ideas do *you* have?” If you were to use the word “I” in any of those sentences, you are obviously taking over the problem or giving advice.



Just think about where your fingers are pointing in the three problem-identification questions. When you are dealing with Child problems, pointing away from yourself, you can say “You.” When you point to yourself in Parent problems, you say “I.”

So instead of saying...	Say...
“You make me feel so...”	“I feel ...” In addition to <i>owning</i> your own feelings, avoid the words “disappointed,” which is a guilt-trip, and “embarrassed,” because that’s caused by your own self-consciousness and caring about what other people think. (Perfectionistic Supervisor style.)
“You <describing what they did wrong>...”	“I see ...” Describe what you see without the blame. In truth it probably doesn’t matter if this person did it or someone else, so use generic language, like “When someone ...”
“You need to ...”	“I need ...” In addition to taking out “you” (blame), be sure what you are saying is really a need and not a want or preference; be accurate.
“You’d better...”	“I expect...” The former is a threat; this is a firmer statement, which you would need in the situation, but isn’t threatening. It’s authoritative (Balanced style) without being autocratic (Power Patrol style).
“You’re going to <describing negative effect>”	“When <this happens>, this can happen <describe negative effect.” For example, “When milk is left out, it spoils.” “When food is left in your bedroom it can attract bugs.” Give information, without the blame.
Give a quick reminder	If you’ve given information in the past, just use one word, a note, non-verbal sign, or code word to signal or remind of a previous agreement.



Use Two-Party F-A-X

You learned how to do one-party problem solving with Child problems, using F-A-X Listening and “keeping the ball in the child’s court.” When a problem also affects you, you have a Child/Parent Combo problem. So you both need to be involved in the problem-solving process and agree on a solution that meets both your needs.

To do this, you will make three modifications to the standard F-A-X Listening process:

1. First, you will go back and forth with each F-A-X step. When “the ball” is in the child’s court, you use “you” language and when the “ball” is in your court, you use “I” language. **Always put the ball in the child’s court first.** The more you can keep it there, the better.
2. When you summarize the core issue, wrapping it up like a gift, define the problem from both viewpoints. Acknowledge the child’s feelings and perspective and use the Communication Toolset to express yours.
3. In the last step of **X**-amine possible solutions, detail who will do what, to achieve the plan.

You can use two-party problem solving in *any* relationship, and can do it on the spur of the moment in a condensed form. Or, if a problem keeps occurring, you can arrange a time to follow the process step-by-step, in writing, using the same Problem-Solving Worksheet in Chapter 7: F-A-X Listening Toolset of the Action Guide.

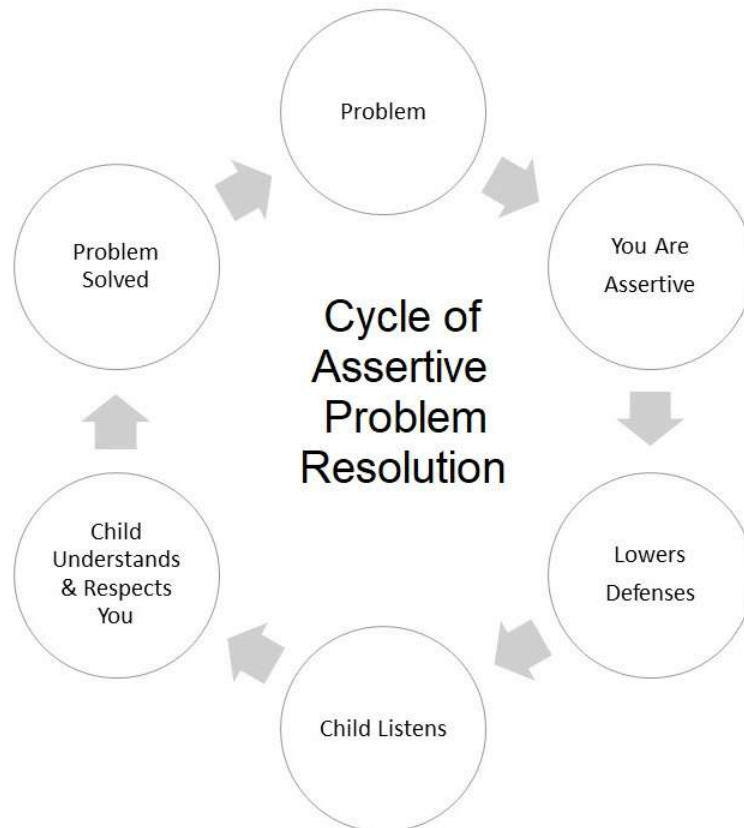
The goal of two-party problem solving is to reach a “win/win” agreement. “Win/win” does *not* mean both people get *everything* they want. Usually, it means both people get *some* of what they want, their “bottom line” needs. Both or neither may be happy about doing what they agreed to do, but they know it is a fair agreement and are therefore willing to follow through with it.

Benefits of Effective Communication

When you communicate assertively *and* respectfully, it sets a wonderful chain of events in motion:

- When you express *your* feelings and concerns respectfully, without blame, shame, criticism, lectures, nagging, or hidden messages, you feel better about yourself and children don’t feel defensive.
- Because children aren’t defensive and you listened to them or acknowledged their feelings *first*, they are more likely to *listen to you* instead of tuning you out.
- Because children listen to you, they are more likely to understand and respect your feelings your perspective and concerns, your limits, rules and expectations.
- Because you modeled respectful assertive communication, children learn to express *their* opinions and concerns respectfully. That means fewer smart-aleck attitudes and less back talk!





What's Next?

Since Parent problems can be a *part* of combo problems, you might only use this Toolset for a half a sentence. What you say next depends on the problem type:

- **If it's a Child/Parent combo problem**, stop and use two-party problem-solving, which you learned in the F-A-X Listening Toolset and saw it applied to Parent problems in this Toolset.
- **If there is Problem behavior**, identify if it's PU or PO and continue to the next PASRR step in your second sentence, to **Redirect** problem behavior. Depending on the problematic behavior or situation, you might also take the last step and **Reveal** discipline. Those steps will use the Misbehavior Toolbox, which starts on the next page.

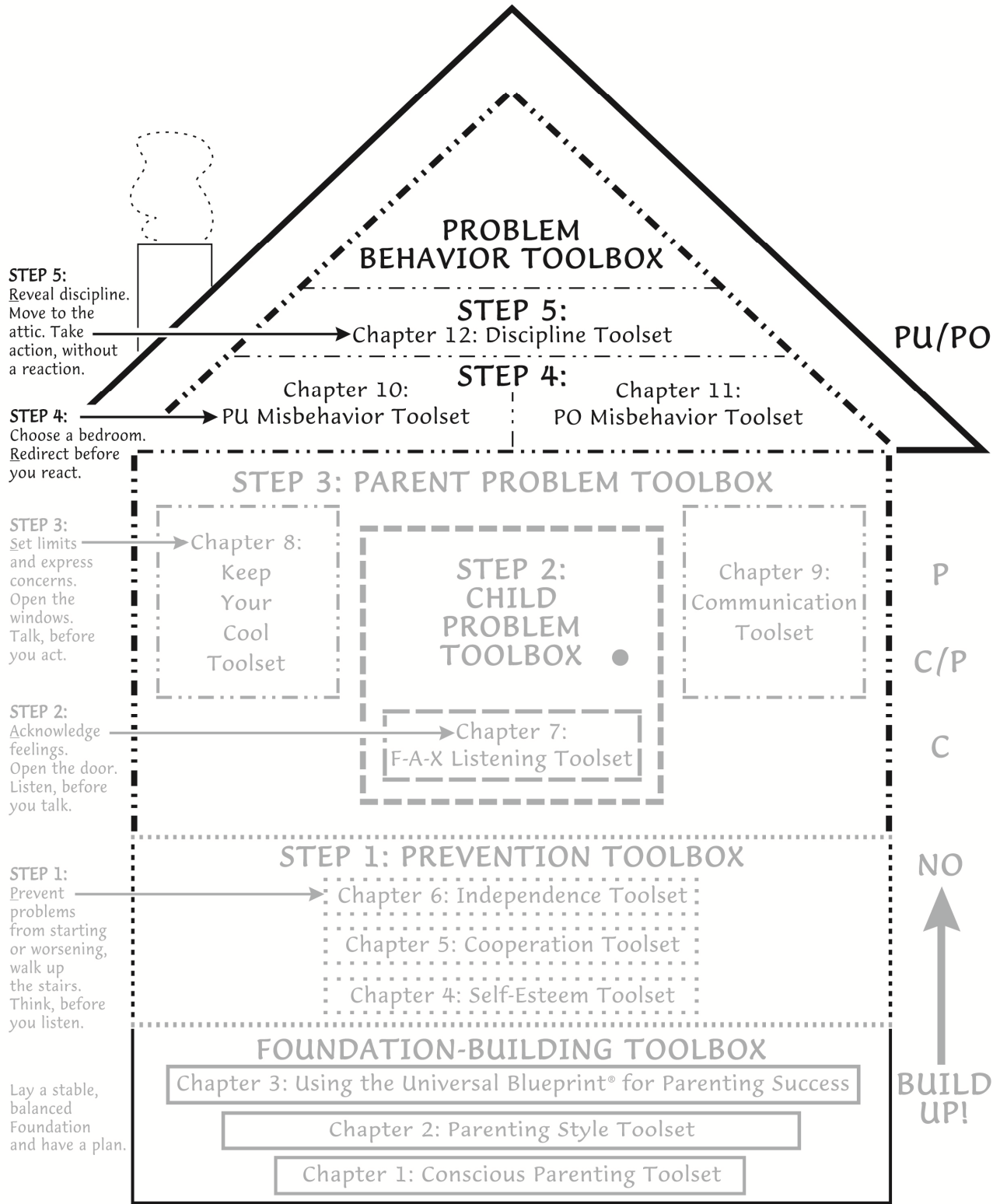
Action Steps

All of the tools in the Clear Communication Toolset are assertive. Best of all, you can use them in *all* your relationships, you can get lots of opportunities to practice these skills!

Now go to the Action Guide for more ways to practice and bonus information and resources. The story of Tabby and Jaxon is a real story from a graduate. See what she said and did next.



Section V: PASRR Steps 4 & 5: The Problem Behavior Toolbox



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The Problem Behavior Toolbox

This Toolbox is going to pull together *everything* you've learned and wrap it up like a gift. So let's take a look at where you've been and where you are heading.

You already learned how to *prevent* most challenges, including problem behavior, by using the Top Five Five-Star Tools.

Prevent problems from starting or worsening, using the Prevention Toolbox.

You also learned what to say in the first sentence of your PASRR formula response:

Acknowledge the child's feelings, using the Child Problem Toolbox.

Set limits and/or express concerns, using the Parent Problem Toolbox:

Keep Your Cool and Clear Communication Toolsets.

Now it's time to learn *why* children behave and how to take the next PASRR step:

Redirect problem behavior.

If you recall the three problem-identification questions, there are *two* types of problem behavior. This Toolbox looks at each type and how to effectively respond to each. So it contains three Toolsets:

- The PU Toolset, for Problem behavior that's Unintentional.
- The PO Toolset, for Problem behavior that's On purpose.
- The Discipline Toolset

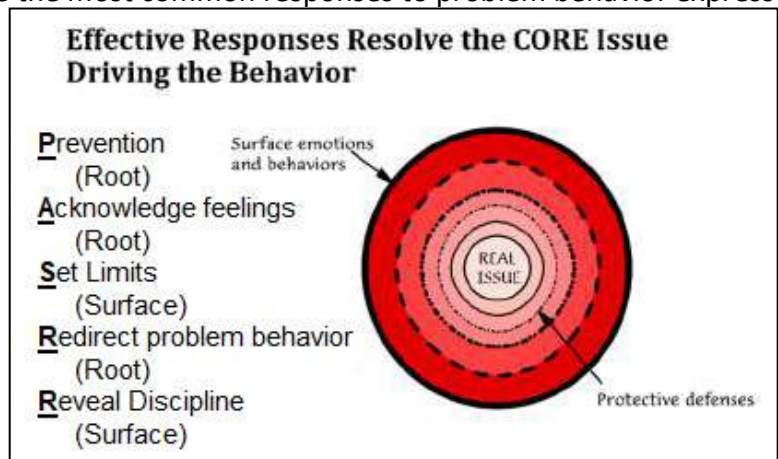


Identifying Types of Problematic Behavior

Only *The Parent's Toolshop*®'s Universal Blueprint® teaches the *difference* between unintentional and intentional misbehavior, offers a *system* for identifying the root cause of each, and *matches* each five-star tool (which you've already learned) to the type of problematic behavior it best addresses.

Each of these parts are important, because the most common responses to problem behavior express the parent's concern (Step "S" in PASRR) and reveal discipline (Step "R" in PASRR). Because all the other steps are missing, children interpret this a threat of punishment. While the behavior might stop, it usually comes back, because the root cause still exists.

When you identify the underlying issues causing a problematic behavior and respond in ways that resolve those issues, the problem behavior usually disappears and often never returns!



So let's quickly review the three questions that help you identify which *type* of problematic behavior you might be facing at any given point in time and *why* the child is misbehaving that way:

Question #1, "Is this problem a Child problem or Parent problem?" Since all problem behavior is an issue of "Appropriateness" (the "A" in the SHARP-RV issues), all problem behavior is a Parent problem, so you can answer this question without much thought. Move to Question #2.

Question #2, "If there is Problem behavior, is it 'Unintentional' or 'On purpose.'" To answer, consider: "Has *this* child *consistently shown mastery* of the skills needed to behave in *this* situation?"

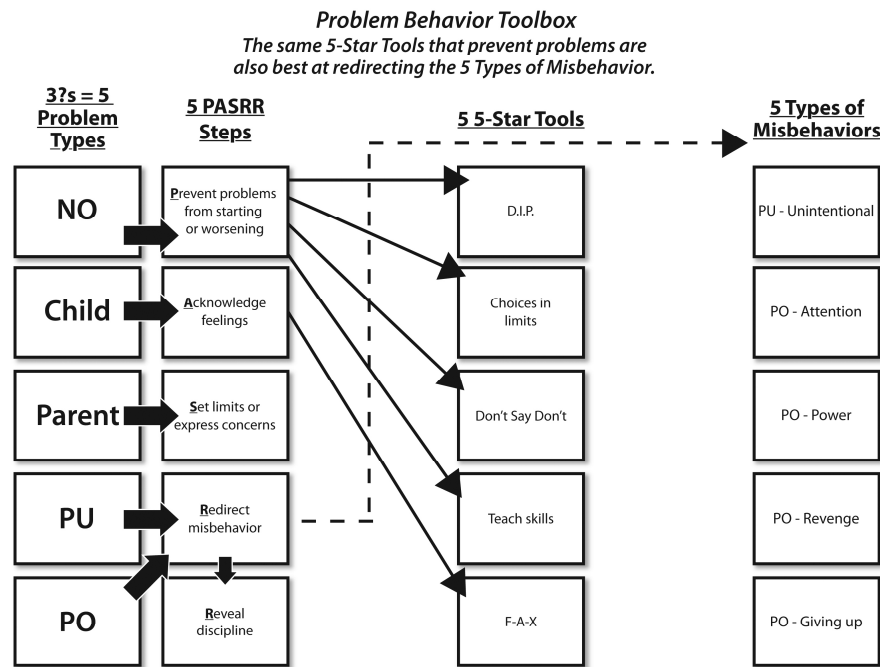
- **If you answer "No," it's *Unintentional* problem behavior (PU = Problem behavior that's Unintentional):** Move to the PU Toolset to understand what causes PU behavior and which five-star tool is best to use in your PASRR response step to "**Redirect problem behavior.**"
- **If you answer "Yes," it's *Intentional* problem behavior (PO = Problem behavior that's On purpose):** Move to the PO Toolset to answer the last question:

Question #3: If the Problem behavior is On purpose, "What's the purpose?" The PO Toolset tells you how to answer this question and which five-star tool is best to use in your PASRR response step to **Redirect** *each* of the four types of PO behavior.



Redirecting with the PASRR Formula

Knowing which *type* of problematic behavior you are facing --- and there are only five types --- helps you respond in the most helpful, appropriate way. **You will use the same tools you use to *prevent* problematic behavior --- the five five-star tools --- with small modifications, to *redirect* the problematic behavior.**



The Problem Behavior Toolbox matches up each five-star tool with the type of behavior it stops. Then you can plug that tool into the PASRR formula, for a response that is short, from one word to two sentences, but highly effective, because each word or sentence serves a very specific purpose.

Redirecting problematic behavior is a critical step in the PASRR Formula you don't want to skip or misuse. Sometimes the type of problematic behavior (PU or PO) or goal (one of the four PO goals) changes mid-stream! You have to recognize when this occurs and know how to adjust your response accordingly or things will escalate and worsen. For example:

- If you are "all talk and no action," children might think it's okay to behave that way.
- If you stop the behavior, but children don't *learn* better, the behavior will likely recur.
- If the behavior gets a *reaction*, children might get a payoff and repeat the behavior to see if they can get the payoff or reaction again.
- If the response too harsh, it might "work," but there could be unnecessary negative consequences later. Remember when you learned, "**Just because IT 'works' (now), doesn't mean you should do IT!**" in The Cooperation Toolset?

So turn the page and continue to the PU Toolset to look at the first type of problematic behavior: PU.



Chapter 11: The PU Toolset (Problem behavior that's Unintentional)

Sometimes Sam and Shantel wonder if their children are theirs...or aliens.

Their toddler, Heather, is a typical two-year-old who doesn't want to share, despite them telling her she should, or that it would be nice to do.

This causes fights with their son, Brett, because he and Heather will fight over toys all the time. When Brett doesn't get his way, he calls Heather a doody-head and uses other phrases he picks up at school that are inappropriate to say, especially in front of Heather, because she repeats them.

While all that is probably normal, it often seems to border on the extreme, because the battles are so constant.

The real alien is their young teenage daughter, Daphne, who would tattoo or pierce every lobe and piece of skin on her body, if Sam and Shantel would let her. She's only fourteen-years-old, so they have to sign permission and they won't.

So Daphne does body art on herself with henna or permanent markers and wears clothes Sam and Shantel think are inappropriate. The good news is that she has to wear a uniform to school. The bad news is that Daphne buys her clothes with her own money, so her parents think they can't prevent her from wearing them.



Do you ever wonder whether your child is “normal?” Is he or she “on track?” Do you have realistic expectations for their behavior, especially when you know you’ve told them a million times what to do (or *not* do)?

What about your nieces and nephews and the neighborhood children the same age. Do you compare your children and wonder if your children are too behind or too far ahead?

Do you sometimes have a hard time telling unintentional from intentional behavior? When it happens the first time, you give the benefit of the doubt. But when it happens again and again, that *has* to be intentional, right?

So just what *are* you supposed to do when children misbehave and are either too young to understand what you are saying to them or just seem like they *can't* learn, due to their age, personality, abilities or medical conditions. The PU Toolset has those answers. So let's dive in!

(Note: The Action Guide has a one-page table to fill in while reading this, to anchor the information in your brain. Fill out that and the flowchart as you learn about each goal. The directions are in the graphics.)



The PU Toolset (Problem behavior that's Unintentional)

Most parents *and* professionals *assume* almost *all* problematic behavior is *intentional*, unless it's an obvious accident, especially if they have already told the child not to do it or think the child “knows better.”

If you believe this, you are more likely to feel frustrated, react in anger, and head in a direction that will be both unhelpful and make matters worse.



Truly, it doesn't matter how many times you tell someone their behavior is a problem — you could “tell them a million times” — until they *master* the skill to behave properly, they might behave that way. Don't you sometimes forget to use a new skill or use it inconsistently until you master it?

Identifying PU Behavior

When there is problematic behavior, ask yourself, “Has *this* child *consistently shown mastery* of the skills needed to behave in *this* situation?” **There are five reasons *why* children don't master skills quickly:**

- 1. The behavior is the result of the child's immaturity or developmental stage.** (The Action Guide has links to a detailed excerpt from the original *The Parent's Toolshop*® book, with a summary of developmental stages, common PU behaviors, and how to redirect each one.)

In general, child **development** is mostly predictable, but also somewhat unpredictable. It **always moves from simple to more complex and usually occurs in a consistent order**, like crawling before walking. Yet it is still quite individual, from child to child, especially in the **rate** children develop and their **style of development**: Children can learn skills all-at-once or one-at-a-time. They can be trial-and-error or wait-and-do learners.

Traumas and poor adjustments to change can cause developmental delays. These delays can make it difficult to know if your expectations are realistic, especially if a child's “functional” age is different from the chronological age.

Then, just when you think your child has mastered a new skill, you can see regressions! These ups-and-downs are natural. **It is necessary for children to go through a temporary period of imbalance before moving to a new level.** If they didn't, they would have to immediately jump from one developmental stage to the next, with no transition period. This would be unnatural.

For all these reasons, it's important for you to understand more about child development stages and what to realistically expect. (See the Action Guide for links to these resources.)



2. **The behavior is part of the child's personality or temperament.** Some examples are children who are energetic, determined, easily overwhelmed, easily distracted, have difficulty making transitions, have irregular body rhythms, need to move, or are analytical and serious.

This is how children's brains are "wired," so it can take longer for the child to master a skill that "doesn't come naturally." You can help your children use their temperament in positive ways and learn skills for managing any difficulties the temperament presents.

3. **There is a medical condition influencing the child's behavior.** It could be something mild, like being cranky due to teething or an earache, or clinically diagnosed disorders with behavioral symptoms.

When the reason is a medical condition or temperament, which have biological causes, teach children skills to compensate for any difficulties their condition poses. Have realistic expectations that it will likely take them longer to learn and master new skills. Depending on the condition, they might never be able to learn or master certain skills.

In this case, you will still want to use all the proven-effective parenting tools in *The Parent's Toolshop*® plan, because they are for all human children. Then get *additional* information and tools that are particularly helpful for that specific medical condition. Usually, those skills will be compatible with those you learn here.

4. **It is an accident.** This is usually the only type of PU behavior most adults *do* recognize!

5. **The child lacks the information to know better or has not mastered the skills,** but there is no barrier (like the previous four reasons) affecting the child's ability to learn. The child just needs more information or practice.



Here are three key points about identifying PU behavior:

- **These reasons aren't excuses for PU behavior; they are explanations as to why the child is behaving that way** or why it's taking time for the child to master the skills. The child will still be held accountable in your response.
- **When in doubt, assume it's PU (unintentional).** Teach skills. The child's reaction to your response will show whether the behavior is deliberate or not.
- **A particular problematic behavior is either PU or PO. It can't be both at the same time. Either the child has mastered the skill or not.** Now, the same behavior (cussing, for example) *can* be PU one minute and PO the next. If a parent rewards the PU behavior (with negative attention, for example), a child may repeat it later On purpose (PO), to get the reaction or payoff. The first time this behavior occurred, it was PU. Then, because of the reaction it got, it "mutated" into PO.

Responding effectively to PU behavior early on can prevent it from turning into PO behavior later.

Reacting to PU behavior instead of responding to it can cause it to mutate into PO behavior.

Punishing it, which doesn't teach skills, will also usually result in the behavior repeating.



Redirecting PU Behavior

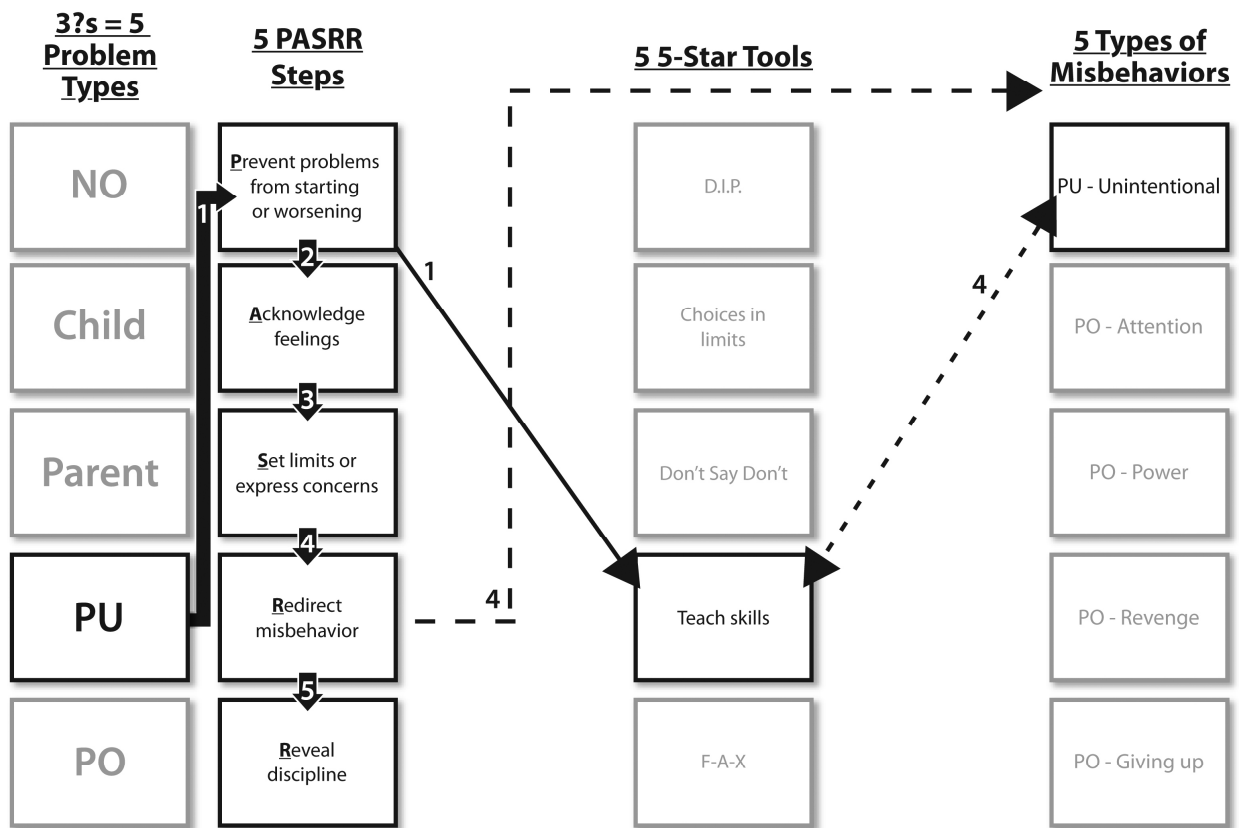
You will always start your first response with *one* sentence that Acknowledges feelings and Sets limits or expresses your concern.

For the next step, Redirecting problematic behavior, there are several options. In this *Jump Start Guide*, we are just focusing on which five-star tool to use --- which is *Teaching Skills*.

When there is PU behavior, *teach children skills* and have realistic expectations about how quickly children can master the skills.

Now, fill in your flowchart like the one below, matching PU behavior with the five-star tool that is best for redirecting it, Teaching Skills.

Responding to PU - Unintentional Problems



Note the steps: 1 through 4. Also notice the arrows that go to and from the five-star tool, reminding you that the best tool for preventing a type of misbehavior is also the best one for redirecting it. (See the last page of this chapter for how to complete the PU behavior row of the Misbehavior Matching Game Key table.)



The PASRR Formula for PU Behavior

Here are some suggestions for applying the PASRR formula to PU behavior:

Prevent the problem by teaching skills. ***“When people want ____, they (teach skills). You can (offer choices or describe the behavior you want to see).”*** Offer descriptive encouragement as they try to improve — even if they fall short of the mark at first.

When PU behavior occurs:

Acknowledge children's feelings or perspective. ***“I can see you want/feel/are trying to ____.”***

Set limits or express concerns. ***“I'm concerned about state SHARP-RV concerns non-blamefully.”***

Redirect PU behavior by **Teaching Skills**. ***“Here's how you can do what he/she is trying to do.”*** Even better is to have a SHARP-RV tie-in, like “Here's how you can do that “safely” or “in a healthy way.”

Reveal Discipline, if needed, with the Discipline Toolset. You'll get a separate formula for this step. PU behavior *always* involves a lack of *skills*. Too often, children aren't taught *how* to behave, just punished if they don't. Discipline, though, focuses on *teaching* from mistakes, not suffering for them.

The Benefits of Using the PU Toolset

When you recognize problematic behavior is unintentional, due to a lack of skills, and you remember to teach skills, it brings dramatically quicker results:

- You will understand *why* children are misbehaving and feel less angry and frustrated.
- You won't take the behavior personally and avoid overreacting.
- Your response will get at the root cause, which eliminates the problematic behavior quicker.
- Children will individuate in acceptable ways, because they don't *have* to rebel against control *or* be conformists!
- Children will master skills faster, because you are teaching them. If children are just punished, with no teaching, they might not know what they are supposed to do, and might repeat the behavior. Parents often assume at that point that the behavior is intentional, but if the child hasn't learned or mastered the skill, it's not!
- You will know how to prevent or effectively respond to common age-related problematic behaviors and have more realistic expectations about how quickly children can learn skills, based on their age, personality or medical conditions.



What's Next?

PU behavior is just one of the five types of problematic behavior, but it accounts for probably 90% of most problematic behavior, especially the first time it occurs. So turn the page to go to Chapter 12: PO Toolset (Problem behavior that's On purpose), to see what to do to redirect the other four types and to finish matching up the five-star tools to the five misbehavior types on your flowchart.

Action Steps

If you want or need more detailed information about developmental stages, go the Action Guide *before* you read Chapter 12. Otherwise, circle back to it after Chapter 12 to see common PU behaviors and effective responses to them.

Did you get the pdf table from the Action Guide? If so, check how you filled it out and use the table below for comparison. Below is only the PU behavior row of the Misbehavior Matching Game Key table.

After you have completed the entire worksheet yourself --- and it *is* important to *hand write* it *yourself* the first time, to anchor the information in your brain --- you can download and print the full table answer key for future reference.

TYPE OF MISBEHAVIOR	HOW YOU KNOW? (Your feelings)	WHAT TO AVOID? (Reactions that escalate/ give payoff)	HOW TO REDIRECT & PREVENT! (show child how to meet goal thru + behavior)
PU (UNINTENTIONAL)	Child has <i>not</i> mastered the skills	Reacting or punishing without teaching	Teach the skills



Chapter 12: The PO Toolset (Problem behavior that's On purpose)

Derek and Sonia have two girls: Natalie, 6, and Morgan, 3. Each night it seems to take forever to get the girls to settle down, get in bed and fall asleep.

Natalie whines at each step of the bedtime routine. She wants to know why she can't play longer before taking her bath. Once she is in the tub, she wants to know why she can't have more bubbles. Then it's hard to get her out of the tub.

Trying to get Morgan to brush her teeth is a battle, like pulling teeth! (Pun intended.) She complains about the yucky toothpaste, barely touches the brush to her teeth, and makes a mess all over the sink. If Derek or Sonia try to help, it can turn into a wrestling match!



Once in bed, no matter how many books Derek and Sonia read, Natalie always wants another! Then, when they leave the room, Natalie finds lame excuses to get up or come out of her room.

She'll say, "I'm hungry," although she had a snack, or "I'm thirsty," although she just drank water. Her list of demands goes on and on.

Morgan needs to be coaxed to get her pajamas on each night and wants her books read to her in the living room. Once in bed, she cries hysterically, clinging to Derek or Sonia, and wants one of them to stay with her.

Derek and Sonia take turns sitting in Morgan's room until she falls asleep. If they don't, she continues to cry, runs out of her room when they leave, and throws a tantrum each time they put her back into the room. This gets everyone more upset.

Derek and Sonia are exhausted by the time the girls are asleep. They have little time to themselves or to spend time together. The stress is taking a toll on their relationship. They disagree on what to do and often argue.

*If they could figure out why their girls behave this way at bedtime and resolve **that**, their nights would be more pleasant and they would have time for each other.*

When your children misbehave, *intentionally*, are you staying calmer now, by using the Keep Your Cool Toolset? If so, instead of getting P.O.'d, are you *feeling* any clues about *why* your children are *choosing* to behave that way and *what* to do to stop it?

The PO Toolset shows you how to use your logic, emotions and intuition to understand what's driving your child's intentional misbehavior and to plan a helpful response.



The PO Toolset (Problem behavior that's On purpose)

There are only 5 types of problematic behavior: PU behavior, which is unintentional, due to lack of skills, and intentional behavior that serves one of four goals.

These “Four Goals of Misbehavior” are based on the teachings of Rudolf Dreikurs', who was a student of Alfred Adler, whose teachings are included in almost all proven-effective, research-based programs with positive *long-term* outcomes, like The Parent's Toolshop®.

Basically, the theory goes: when people try to meet their goals through positive behavior and it doesn't work, they get discouraged and may resort to negative behavior to reach the goal. That negative, intentional behavior serves one of four goals: attention, power, revenge or giving up.

The PO Toolset gives you a system identifying the goal of PO behavior --- for *that child in that second in time* --- and how to respond effectively, instead of getting P.O.'d and reacting in anger.

The key to responding effectively to intentional misbehavior is to identify what benefit or goal the behavior serves for the child. Then redirect the child by showing how to meet that goal through positive behavior.



It sounds simple, but things can get a bit confusing or seemingly complicated, because **one behavior can serve more than one goal.** (Think about tantrums, running away, or not talking.) **So you need a reliable system for finding the clues that will help you correctly identify the goal *and* redirect it.**

What would be an effective response for one goal will completely backfire for a different goal! So **if you mis-identify the goal, the problematic behavior can continue or get worse!**

Identifying the Goal of PO Behavior

Remember Problem-Identification **Question #2, "Is the Problem behavior 'Unintentional' or 'On Purpose,'"?** To answer it, consider if *any* of the following statements are true. If so, you are most likely facing PO behavior:

- You *have consistently seen* that the child *has* mastered the skills to behave appropriately in similar situations.
- You *are positive* the child knows better and hasn't forgotten or doesn't need more practice.
- The child seems to be doing this *deliberately* and may even be looking for or expecting a reaction. (If this statement is true, it's *definitely* on purpose!)

Once you are sure it's PO behavior, answer Question #3: "If it's On purpose, what's the purpose?"



There are only four possible answers: Attention, Power, Revenge, or Giving up.

To identify the goal of the child's behavior, **ask the following questions and look for certain clues that are common signs of that goal.**

- a. **How do I feel when I see this behavior?** Since all intentional problem behavior can cause *you* to feel anger, which is a *secondary* emotion, you want to identify the *primary* feeling causing your anger. **Different feelings are clues to the different goals of intentional misbehavior.**

Almost all PO behavior makes you feel P.O.'d (that's peeved off, if we keep this G-rated). So it can be challenging not to react. If you follow your mission and the tools you've already learned, which is why you learned them in this order, you will stop and think for 1-10 seconds and take a deep breath. This helps you not get angry. Instead, you'll be in touch with your *primary* feeling. That's the *first* clue to the goal.

- b. **What am I tempted to do?** Your feelings and temptations are clues that help you identify the purpose, but *you don't want to act on them*. Gut reactions usually escalate the situation or give a payoff. You can verify this by asking the next question.
- c. **If I did this (my gut reaction), how would the child react?** If you carried out your gut reaction, would you give the behavior a payoff? Would it escalate the situation? How would the child interpret your actions? Would the behavior get better or worse? Would the short term result have long-term negative consequences? **These answers are all clues to the goal.**

2. **Avoid Reacting, Which Escalates the Situation or Gives a Payoff.** This is a tricky step, because you need to be in touch with your gut feelings, but avoid acting on them (what you're tempted to do in (1b) above). This can be challenging! You must Keep Your Cool and resist the urge to react.
3. **Redirect the Behavior.** In each case, you want to show children how to meet their purpose through positive behavior. Once children now know how to reach their goals in positive ways, **they don't need to resort to problematic behavior anymore!**

Good news! You already have the tools to redirect PO behavior: the remaining five-star tools.

Identifying and Redirecting Each of the Four Goals of Misbehavior

Let's look at each of the four goals, how to answer the three goal-identification questions above, what reactions to avoid, and which five-star tool is best to redirect each.

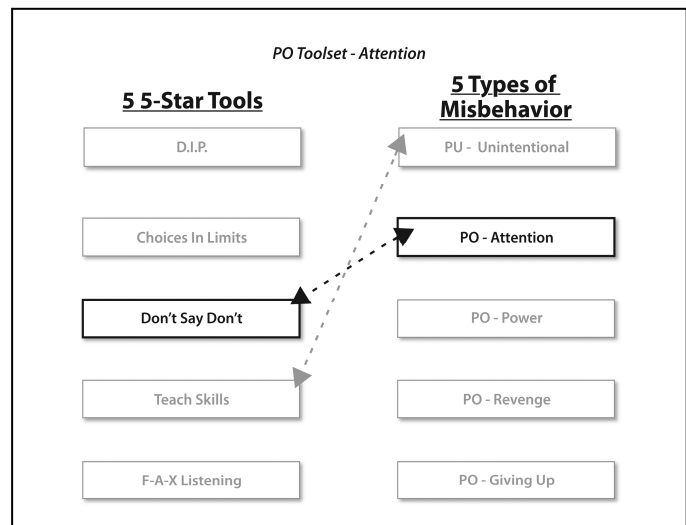
Chapter 12 of the Action Guide has a one-page table to fill in while reading this, to anchor the information in your brain. Fill out that *and* the flowchart as you learn about each goal. To save space, here is the header row. Note the PO goal identification clues at the top of each column.

TYPE OF MISBEHAVIOR	HOW YOU KNOW? (Your feelings)	WHAT TO AVOID? (Reactions that escalate/ give payoff)	HOW TO REDIRECT & PREVENT! (Show child how to meet goal thru + behavior)
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ATTENTION

- 1) **Reinforce positive/prevent negative:** Prevent the problem by using any of the following tools: plan ahead, spend time together, give attention unexpectedly, involve the child, and/or recognize the child's efforts.
- 2) **Identify the goal of Attention:**
 - a) **I feel ...** Annoyed, irritated, and depending on the situation, my personal space is violated.
 - b) **I'm tempted to ...** Remind, nag, give undue service, say "Stop, Don't, or Quit" or "Leave me alone," or ONLY ignore the behavior.
 - c) **If I do ...**
- 3) **Avoid Reacting:** If you nag or remind, it gives the child attention, even if it's only negative attention. If you *only* ignore the behavior, it may temporarily stop, escalate, or the child may try new behaviors to keep you involved.
- 4) **Redirect:** NOTE: You only get *one* chance to respond; additional responses will give a payoff.
 - a) In one sentence, **A**cknowledge the child's feelings and **S**et limits or express concerns.
 - b) To **R**edirect the problematic behavior, use "Don't Say Don't" to tell the child how to get attention in an *acceptable* way. What you suggest *must* be a meaningful activity or something that communicates that you understand their needs.
 - c) **R**eveal discipline: You must break the cycle before disciplining. Reveal what *you* will do: ignore the negative behavior. You'll learn more details about discipline in the next chapter.
 - d) *Then* follow through --- ignore the behavior, not the child. You can resume giving attention if the child uses positive behavior or isn't expecting or demanding attention.



<p>PO for ATTENTION</p>	<p>Irritated, annoyed, personal space violated</p>	<p>Stopping, reminding, nagging to "go away" or to "stop" or "quit." Or <u>ONLY</u> ignoring.</p>	<p>1. Use PAS. 2. Then Redirect with "Don't Say Don't" (tell child how to get attention in positive way.) 3. <i>Then</i> ignore.</p>
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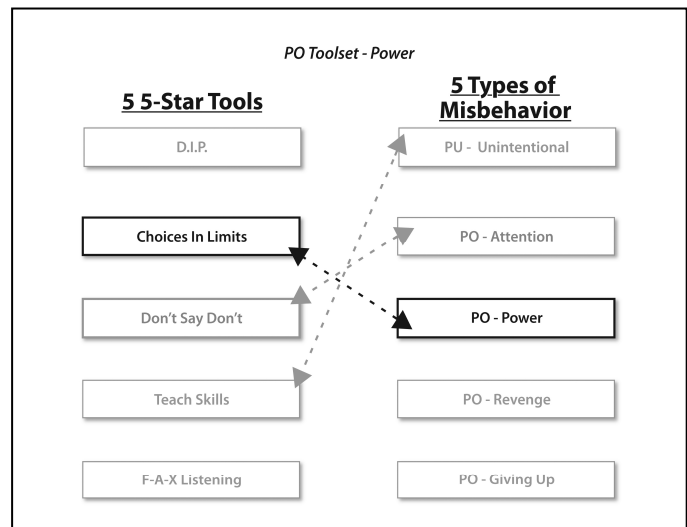


Example: While your child is playing quietly, you get a call. Like a homing beacon, your toddler appears, wanting your attention. Normally, you would pause the call, cover the mouthpiece, answer the need or tell the child to go back to playing...repeatedly, with each interruption. Instead, you give rub his back until you can ask the caller to pause *once*, as you tell your child, "If you pick something quiet to do, you can play here with me." Because this gives him *positive* attention, it meets the need.

POWER

In power struggles, the child's words or behavior say, "I won't."

- 1) **Reinforce positive/prevent negative:** Prevent the problem by using any of the following tools: offering children choices within limits, ask for their help, build teamwork, word requests in positive words, involve children in decisions, teach skills or let children find their own style or way of reaching the goal.
- 2) **Identify the goal of Power:**
 - a) **I feel ...** disrespected, provoked, that my authority is being challenged.
 - b) **I'm tempted to ...** Argue, exert more power, "I'll show you who's the boss," or give in.
 - c) **If I do ...** If you exert more power, the child will passively or aggressively defy you, which escalates the power struggle. If you give in, it gives the child a payoff, because the child gets what he or she wants.
- 3) **Redirect:**
 - a) Keep your cool. Be kind *and* firm.
 - b) In one sentence, **A**cknowledge the child's feelings and **S**et limits or express your SHARP-RV concerns.
 - c) **R**edirect by offering choices within bottom-line limits.
 - d) Disengage. Refuse to argue — it takes two to argue.
 - e) **R**eveal discipline: You must break the cycle before disciplining. Keep using the language of choices to reveal the discipline, which you'll learn in the Discipline chapter.



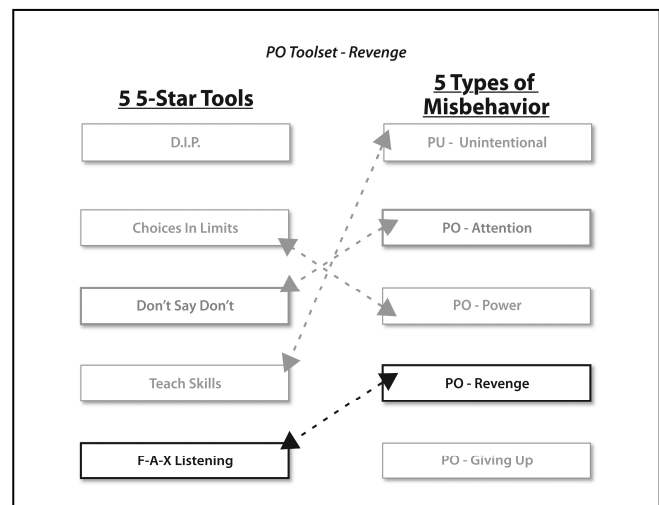
PO for POWER	Authority being challenged. Child means "I won't."	Arguing, forcing win/lose, giving in	Win/win choices within bottom line limits
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REVENGE

People usually don't hurt others unless they feel hurt, so **the root of all revenge is hurt**. (Say that three times, to remember it!) The hurt the hurter feels isn't always from the person they are hurting.

- 1) **Reinforce positive/prevent negative:** Prevent the problem by using any of the following tools: F-A-X listening and communication to avoid hurting feelings, and teach the child assertive, respectful conflict resolution skills, so they don't resort to revenge.
- 2) **Identify the goal of revenge**
 - a) **I feel ...** hurt, physically or emotionally. Disappointed, shock or disbelief, disgusted.
 - b) **I'm tempted to ...** hurt back or show hurt, "How could you do this to me?"
 - c) **If I do ...** Showing hurt gives a payoff. Retaliation escalates revenge cycles.
- 3) **Avoid Reacting:** If you show hurt, the child will know the revenge worked. If you retaliate, the revenge cycle will continue, "Oh yeah, well, I'll get you back."
- 4) **Redirect:**
 - a) Disengage. Cool off.
 - b) Rebuild trust by **A**cknowledging the child's hurt **f**irst. Use F-A-X Listening to resolve the hurt if possible.
 - c) **S**et limits or express concerns to address the revengeful behavior.
 - d) **R**edirect the behavior by brainstorming acceptable ways to express anger. You **must** break the revenge cycle before disciplining.
 - e) **R**eveal discipline: the child chooses **h**ow to make amends.



Note on the table to edit the left cell to remember what's at the root of all revenge:

<p>The root of all PO for REVENGE is <u>HURT!</u></p>	<p>Hurt (sometimes shock)</p>	<p>Hurting back or showing hurt</p>	<p>1) Use F-A-X to acknowledge and resolve their hurt <i>first</i>. Rebuild trust. 2) Express concerns and brainstorm how they can express their hurt more appropriately.</p>
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It's common for revenge to follow a lost power struggle. For example, Mark, age 8, was asked to water his mother's roses. He didn't want to. She insisted. He got mad and kicked a rose bush, knocking off a few petals. His mother acted shocked and said, "That wasn't nice!" Mark smiled, looking looked satisfied! She didn't understand why he was *happy*. **Do you see how and why the goal shifted?**

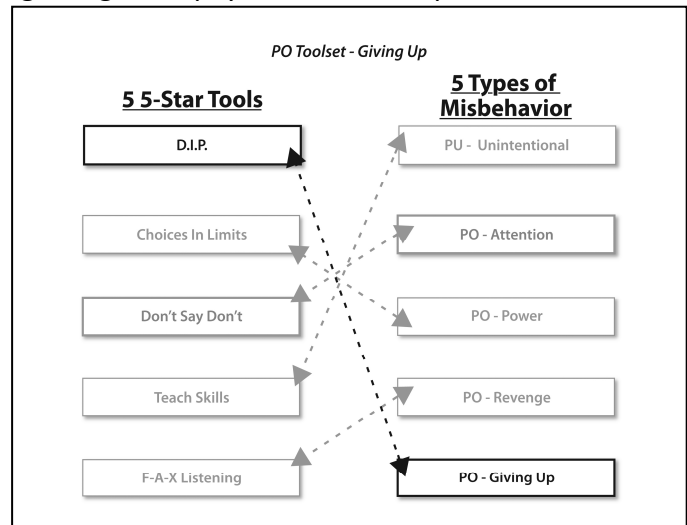
If the goal shifts, your response needs to shift, too. She could have Prevented the power struggle, but once revenge started, *that's* what she needed to respond to. She could have said, "I know you are *angry* (Acknowledge feelings) that I made you *water the flowers* (Set limits – or her issue). We *both* could have *been more respectful* (Redirect). (Next chapter: how to Reveal discipline with Revenge.)



GIVING UP

Giving Up behavior will always be *passive*. The child's behavior says, "I can't."

- 1) **Reinforce positive/prevent negative:** Prevent the problem by using any of the following tools: Give a D.I.P., by describing any effort or improvement. Teach skills.
- 2) **Identify the goal of giving up:**
 - a) **I feel ...** Frustrated, discouraged, hopeless, tired, or frustrated.
 - b) **I'm tempted to ...** Help, rescue, praise, pressure the child, give up, or expect less.
 - c) **If I do ...** Rescuing, giving up or expecting less gives a payoff. Praise and pressure escalates the behavior. The child will feel more incompetent and fail to respond.
- 3) **Redirect:**
 - a) In one sentence, **A**cknowledge the child's feelings and **S**et limits or express concerns.
 - b) **R**edirect: Give a D.I.P. Focus on *any* effort or improvement, no matter how small. Express faith in abilities. Build on interests and strengths.
 - c) If the child is feeling overwhelmed, break the task into smaller parts and focus on a different step.



<p>PO for GIVING UP is <i>always passive</i></p>	<p>Frustrated, hopeless, helpless. Child means "I can't."</p>	<p>Praise, pressure, pushing, giving up, too</p>	<p>Give a D.I.P. of descriptive encouragement, not praise. Teach skills (break into smaller steps, shift focus to different step)</p>
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Example: Your child is getting discouraged while trying to learn how to play baseball. If you tell her she's "good," or that she "can do it," she's likely to argue or escalate her insistence that she's incapable! If you conclude, "Well, maybe baseball isn't your thing," it gives permission to quit, not a life lesson you want to encourage. Instead, remind the child of how they have already improved, then focus on a different aspect of the game, like switching from batting to throwing, possibly after a break.



Important Points to Remember:

- **Children who are older than toddlers might intentionally use emotions, rather than behavior, to meet any of the four goals.**

For example:

- Children can “turn on the tears” to get attention or their way.
- They can cry to get revenge, hoping parents will feel bad for “making kids cry.”
- They can cry in despair and discouragement, giving up.



- **One behavior can serve more than one purpose.** The next time you see the same behavior, the goal might be different. For example, when children don't clean their rooms, you must first eliminate the possibility that the behavior is really PU:



- Do they have the skills and consistently shown you they can do the chore? If so, and you are sure it's PO, they might be seeking *attention* to get you involved.
- They could also be exerting *power*, challenging you to “make them.”
- They might refuse to clean as a *payback* for a hurt.
- Children might feel so overwhelmed they *give up*.

The way to tell which goal it is in each instance is to ask the three clue-finding questions: How do you feel? What are you tempted to do? What would happen if you did?

- **As you respond, the goal can change;** if it does, you'll feel a shift in *your feelings*. Adjust your response according to the new goal you detect. The example of Mark and the roses, earlier, is one example.

Here's another. If a child is Giving Up on homework and you help or praise them (instead of giving a D.I.P.) they might start “acting dumb” to keep you involved and get attention. You will feel the shift, from feeling compassionate to feeling manipulated. With time, you'll sense the subtle shifts, pick up on the clues, and intuitively shift your response.



- **In a PO problem, *always* Redirect the behavior *before* moving to the next step, Reveal Discipline.** Skipping this step can turn discipline into punishment, escalate the problem, or give a payoff. The beginning of the next chapter will explain why and give you some examples.



The Benefits of Using the PO Toolset

You may think this all sounds too complicated...well it can be, *if you don't* have a system for quickly identifying the goal of PO behavior and choosing the best tool to redirect the problematic behavior. The behavior goal can change from one second to the next or a reaction can cause the problem to mutate into another goal or type of problem altogether!

Once you have the Universal Blueprint® system, you can adjust *in the moment, in nanoseconds*, as you feel the situation shifting, always knowing *which* tool to use.

With the Universal Blueprint® flowchart, which matches the tools with the type of problem it best solves, it's as simple as knowing a hammer is best to use with a nail, a saw to cut wood, a screwdriver for a screw, and a wrench for a bolt!

The Universal Blueprint® for Parenting Success gives you a system for identifying and redirecting intentional problematic behavior, so you:

- Avoid reactions that escalate the situation or give an accidental payoff, which will cause the problematic behavior to repeat.
- Easily know --- *in seconds* --- exactly *why* the child is misbehaving and what to say and do, using skills you are already using every day (because they are the Top Five Five-Star Tools).
- Recognize when the purpose changes in the middle of a situation, so you can follow the flow, maintaining the most effective response second-by-second.
- Follow-through, skillfully and consistently, often *completely eliminating* the problem behavior, because you resolved the core issue driving it!



What's Next?

Aren't you grateful you trusted the process and learned the system *in order*? It really does matter, as you now see. Well your patience has paid off. It's finally time to get to the Toolset you've been waiting for...The Discipline Toolset.

Regardless of which type of problematic behavior you are responding to, you may need to hold children accountable. That takes you to the last step of the PASRR Formula, Reveal Discipline, using the Discipline Toolset, which is in the next chapter, Chapter 13.

Action Steps

Before you turn the page and take the final step in the PASRR Effective Response Formula, complete your Misbehavior Matching Table and flowchart. Then go to the Action Guide for the master keys.



1. **Complete the fourth column of the Universal Blueprint® flowchart.** Since the lines are already there, you only need to list the 5 types of misbehavior in the order this chapter covered them. Be sure to *trace* the decision-making *lines* for “Step 4” and how to match the 5 star tools with the 5 types of misbehavior. You will get a completed flowchart in Chapter 13 of the Action Guide.
2. **Complete your Misbehavior Matching Game table.** Once you’ve completed *your* handout, **get the pdf key in Chapter 12 of the Action Guide** (print it landscape mode). Hang it on your refrigerator as a quick reference guide for how to identify and redirect each type of misbehavior.

MISBEHAVIOR MATCHING KEY

TYPE OF MISBEHAVIOR (Problem behavior that’s <u>Unintentional</u> or <u>On purpose</u> + Goal)	HOW YOU KNOW? (Your feelings)	WHAT TO AVOID? (Reactions that escalate/ give payoff)	HOW TO REDIRECT & PREVENT! (show child how to meet goal thru + behavior)
PU (UNINTENTIONAL)	Child has <i>not</i> mastered the skills	Reacting or punishing without teaching	Teach the skills
PO for ATTENTION	Irritated, annoyed, personal space violated	Stopping, reminding, nagging to “go away” or to “stop” or “quit.” Or <u>ONLY</u> ignoring.	1, Use PAS, then Redirect with “Don’t Say Don’t” (tell child how to get attention in + way.) <i>Then</i> ignore.
PO for POWER	Authority being challenged. Child <i>means</i> “I won’t.”	Arguing, forcing win/lose, giving in	Win/win choices within bottom line limits
<i>The root of all</i> PO for REVENGE <i>is <u>HURT!</u></i>	Hurt (sometimes shock)	Hurting back or showing hurt	1) Use F-A-X to acknowledge and resolve their hurt <i>first</i> . Rebuild trust 2) Teach them how to express their hurt more appropriately.
PO for GIVING UP <i>always passive</i>	Frustrated, hopeless, helpless. Child <i>means</i> “I Can’t.”	Praise, pressure, pushing, giving up, too	Give a D.I.P. of descriptive encouragement, not praise. Teach skills (break into smaller steps, shift focus)

Together, the Misbehavior Matching Game table and Universal Blueprint® flowchart (which you’ll finish in the next chapter) summarize the entire Universal Blueprint® (and this book) on **two** pages!



Chapter 13: The Discipline Toolset

Evie and Shelly are chatting at the playground while watching their three-year-old toddlers play. Evie's daughter is Sarah and Shelley's youngest is Shayde. Evie also has a son, Shaq, ten-years-old, and Shelley has a daughter, Shantell, sixteen-years-old.



Evie complains, "I'm here instead of a playgroup, because Sarah won't help clean up the toys at the end. She doesn't want the fun to end. I don't want to spank her like I was, but I've run out of ideas!"

Shelly says, "Yeah, when I was a kid, I got my butt torn up with a switch over stupid, little stuff like that. I don't believe in whoopings and won't spank my kids over little stuff. Shayde is three, too, but I'm not sure he understands what I'm trying to teach him. I use time-out or take away a toy or privilege, but will spank him if those don't work or he's really bad."

Evie, says, "I've tried to train her! I've reasoned with her, asking if she played with the toys, and if so, who should be responsible for cleaning them up. I've pointed out that the other kids are cleaning up. I've praised the other children for doing what they're supposed to do. I've tried getting her to promise to help clean before we walk in. I've told her that big girls help clean up, and ask if she's a baby or a big girl. She says, 'I'm a baby.' Nothing works!

I've told Sarah she can't go to friends' homes if she won't help clean up, but she never asks to play with them. I've put her in time-out during the play date and once we get home. It doesn't bother her! I ask, 'Are you ready to come out of time-out?' and she says, 'Not yet.'

My son, Shaq, was like that. He doesn't like to clean either, so I take away his toys and privileges. He says he doesn't care and won't let on which of his toys is his favorite. It seems like he's not attached to any of them. He just sits there reading a book, because he knows I won't throw away books or make him stop reading."

Shelley says, "Shantell is too old to spank and doesn't really have toys, so I ground her. She stays in her room, surrounded by a mess that doesn't bother her. She sees friends at school and extra-curricular activities. Grounding her from those would hurt the whole team and could get her kicked off the team for good. So I'm not sure what else to do."

So what do you do when "nothing seems to work"? "Desperate times" need *not* call for "desperate measures," because those can lead to unhelpful punishment, instead of effective discipline. What's the difference? This chapter answers that and all your remaining questions about discipline, the final PASRR step in the Universal Blueprint® Formula for Parenting Success.



WARNING: If you Jumped Ahead or Skipped Steps, STOP and READ THIS

Most parents have problem behavior in mind when picking up a parenting book or taking a class, so it's tempting to jump ahead. Unfortunately, it will backfire if you skip *over* steps that can prevent or resolve the problem faster than jumping all the way to discipline out of the gate!



When most parents discipline, they say, “If you don’t stop doing [that],” with “that” being a gazillion different problem behaviors, “I’m going to do [this] to you,” with “this” being some form of punishment. This threat skips important (PASRR) steps, so it can *prevent* children from learning positive behavior and turn a helpful discipline into unhelpful punishment.

When children misbehave and you skip PASRR steps, especially identifying the *cause* of the problematic behavior and redirecting it with the most-effective five-star tool, it can render your discipline ineffective or turn it into punishment, which brings on new problems:

- If you treat children like they are *intentionally* misbehaving (PO: Problem behavior that’s On-purpose), when they really don’t know any better (PU: Problem behavior that’s Unintentional), the child will feel *more* discouraged. You learned in Chapter 12 that **Rudolf Dreikurs says discouragement is the root of all intentional problematic behavior**, skipping steps can cause PU behavior to turn into PO!
- **If children don’t know better (PU)** and you don’t teach them skills, they won’t learn better and will likely misbehave again. Punishment doesn’t teach, but discipline *can*.
- **If you don’t redirect PO behavior**, the situation usually escalates or you can easily accidentally reinforce it, especially if you give a gut reaction.
- **If you discipline *during* a power struggle**, the child will interpret it as a power play and it will escalate the power struggle. Or, if you win the power struggle, the child may resort to revenge to get back at you for making them lose.
- **If you discipline *during* a revenge cycle**, the child will interpret it as revengeful punishment, will not learn from the discipline, and will seek revenge on you later.
- **If you discipline a child who is *Giving Up***, the child will feel even more discouraged and could completely give up even trying.

If you jumped ahead, go back and learn this system *in order*, at least the *first* time.

If you have arrived here after reading *all* the previous chapters *in order*, read the threat in the second paragraph again. Think about what you have learned so far. Do you see:

- How ineffective and incomplete is a threat like that?
- How many steps the parent is skipping that could prevent or stop the problem sooner?
- How the child will interpret this a punishment and resent the parent as “the bad guy”?
- How the situation could escalate? Or go nowhere if the child acts like he doesn’t care?
- How the child likely won’t *learn* anything about *how to* behave?

Aren’t you glad you learned the steps and tools to use *before* the Discipline Toolset?



Where you are in the PASRR Formula

Would you like to have *self*-disciplined children? It sure would make life easier, right? That's what the Discipline Toolset accomplishes *if* you use it effectively.

Let's review where you are in the Universal Blueprint® PASRR Formula. You now know how to:

Prevent Problems from starting or worsening, with the Prevention Toolbox.

Acknowledge the child's feelings, with the Child Problem Toolbox: F-A-X Listening Toolset

Set limits and express concerns, with the Parent Problem Toolbox

Redirect problem behavior, with the PU or PO Toolset

With either PU or PO behavior, you may move to the final step:

Reveal discipline, with the Discipline Toolset

You also know that using the PASRR formula takes only two or three sentences at most, without repeating yourself. You can also take one or two steps at a time, with one word to one sentence, and see the results, before deciding whether to take the next step. That last step is...

The Discipline Toolset

Most parents arrive at a Parents Toolshop® class with a list (mental or written) of the problems they are dealing with, seeking solutions.

As they apply what they learn, they check off items on that list.

By the time they get to the Discipline Toolset, most parents' lists are *gone*, because they've learned how to prevent and redirect problematic behavior! What's left are behaviors that the child is having difficulty learning or in being *self*-disciplined.



“An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure”

Whenever possible, you want children to know *how* to behave properly, the *value* of proper behavior, and the challenges problematic behavior can bring. Discipline is *not* about what the parent will do *to* the child if the child misbehaves. That's an *externally*-motivated reason to behave; you want *self*-disciplined children instead, right?

If children know *what* their behavior choices are and *why* proper behavior is important, then discipline simply becomes a matter of holding children accountable for their behavior choices by allowing them to experience those outcomes.



The Difference between Discipline and Punishment

Many people incorrectly use the terms “discipline” and “punishment” interchangeably.

- “**Discipline**” helps children learn a positive lesson from their poor behavior choices. It focuses on *solutions*.
- “**Punishment**” focuses on *blame* and imposes *suffering* (emotional or physical, mild to abusive) that shifts the focus from the child’s poor choice and the natural outcome, to who is in power doing this *to* them.



This need for children to suffer, at least a little, in order to “learn a lesson” is common parenting myth. In truth, imposing suffering actually prevents or detracts from learning, because it shifts the focus from the lesson to be learned to who is in control. It’s also hard to concentrate on learning if you are suffering! For example, imagine if you were handcuffed to your chair every time you read this book. Could you focus on learning?

This suffering doesn’t have to be *abusive*; it can be a mild as wanting to make sure children “feel bad” about what they did.

- With effective discipline, children might feel **regret**, which is accepting responsibility for one’s actions and learning from one’s mistakes. There is no negative effect on self-esteem or character. “I regret that mistake. I want to do better.”
- At the *least*, punishment imposes **guilt**, which is rooted in the need to *blame* others and make sure they “feel bad.” This can be unhealthy when repeated over and over, verbally or in one’s mind. “You *did* something ‘bad’. ...*Later*...Remember when *you did* ____?”
- Worst of all is **shame**, which does long-term damage to self-esteem and creates toxic biochemicals that can literally poison the body. “You did ____, so you *are* ‘bad’.”

Punishment focuses on the parent controlling children’s behavior. Since this is *external* control, children tend to only behave when the parent or threat of punishment is present. But “when the cat’s away, the mice will play.”

Discipline teaches children self-discipline. Parents are responsible for *teaching* appropriate behavior and *why* it’s important, *setting limits*, then *holding children accountable* for their poor behavior choices. Because these children (“mice”) *internalize* these lessons, they are *self-disciplined* and behave even when the “cat” is away.

Effective discipline, used skillfully, gets consistently-positive outcomes and has no risks.

Punishment gets inconsistent results has more potential for negative side effects and unintentional trauma. (Yes, the nervous system and brain perceive harsh words and mild physical punishment as trauma, even if that’s not the intent.)

So even if both *did* get the same results, your best option is to **use what gets the most-consistent results with the least risk, which is discipline, not punishment.**



Choosing the Discipline: Must Meet 4 R's

For a discipline plan or tool to be effective, it must meet the following "4 R's" (Adapted with permission from Dr. Jane Nelsen, author of *Positive Discipline*.):

1. **The discipline must be logically RELATED** to the problematic behavior, so the lesson makes sense. Otherwise, children think you just made it up to be mean. This is why always having the same discipline for every offense ("No TV!" or "No video games!") rarely works in the long-run. It doesn't make sense. If it's not obvious *to the child*, state the logical connection.

"Because you chose <problematic behavior>, it means this <the discipline> will happen, because <logical connection>."

Illogical: "You came home late, so you don't get any dessert."

Logical: "Because you chose to come home late, *you don't have time* to eat your dessert *before* you have to leave for baseball practice."

2. **The Discipline is REASONABLE.** There are two aspects to being reasonable:

- **The time should be the shortest**, giving children a chance to *show* they learned or changed. If you start small and the child violates the rule again, you can increase the time limit and still be reasonable.
- **The extent must only relate to fixing the mistake, not adding on extra suffering.** For example, if a child washes the dishes and misses a dish, a reasonable discipline is for the child to re-clean only the dirty dish. If a child has to clean *all* the dishes, she'll focus on her resentment toward the parent and punishment, how to get revenge or sneak clean dishes back to the shelf, rather than thorough cleaning.



3. **The Discipline is RESPECTFUL.** There are two aspects to being respectful.

- **The discipline itself needs to be respectful to both the parent and the child.** Punishment that imposes suffering is not respectful to the child. If a discipline violates *your* rights, it's not respectful to *you*.
- **The way you present the discipline needs to be respectful.** Avoid yelling, threats, a punishing attitude, or using it as revenge for not getting your way or being angry.

4. **The Discipline is REVEALED whenever possible.**

- Whenever possible, you want to **reveal** discipline in advance, before acting on it. Otherwise, children will think you are just making something up on the spot, just to be mean. They will react to *that*, rather than learning from the discipline.
- They can also surprise you with a behavior for which you haven't revealed a discipline. If it's not severe, you can say, "Next time..."

If a discipline is missing any one of these "4 R's", it turns it into punishment, and it won't be as



effective. It also brings on the 4 R's of punishment (also from Jane Nelsen, in *Positive Discipline*).

Using the example of being handcuffed to your chair while reading this book:

- **Resentment:** You'd resent me, wouldn't you?
- **Rebellion:** You'd be trying to get out of your handcuffs.
- **Retreat (sneaking to get away with it):** If I gave you a break you'd leave!
- **Revenge:** After leaving, you might get back at me for making you suffer.



If your child reacts in any of these ways, chances are one of the Four R's of Discipline was missing. But don't worry, children always give you another chance to learn from *your* mistakes!

THE LANGUAGE OF EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

Before you discipline, teach children their behavior choices and the outcomes. The value/benefit is how it will benefit themselves or others, *not* a bribe. The negative outcome is not the discipline; it's your reason for wanting them to not do it (SHARP-RV RV).

"It's important that you <describe positive behavior>, because <value/benefit>. If you <negative behavior> it could <SHARP-RV RV issue>."

Example: "If you (ride your bike on the sidewalk), you will (be safe).
If you were to (ride it in the street), you (could get hit by a car)."

When you reveal discipline, present it as a choice that determines the outcome. Say:

**"If you choose to (problematic behavior), I'll know you've decided to... (discipline)."
If a child would lose a privilege or item, instead of saying, "I'll take it away," say,
"I'll know you've decided to... give up (the item/privilege) until (short time)."
OR "Your behavior tells me you aren't ready to be responsible for <privilege>."**

Example: "If you *choose to* ride your bike in the street,
I'll know *you've decided to* put away your bike."
Or "Riding your bike in the street tells me *you aren't ready*
to be responsible for having a bike."

This wording reinforces who will be responsible for the loss and keeps you out of the "bad-guy" role "taking" it away. It also starts out with a short, reasonable time period, you can increase the time, if needed, and still be reasonable.

If children freak out, use this freak-out phrase (what you say when they freak out):

**"You'll have another chance (when, reasonable short time)
to show me you can (positive behavior you want to see)."**



Which Tools to Avoid?

When you use less-effective tools to discipline, they quickly become power-and-control weapons and children think you are using them just to make them do what you want them to do. This can start or escalate power struggles. It can also cause children to feel manipulated and hurt, which can lead to resentment and revenge.

Surprisingly, the three most commonly used tools *intended* to be used for discipline are actually punishment, super-easy to turn into punishment, or not even discipline tools at all!

Evie and Shelley illustrated the typical problems with these punishments. Here are more:

Spanking (Punishment, not Discipline)

Spanking does not and can *never* fit the 4 R's, because hitting others is disrespectful. It is a form of "corporal *punishment*," not an "effective *discipline*" tool, so it doesn't meet the criteria for being included in the *Discipline* Toolset.



While spanking can get children to obey out of fear, countless studies have shown there can be possible negative long-term risks. (See the Action Guide for some links to the research.) Since you have *dozens* of other tools for *preventing* the need for discipline and for disciplining effectively, without *any* negative long-term *risks*, we won't discuss spanking further.

Restrictions/Grounding/Taking Away Privileges (Easy to Misuse)



Restrictions *must be* logically related to an abuse of a privilege. Avoid restricting rights (i.e., food, shelter, the right to be treated with respect), responsibilities (i.e., team sports) or privileges children already earned (i.e., a school field trip). **What *is* restricted *must be* logically related to the abuse of that privilege.** For example, if a child rides his bike in the street, you wouldn't take away a video games.

- **Progressive restrictions** increase freedom as children master their skills. Example: John gets his bike back *after dinner*, to show he will ride on the sidewalk. If he rides the bike in the street again, it goes away until *tomorrow*. He'll get another chance then.
- **Regressive restrictions** need to be *rarely* used, after major infractions, to severely restrict freedom and gradually reinstate privileges as children restore trust. Example: John rode his bike beyond the neighborhood, crossing a busy, dangerous street he knows he's not allowed to cross. At first, he gives up his bike *and* can't go anywhere (the most restrictive). If all goes well and he doesn't sneak, he gets his bike back, but stays on his own street. If that goes well, he can ride around the block. And so on, until he has his full privileges back.



Time-Outs (Are Not a Discipline Tool & Easy to Misuse)

A mother in one of my parenting classes said, "Time-outs have become this generation's spanking." What she meant was that when many parents were young, spanking was the main discipline tool. Parents used it as their *only* tool, for just about *everything*. Today, many parents don't want to spank, so they've replaced it with time-out, but continue to overuse and misuse it.



When time-outs are used for discipline, they usually become punishment. Most adults have the mistaken idea that the point of sending children to time-out is to make the child suffer for their problematic behavior. "You go to your room (or chair) and think about what you did." The tone of voice usually implies, "and you suffer." Imposing suffering is punishment, not discipline, so it usually brings on the 4 R's of punishment instead of "teaching" from mistakes.

Traditional time-outs are used in ways that start power struggles or revenge cycles: the *parent* decides the child needs to go into a time-out and *makes* the child leave. The child can't play or talk or *do* anything, just sit still, in what's usually an uncomfortable location. It ends after one minute for every year of the child's age. It can re-start if the child moves or talks.

Now for the big surprise — **time-outs are not even a "discipline" tool! Timeouts can be an effective anger-management tool.** This is a completely different way of looking at time-outs than what most parents are used to, as so many people misuse and overuse for discipline.

Think of it this way: **Timeouts are what you use to help you and your child calm down first, so you can reveal the discipline in a calm way and your child will be calm enough to learn the lesson from the discipline. Timeouts are not the discipline itself.**

You don't have to use "time-outs" or even call calming-down-periods by that name. IF you *choose* to use them *at all*, then know *when* and *how* to use them appropriately -- to teach self-control and self-calming skills. Here are suggestions that blend concepts from the 4 R's of Discipline and the Keep Your Cool Toolset:

- **Develop a plan in advance.** Teach children during a happy time about the value of a cooling-off period. **Use F-A-X Listening to find a personalized plan** that includes the remaining elements.
- **When to use?** The purpose of a time-out is to help children regain control, so **it is only logically related and appropriate to use them when the child has lost self-control** or there is extremely disruptive behavior. If this is not the case, use a different tool.
- **Where to go: select a location based on the child's recharge style** (Chapter 9: Keep Your Cool Toolset).
 - Children who are *external rechargers* get more upset when alone. These are the children who escalate or try to follow you around during traditional time-outs. These children often calm down better if they can *see* others, without being disruptive.



- Children who are *internal rechargers* calm down better by themselves.
- If you force a child to stay in a chair or room, it shifts the focus from what they did and their responsibility for calming down to who is in power. This turns the time-out into a power struggle or punishment, which reduces its effectiveness.
- Some parents hesitate to use a child's room for fear the child will view the bedroom as a prison. If the child is an *internal recharger* and the goal is for the child to have some quiet time, children won't see it as punishment. If the child gets destructive, it's a sign the child has *physical* anger energy and their energy is literally "bouncing off the walls." See suggestions below for how to channel that energy.
- **What to do: Teach children *how* to regain self-control using activities that channel the type of anger energy they experience.**
 - Children who experience **verbal anger energy** can channel it through creative expressions, like talking, singing, drawing, or coloring.
 - Children who experience **physical anger energy** will have a hard time sitting still and need to move. Let them go outside to throw a ball or "run out their angries" out.
 - If children experience **verbal and physical energy**, give them clay or drawing materials or some other way to *physically* express themselves.
 - **Allow the child to be active or play.** If children cannot disperse their energy constructively, it will explode destructively. If children start playing, it shows that they have regained self-control and might be ready for some problem solving.
- **Present them *respectfully* as a choice.** A child can choose to settle down or take some time out. Suggest the time-out in a kind and firm manner, followed by the encouraging instructions to come back when the child is ready.
- **The time limit needs to be *reasonable*.** Avoid timers; they turn time-outs into power struggles. If children have calmed down but parents won't let them out, children fall apart. Let time-outs end when children have regained self-control and agree to act appropriately. If children return before they are calm, describe the behavior you want to see. Learning to self-calm can take time, so see if they need help carrying out or modifying their plan.
- **When a time-out is over:**
 - If the child just needs to calm down, let it go and don't call attention to their behavior.
 - If the problem is serious or needs a solution or discipline, wait until both of you have calmed down and then use problem solving to discuss a solution.



Again, you can completely discard traditional "time-outs" and *never use them!* You do, however, want to teach your children anger and stress management skills, so they can calm themselves *before* discussing discipline. This can *prevent* the need for discipline *and* affect how well children *learn* from the discipline.



The Top Five Best Discipline Tools

The Discipline Toolset has 8 practical tools that easily fit the 4 R's, so you can avoid using common but ineffective punishment tactics. Of them, **five tools match the five types of problematic behavior AND are the five *most effective* discipline tools that meet the 4 R's.**

Once you know which type of problematic behavior you are facing, there will be a matching discipline tool that is likely the best to try first. The following descriptions include *why* certain discipline tools work best for each of the five types of problem behavior.

1. Show children how to make amends.

For example, if they break it, they fix it. This is probably the best *overall* discipline tool, because it is easiest to fit the 4 R's. It's *especially good for PU behavior*, though, since it's caused by a lack of skills, and this tool helps children *learn* from their mistakes.



2. Alter the focus of the choices as issues shift.

As you might guess, if choices within limits is **the best tool for preventing and redirecting power struggles**, using a variation of it for discipline would be a consistent, meaningful option. ***It's ineffective to keep offering the same choice, over and over, repeating yourself. Instead, take the child's choice, whether it's expressed through their words or behavior, and follow through with it.***

Simply state your bottom line and their choice(s). Then say, "Let me know what you decide," or "If you can't decide I'll decide for you and you might not like what I choose." Observe their verbal or behavioral response and then simply follow through by taking action!

For example, to prevent a child from being noisy in a restaurant, bring activities. The first choice you give could be to sit quietly at the table (bottom line) and either color or play a game (choices within the limit). If the child continues being disruptive, *their behavior is showing you they've decided* to do neither! The *new* choice might be to either sit quietly at the table or leave. If they continue being noisy, *their behavior is showing you they've decided* to leave. *Now* the choice is *how* they will leave, walk out holding your hand or be carried. If you take the child's hand and the child goes limp, like a rag doll, you say, "I see you've decided to be carried."

By following through, consistently, children learn cause-and-effect. They also learn it's *their choice* whether the situation escalates and *can't blame you for being mean, which helps them avoid self-responsibility*. Yes, you may need to get your food to-go, but if you don't then children learn you won't follow through. Practice at home before giving another chance.



3. Take action.

This involves deciding what *you* will do, not what you will *make children* do, which can escalate into physical punishment. Respectfully follow through, with or without words, with reasonable, related actions. **This tool is best for attention-seeking PO behavior**, because the more you stay involved, the more attention (a payoff) you are giving. Simply reveal what you intend to do, or not if doing something would give more attention to the behavior. Then follow through.

For example: Let's say you have a teenager who's bigger or taller than you. If he's being disrespectful, you can't say "Go to your room" *and* enforce it! Instead, Acknowledge his feelings, "I really want to listen to you." Then Set limits for yourself, "I just have a hard time listening when I'm being spoken to disrespectfully." Then Redirect the behavior and Reveal discipline, "I'm willing to listen when you are willing to talk calmly." Then leave the room.

4. Use two-party problem solving

Use this tool to prevent, reveal, or decide discipline. "I am concerned about (inappropriate behavior). What can we do about that?" Use the B.E.D. problem-solving process you learned in F-A-X Listening, with the worksheet, except *you* are the other person who shares feelings, ideas and agrees to the solution.

The fact that you are using F-A-X Listening is your clue that this discipline tool is best to use with PO behavior for revenge. Resolve their hurt first, then address *how* they expressed their hurt. Part of the "plan" can be how they can make amends for who or what they hurt. Mixing and matching tools is fine, if appropriate to the situation. This is different than giving a double discipline or layering on additional punishment.

5. Allow natural consequences

These predictably and quickly happen if you do nothing to stop them. For example, if they refuse to wear a raincoat, they get wet. If they don't finish their meal, they feel hungry.

Simply reveal the natural consequence, then allow it to happen. Avoid interfering or rescuing. When it happens, avoid saying, "I told you so!" Instead, ask, "What did you learn?" Or "What might you choose next time?"

Only use this tool if there *are* natural consequences that are quick and safe. For example: there is no *natural* consequence for being late. It could take months before not brushing teeth causes cavities, and jumping out windows can be deadly. So choose a different discipline tool.

This is the best discipline tool to use for PO behavior for the goal of Giving Up, because children are *so* discouraged the other discipline tools could feel like punishment. Even revealing them could discourage the child further and escalate the situation.



Double-Discipline

“Double discipline” isn’t a tool; it’s **the unfair practice of following up someone else’s discipline with your own, so children “pay twice.”** This often happens when children get in trouble at school. “Paying twice” for the same “crime” is unreasonable, unfair, and illogical, so it will seem like punishment to the child, and bring on the 4 R’s of Punishment.

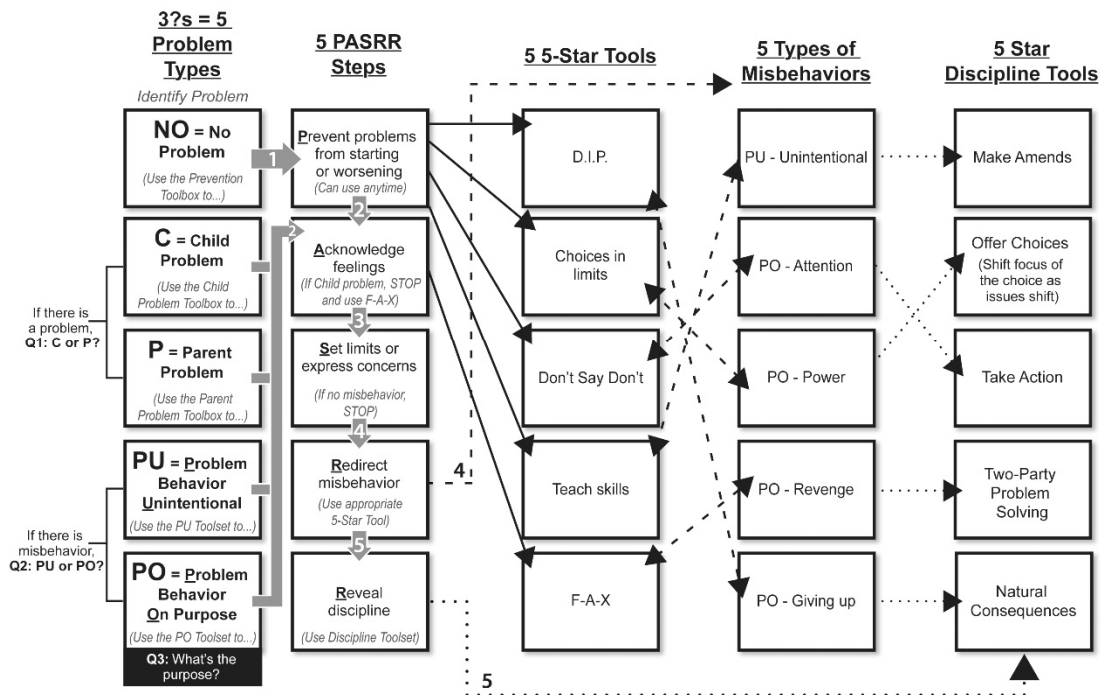
Instead, **back up the teacher by using problem solving to discuss** what the child did, why the school disciplined the way they did, that the child learned. This helps you be supportive to both the child and other disciplinarian, without rescuing or siding with either one.

The *only* time “double-discipline” is appropriate is for lying. Lying involves *two* problematic behaviors, what the child did wrong (what they lied about) and the lie itself. Each may have a different “goal.” For example, a child might ruin a borrowed outfit *on purpose* (goal of revenge), but then lie to avoid punishment (goal of power). The original advanced *The Parents Toolshop®* book has an entire section on Lying, which you can opt in to get from the Action Guide.

Pulling It All Together

Now you know exactly what to say and do in any situation, using the PASRR Formula to choose the best discipline tool for the type of problem behavior you are facing! Then all you need to do is follow through! So let’s complete the final column on the Universal Blueprint® flowchart. Yay!

Summary of Universal Blueprint®



Universal Blueprint® updated graphic ©2015 Jody Johnston Pawel, LSW, CFLE Parents Toolshop®



When you use the Toolboxes and Toolsets you've learned *in order*, you have a decision-making, problem-solving process you can use again and again for each situation you encounter.



Just start at “START HERE” and follow the arrows, using the Foundation-Building and Prevention Tools *all the time*, to prevent challenges from starting.

When there is a problem, you can start at the open toolbox in the bottom right corner and follow the arrows through each step of the PASRR Formula it is appropriate to take, based on the type of problem it is.

(The Action Guide has a link to the image above, so you can save, zoom in, and/or print it.)



You will also fulfill:

YOUR MISSION

- Prevent the problem from starting, using the Top Five Five-star tools.

WHEN THERE IS A PROBLEM

STOP AND THINK for 1-10 seconds (Breathe deep, using Keep Your Cool Toolset)

PLAN a helpful response for what to:

SAY

- Acknowledge the *child's* feelings or perspective FIRST.
- Set limits or assertively and respectfully express *your* concerns

DO

- Redirect the problematic behavior
- Reveal discipline

DELIVER it effectively

FOLLOW THROUGH

This response can easily be *three sentences* total. You can say all of them at once or on three different occasions, picking up where you left off each time.

Saying three strategically-different statements is completely different from repeating yourself three times or counting 1-2-3! You are simply moving through the PASRR formula, giving a chance for each step to work. It is perfectly fine to not say the entire formula at once! It works either way.

The PASRR formula is also likely to be fewer words than you would need to say if punishment causes a blow-up, meltdown, or simply doesn't work and needs to be done over and over again.



"I don't need to discipline as often as I thought I did. Before, I used discipline this much (holding his arms wide apart) and the rest of the skills only this much (holding his hands in front of his chest). Now, I only need to use discipline this much (his hands in front of his chest) and I use the rest of the tools this much (holding his arms wide apart)." --- Bryan Belden



Sample PASRR Formula Response

Now that you know The Parents Toolshop® PASRR formula, you can get access to *dozens* of examples of PASRR responses to the most common challenges parents face. They are available through the Action Guide, website articles, and membership resources.

Here's just one, to illustrate how *one parent's answers* to the *three questions* determined the path to take in *this* situation.

Gene, 5, was playing with a stick, hitting the branches of a neighbor's tree. There are branches all over the ground when the neighbor comes to Gene's father to complain.



Type of problem: PU. Gene meant to hit the tree, but he was just playing. He probably didn't realize he would damage the tree. Once more than a few branches were knocked off, he realized he was hurting the tree and stopped. He probably didn't think about picking up the branches or confessing his wrong. Only if Gene hated the neighbor and was getting revenge would you consider this to be intentional (PO) behavior.

Prevent the problem: Teach children in a NO-problem time that they are to treat all people and things with respect. They should think about the effects of their actions and make amends for their mistakes. These rules are for life, not just for any particular incident. If children are taught these lessons, it will reduce intentionally destructive behavior. You may not, however, be able to pre-vent unintentional mistakes like Gene's.

Acknowledge feelings, Set limits, and Redirect behavior: "I know how much you enjoy playing with sticks, but you need to be thinking about what you are hitting. You need to keep your stick away from people or things that could get hurt."

Reveal discipline: This incident seems to have risen unexpectedly, with no chance to reveal discipline ahead of time. Nevertheless, some discipline is indicated. Say, "You'll need to take responsibility for the damage to Mr. X's tree." Then have Gene pick up the branches and apologize to his neighbor. For the time being, Gene should not play in that neighbor's yard, until he can show he can play with sticks responsibly.



What's Next?

Whew! This is a packed Toolbox! Discipline is quite a can of worms and it's hard to open it without raising more issues than we can explore here. There are issues like:

- The common mindsets that lead to “making children suffer” with punishment,
- The long-term outcomes of punishment versus discipline,
- The pros and cons of specific punishment tools like spanking and threats,
- Why using timeouts as a discipline tool won't work and why using them as a calming-down tool will *not* reinforce the behavior.
- And, of course, the fine details of using the top five discipline tools to their highest potential and the other discipline tools you can use.

Depending on how much information you want, you can learn more in the Advanced programs and resources.

Given that this is just a quick, short *Jump Start Guide*, we obviously can't dive in as deeply as we can in our workshops. Do you see, though, why jumping right to discipline causes you to miss out on all kinds of important opportunities to:

- Prevent the problem from starting or worsening?
- Keep you and the child calm, cool and collected?
- Clearly, respectfully and assertively communicate your concerns?
- Teach skills or show children how to meet their goals through positive behavior?
- Hold children *more* accountable without imposing suffering or having to be the bad guy?

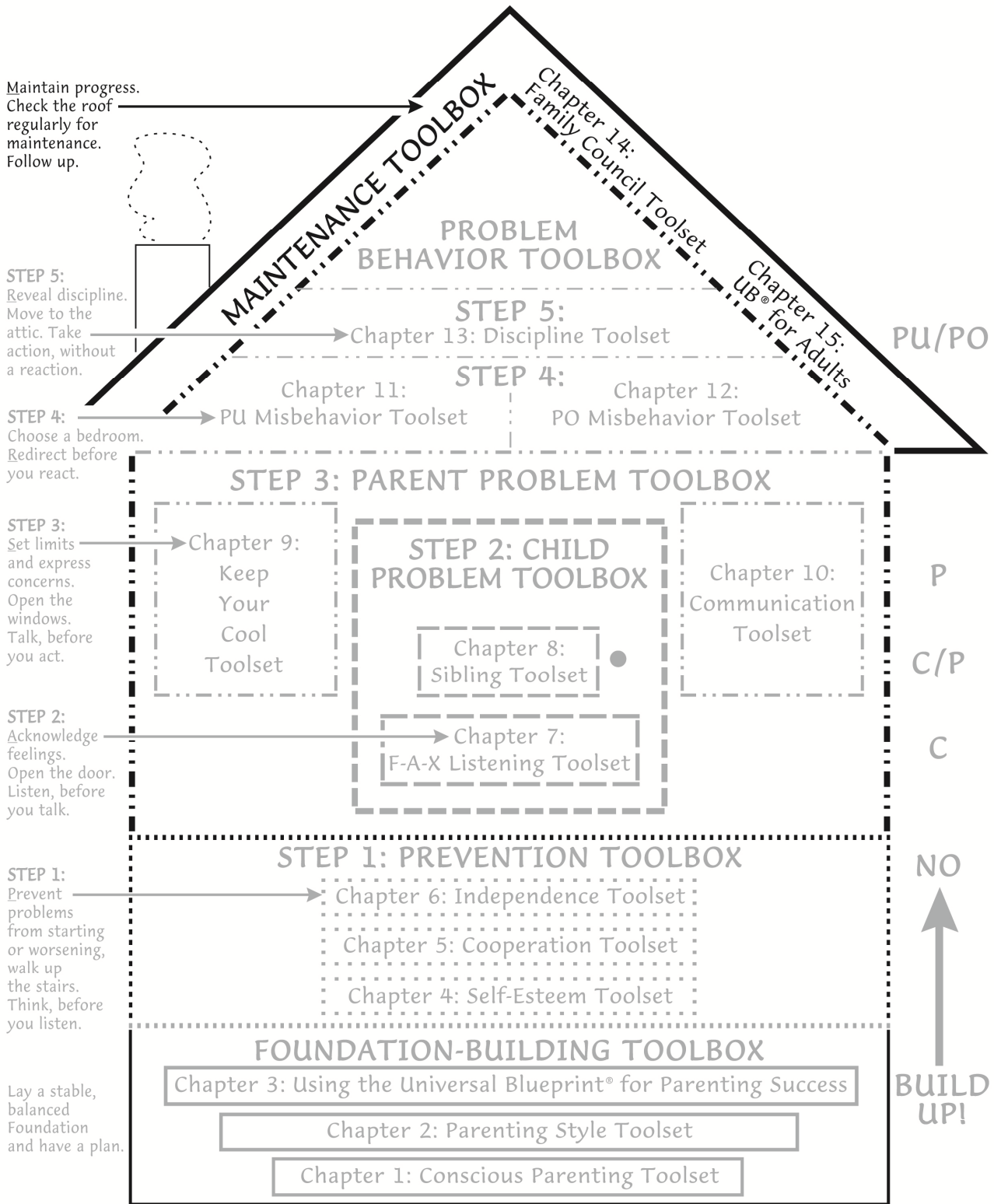
Now that you have the whole PASRR Formula, the last Toolbox will look at maintaining progress, “paying forward” the skills you have learned, and learning how you can use these tools to improve *all* your relationships, even with adults!

Action Steps

Go to the Action Guide where you will get additional information and resources on discipline, think more about Evie and Shelley's discussion in the opening scenario, get a PASRR Formula Decision-Making Worksheet and practice exercises for planning appropriate discipline for situations *you* are facing.



Section VI: The Maintenance Toolbox



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The Maintenance Toolbox

Congratulations! By reading the *Parents Toolshop® Jump Start Guide* in order, you know the whole PASRR formula, including how to use the basic tools in the Prevention, Child problem, Parent problem and Problem Behavior Toolboxes. **You now have everything you need to plan an effective customized response to any parenting challenge.**

By now, you are probably seeing a *lot* of progress in a *lot* of areas, so you want to maintain that progress. For that, you'll use the final Toolbox: The Maintenance Toolbox. If you *aren't* seeing progress in a particular area, you will want to know why, which you'll also learn in this Toolbox.

The two Toolsets in the Maintenance Toolbox are:

- **Family Councils Toolset** which allows you to use, model and teach all the skills you've learned in a forum for making decisions, solving problems, and developing closer family relationships.
- **The Three C's**, which help you:
 - Be **Consistent**, including the 6 reasons you might not get results.
 - Deal with **Criticism** by using the Universal Blueprint® in Adult Relationships, and
 - Maintain your **Confidence**



Chapter 14: The Family Council Toolset

Fred and Tammy are both hesitant about using family councils, but for different reasons.

When Fred was growing up, they had family meetings where the kids would vote on decisions. Sometimes he and his two siblings were able to “stack the vote” against their parents, so they’d be sure to get what they wanted.

Other times, there were emotionally-charged arguments, losing votes, and then the losers sabotaged the decisions.

His older brother finally refused to attend, so his parents punished him by leaving him out of the activities they planned in the meetings.



Tammy also has bad memories of the “family meetings” she had growing up. Now and then, her dad would call a family meeting, usually when there was a problem.

He’d sit at his desk or the head of the kitchen table and then lecture them about the problem and reveal his decision or solution, along with any related punishment.

It got to the point that every time she and her siblings heard the term “family meeting” they’d roll their eyes, cringe and wonder, “What’s wrong now?,” “Who’s going to get in trouble?,” and “I wonder how long this lecture will last?”

Family councils can be one of the most meaningful times families spend together, deepening their relationships in ways that just can’t be done “on the run” or during typical daily life.

Unfortunately, experiences like Fred and Tammy’s are all too common among families who try to have “family meetings” or councils. There are several ways well-intended family councils (or meetings) can go sour and leave everyone feeling worse. So this chapter offers a few of the most important basic guidelines to follow to avoid these common pitfalls.



Top Ten Tips for Having Great Family Councils

How would you like to take all the skills you've learned and "Pay Them Forward," so your *children* learn them? Well, Family Councils are the way to do that, because they use *all* the tools in the Universal Blueprint®. By modeling these skills, children learn how to use the skills, too! After mastering the skills *within* the family, children can be a team player and leader, or a follower, if they choose, in other relationships or group settings, like school or work.

The original *The Parents Toolshop*® book offers 16 suggestions for having productive family councils. Here are the top ten most important tips for avoiding common problems and pitfalls.

1. **Set aside a *regular time* for family councils.** If you only meet when there's a problem, children will view family councils negatively and resist participating.
2. **Whoever is part of the family can be involved in the council.** For example, if you have elderly relatives who live in the house, they're welcome to come. If they are affected by a decision, they have a right to be involved in that decision.
3. **Keep a balanced, cooperative atmosphere.** Keep seating arrangements equal eye level.
 - Avoid lecturing and judging; it causes resentment and rebellion.
 - Avoid an "us and them" attitude, with parents on one side and children on the other, especially when there is an only child.
 - Everyone can share opinions and feelings, listening respectfully, without criticism.
 - Make sure children's issues get equal attention. If they don't offer opinions or ideas, ask for their input.
4. **Have some structure that's age-appropriate.**

If you have younger children, you want a more informal, fun format --- with the fun being purposeful. For example, the book you read or movie that you watch might teach a value.

With older children, be a little more formal, where they're involved in the discussions and decisions. You can still do fun activities, but want to start addressing issues they care about and want a say in deciding.

If you have a family with both younger and older children, let the younger children play while the older children make decisions. Then end with family fun.

5. **Have family councils start positive and end positive.** Put serious topics in the middle.
6. **Keep council meetings brief.** A good length of time for a family council is around twenty minutes, depending on the ages of the children.



7. Get each family member involved. If each family member has a role in the meeting, they will be more likely to attend and feel their participation is important. By rotating the roles, each family member can learn the tools you have just learned. **The main roles you want to have are:**

1. **The Leader** starts and ends the meeting on time, makes sure all opinions are heard, and helps keep members focused on the issues.
2. **The Recorder** takes notes during the meeting of ideas generated in problem-solving sessions, issues discussed, and decisions or plans the family makes. Young children who can't write can use a microphone.
3. **The Icebreaker** decides what positive opening activity to use. This starts every family council with people talking, feeling, and thinking positively.
4. **The Anchor** selects a positive closing activity. This ensures that the family council will always end on a positive note.



If there are fewer than four people, each person can take more than one role. If there are more than four people, have co-leaders or add roles, like Topic Discussion Leader, Snack Planner, Game Planner, Entertainment Leader or Lesson Planner.

8. **Only discuss issues that involve or affect the entire family.** Issues such as one child's bedtime or discipline are *not* appropriate for the entire family to make.
9. **Make consensus decisions: no voting allowed.** Consensus decisions are when everyone agrees. Each person might not get 100% of what they want, but agrees to the decision. You want consensus so you don't have losers who sabotage the decisions.
10. **Get practice making decisions** before solving problems or making emotionally-charged decisions. ***In your first few meetings, you just want to decide how you want to do your family councils and make decisions.*** For example, "When do you want to meet?" and "How long do we want to meet?"

After the first month or so, once you all have practice making consensus decisions about topics and issues the *children* raise, you can start approaching issues that involve *parent* issues (safety, health, appropriateness, rights, property, rules and values) *and* involve or affect all the family members.



The Benefits of Regular Family Councils

When you **set aside a regular time** for family councils, your family will:

- **Develop deeper relationships** than they would have otherwise. Parents and children talk about more than what's for dinner, what happened that day, and who is driving to practice.

The issue really isn't whether you think you talk *often* enough without family councils. Chances are, you aren't talking about the same *issues* and developing the same *depth* of relationships, unless you are setting aside time regularly to build your relationships.



- **Avoid potential problems**, by discussing rules and issues *before* there's a problem.
- **Get better follow through on agreements**, by listening with respect to children's opinions and involving them in making decisions that affect them.
- **Have a greater sense of teamwork**. When members feel like they make unique contributions to the family team, they work together more cooperatively and supportively.
- **Increase the self-esteem of each family member**, who feels important, both as a respected individual and needed member of the family.
- **Experience decreased rivalry and competition**. Power struggles diminish between parents and children and among siblings. Since family councils have rules of conduct, siblings take a break from teasing and criticizing. (Maybe the only break that week!) They have opportunities to compliment each other and build on the strengths of their relationships. They learn to work together and establish a deeper bond.
- **See improved behavior**. When children feel they belong, can express their feelings, are respected, and get a say, they naturally behave better and/or misbehave less.
- **Develop life skills**. Anyone who participates in a family council learns important life skills, which are useful in the family, in the business world and other relationships. For example: children learn how to manage time, make decisions, be accountable, listen and communicate effectively, and plan activities.

What's Next?

The *final chapter* is next, where you can start looking ahead at next steps in your growth.

Action Steps

Before you go to the last chapter, head over to the Action Guide, to get additional details and resources on Family Councils and review them *before* you have your first meeting.



Chapter 15: The Three C's: Consistency, handling Criticism & Confidence

Ron and Becky have used the Universal Blueprint® to resolve a lot of challenges with their three children, ages 3, 8 and 13. It took some time for them and their children to create new habits, but they haven't been happier and life at home has never gone smoother.

Are they perfect parents with perfect children? No, of course not. Challenges still arise, but now they know they can always find a solution, together, that will bring them closer.



They know their family and friends operate differently, because they sometimes criticize their parenting and offer advice --- and they don't like a lot of the advice they are given.

For example, at a picnic their energetic son said something smart-alecky. Becky responded by saying, "Whoa! You're so excited that sounded kind of rude. Try asking again, respectfully." His son asked politely then trotted back to his cousins and neighbors. When Becky turned back to the group of adults, here are some of the comment she got:

- *"Kids today are so rude. You need to take away all their privileges, so they will start appreciating what they have. Then they will be more respectful."*
- *"All I need to do is count to 3 or give three strikes. I rarely get to 3."*
- *"If they got a good smack now and then they'd show you some respect!"*
- *"Just send him to his room and don't let him come out until he can show respect."*
- *"I don't tolerate any sass. You need to show him who's boss and lay down the law."*

The list of unhelpful advice goes on and on. Ron's mom is particularly challenging. She's critical and condescending towards Becky. Ron won't speak up or support Becky; he says, "She'll never change. You just have to get used to her."

Ron and Becky want to parent more as a team and more consistently, but when they are out in public Becky often caves in, to appear nice in front of others, and Ron yells more, so his family doesn't accuse him of being too soft.

Would you like your parenting progress to stick? Are you dealing with criticism from others, getting bad advice or finding yourself being inconsistent with your partner or in high-pressure situations? Then this final Toolset is for you.



The 3 C's: Consistency, handling Criticism, Confidence

Last, but not least, we close out this *Jump Start Guide* of The Parent's Toolshop® with the final Toolset that shows you how to maintain *your* progress. It's called...

The Three C's, which are reminders to:

- Be **Consistent**,
- Deal with **Criticism** by Using the Universal Blueprint® in Adult Relationships, and
- Maintain your **Confidence**

Be Consistent

The Myth of Consistency is that you do whatever you said you were going to do *no matter what*. If you overreact and say you are going to do something outrageous that goes against your overall parenting plan, you *aren't* being consistent if you follow through!



True Consistency is getting back on the “path” of your parenting plan when you make mistakes, stray or overreact. By apologizing, admitting you overreacted, and *adjusting* your response (neither digging nor giving in), you model to children how to handle and fix mistakes.

It's important that you initiate the apology and course correction. If you don't, either you'll dig in and destroy your progress or relationships *or* you'll end up giving in when your children protest your unfairness. Then they'll think *they* convinced you to change your mind. Instead, say “Erase” or “Rewind,” moving your hands in a circular motion, and start over. **In parenting, you always get unlimited do-overs, as long as you are the one admitting the mistake.**

When you are away from home, it's important to follow the same parenting plan that you use at home. If you are inconsistent, children learn there are times they can get away with problematic behavior, which will lead them to test you more often.

When you use the same parenting plan everywhere, your children always know the limits and are better behaved, even when you aren't there or the rules are different! Imagine another family allows their child do to something your child isn't allowed to do, like watch an R-rated movie. You want your child to still follow *your* rules, right?

Consistency among parenting partners is also important. You don't need to be identical; just both in the Balanced Parenting Style, following the same parenting plan (Universal Blueprint®) for finding solutions, which you can implement in your own unique personality.

Here are a few quick tips for building teamwork and handling disagreements:

- Agree on a plan for common problems that arise.
- Agree to disagree respectfully and not to sabotage each other. If the other parent isn't abusive or doesn't grossly violate the child's rights, you can back off and not interfere.
- If you choose to get involved, back up your partner with your skills.



What if You're Not Getting Results?

The tools you've learned have been used by tens of thousands of parents, recommended by professionals, and have several decades of research showing their long-term effectiveness. So by this point most parents have gotten great results, resolving *several* parenting challenges!

Since this is the shortest summary of the Universal Blueprint® problem-solving system, you might *not* see the same results as those who read the advanced Parent's Toolshop® books or attend the advanced training programs we offer on-line or with a certified trainer.

These tools *do* work, though, both in the short-term and long-run. You just need to avoid the most common mistakes parents make when using them. Or, worded in the positive, make sure you **check for these six reasons if you aren't getting results:**

1. ***Did you choose the most-effective tool for the job?***
Use the three questions and PASRR formula to plan a response you think will best meet your goal. If the response doesn't work, check to see that you've correctly identified the type of problem you are facing and chosen the best tool for that type.
2. ***Did you use the tools in the proper order?*** Some tools work best if you use them before or after other tools. For example, before you discipline, you must break any power or revenge cycles, or the discipline will feed the cycle. By following *all* the PASRR formula, *in order*, without skipping steps, you will always plan the most effective response.
3. ***Did you use the tool properly?*** Many parenting tools are easy to misuse. If a tool doesn't seem to work, consider *how* you used it. Pay attention to your attitude, body language, tone of voice, words and actions; they *all* influence how your message is received.
4. ***Did you use the tools consistently, long enough for change to occur?*** Instead of trying a different approach each time the same problem occurs, use the PASRR formula to create a response that has the best chance of succeeding. Then use it consistently for several days or weeks. Change can take place on the inside, without any obvious change on the outside. If it has taken some time for a problem to develop, it may take some time to change. The child may need time to rebuild trust, break old habits and master proper behavior. Look for small changes to reassure yourself that progress *is* occurring.
5. ***Did you examine your beliefs? They can change the effectiveness of the tool.*** Become more aware of inaccurate or unhealthy subconscious beliefs that might interfere with your effectiveness. Replace these beliefs with healthier alternatives.
6. ***Did you look for a deeper problem?*** Immediate change is unlikely when a problem behavior is severe, has lasted a long time, or is the result of a medical condition or deep emotional hurt. Ineffective parenting only makes matters worse. Effective parenting can take you far, but some challenges may be beyond what parents can reasonably be expected to handle. Seek professional help, such as an assessment or therapy.



Handling Criticism with the Universal Blueprint® for Adult Relationships

When dealing with criticism or difficult, negative or toxic people, you want to plan a helpful response, using the Universal Blueprint® for *Adult Relationships*. The previous section briefly summarized how you can use each Toolset with adults. This section lays out each *step*, showing the few minor exceptions or modifications you might need to make.



The Four Questions to Ask

In *adult relationships*, you need to ask yourself **one new question right at the beginning**. That answer will help you answer the three “universal” problem-type-identification questions, know which steps to take in your response, and which tools to choose.

Question 1: Is this a Peer (Adult-to-Adult) or Leadership Relationship?

Is it a Leadership Relationship?

OR

Is it a Peer (Adult-to-Adult) Relationship?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/Child • Teacher/Student • Therapist/Client • Professional/Client • Business Leader/Staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couples • Friends • Extended Family • Neighbors • Colleagues |
|---|--|

Then move to the original three questions, to identify the problem *type*. In adult relationships, there’s only *one* thing different and it’s how you answer the next question.

Questions 2-4: Identify the Type of Problem:

2. Is This the Other Person’s Problem or My Problem?

Since no one is a child in adult relationships, this is just simply reworded. If you think about the hand signals you’ve learned, where you point is still the same: away from or toward yourself.



In Adult Relationships:
The **Other person’s problem** is similar to a **Child problem** and
My problem is like a **Parent problem**



Answering this question in adult relationships is similar, but instead of P-E-S-S “Child issues,” it’s “My problem” if these issues are involved: PEWS--Peers, Emotions, Work and Significant others.



In Parent/Adult & Child Relationships

Child problems involve PESS:

- Peers,
- Emotions,
- School,
- Siblings

OR In Adult-to-Adult Relationships

Other adults' problems involve PEWS:

- Peers,
- Emotions,
- Work,
- Significant other

In adult relationships, it's "your problem" (or "my problem," when pointing to yourself) if it involves certain types of issues that can arise in the two major types of relationships.

- *In adult relationships where someone is the "leader,"* you still have all SHARP-RV issues.
- *When it's a peer-to-peer adult relationship,* you take off the "RV," because other adults have a right to set and follow their own rules and to have different values, even if you're in the same company or family. If those rules or values violate *your* safety, rights, or property, however, then it *would* be your problem.

Is it a Leadership Relationship?

Your SHARP-RV issues:

- Safety,
- Health,
- Appropriateness,
- Rights,
- Property,
- **Rules,**
- **Values**

OR Is it Peer (Adult-to-Adult)?

Your SHARP issues:

- Safety,
- Health,
- Appropriateness,
- Rights,
- Property

3. If there's Problem behavior, ask "Is it Unintentional (PU) or On purpose (PO)?"



Identifying whether adult problem behavior is Unintentional or On purpose is exactly the same in adult relationships. You will find, however, that factors like developmental stages won't be as common, unless something caused developmental delays. Personality traits and lack of skills will usually be more common reasons for unintentional problem behavior in adults.



4. If the Problem behavior is "On purpose, ask "What's the purpose?"

When adults seem to be *deliberately* behaving in a problematic way, the same "4 Goals of Misbehavior" apply, as well as how to identify them:

- Some adults always want to be the center of *attention*.
- Some adults are *power-hungry* and controlling, telling you how to live your life or what to do, even though they have no right to tell you that.
- You see that a lot of *revenge* in divorce and post-divorce relationships.
- A lot of people *give up* on a relationship and end it after exhausting the other three goals.



Plan a Helpful Response: Follow the Five PASRR/PASRS Steps

Now that you know what *type* of problem you are facing, it's time to plan a helpful response.

There are still five steps to an effective response in adult relationships. The first four steps are identical to what you learned in parenting, but the last step is different *if* it is a peer-to-peer adult relationship.

A Leadership Relationship?

- Prevent the problem from starting or worsening
- Acknowledge the other person's feelings first
- Set limits/boundaries or express concerns
- Redirect problematic behavior
- Reveal Discipline

OR

Is it Peer (Adult-to-Adult)

- Prevent the problem from starting or worsening
- Acknowledge the other person's feelings first
- Set limits/boundaries or express concerns
- Redirect problematic behavior
- Solve the problem, jointly or alone

Solve the Problem: The tools you use in this final step depend on the *type* of relationship it is and how willing the other person is to be involved in solving the problem:

If you are in a leadership position in the adult relationship, then you might have the ability to discipline. It might even look and sound very similar to the tools you can use in parenting. Just make sure your discipline still meets the 4 R's: Related, Respectful, Reasonable and Revealed.

If the adult is a peer (partner, friend, relative), use the PASRS Effective Response Formula, where the final step is to **Solve the problem**.

- **If the person is willing to work with you to find a solution**, use the F-A-X Listening process.
- **If the person isn't willing to be part of the solution**, follow these C-A-R steps *in order*:
 - **Change it:** "It" being yourself, your perceptions, your responses, etc. Anything but trying to change *the other person*.
 - **Accept it:** Accept this is the way things are or that person is. It doesn't mean you accept abusive treatment or find it *agreeable*. Simply that you surrender resisting and fighting it and accept it as-it-is.
 - **Remove Yourself from It:** If nothing changes and becomes unacceptable (as in abusive), then remove yourself from "it" --- that could be emotionally removing yourself or physically removing yourself.

That's it! The only differences when using the Universal Blueprint® in Adult Relationships are:

- (Parenting) PESS vs. (Adults) PEWS,
- (Parenting) SHARP-RV vs. (Adults) SHARP, and
- (Parenting) PASSR vs. (Adults) PASRS with C-A-R as a last resort

Now you are ready to use the Universal Blueprint® to improve *every* relationship in your life!



Now You've Got ALL the Basics!

Now that you know the *basics* of the *entire* Universal Blueprint® system, you can *rely* on it, like a GPS system (Guide to Parenting Success) that can guide you to the most effective way to prevent or plan a totally personalized response to *any* challenge in *any* relationship.

When used consistently, according to directions, the Universal Blueprint® will never fail you! The only mistakes are “operator error,” which you know how to avoid. **Once you master it, using this system comes automatically, without hardly any thought, like any other habit you create!**



Maintain Your Confidence

You've received a *lot* of information in this *Jump Start Guide* book! Yet, it was just the tip of the iceberg. Here are some tips to help you maintain your progress, as you continue your growth:

- **Repetitive practice rewires your habits.** Since this is a quick-start guide, you may have read it quickly, wanting to get the whole system, *fast*. If you don't keep *using* what you've learned, *reinforcing* it, or building on it by learning more, you'll likely forget a lot of what you learned.

Researchers have found that it takes an average of 66 days to create a new habit. So re-read this book, practicing one Toolset per week. Consciously use the Universal Blueprint®, its PASRR Formula, and tools for several months. You'll find that with repetition the decision-making process takes only nanoseconds and the language will start to be second nature.



- **Continue to educate yourself.** Periodically read this book again, especially when your children reach new developmental stages. Different statements will jump out at you or be more relevant. Also, check out the resources in the Action Guides. Continue attending training programs like Parent's Toolshop®.
- **Get support.** Parents Toolshop® offers online discussion groups and live, ongoing support, so you can ask questions, clarify concepts, and get personalized attention applying what you've learned to *your* family.
- **Stay involved.** There is still *so much more to learn* within the Universal Blueprint® and Relationship Toolshop®. Many of our community members are "lifers," applying these skills to every area of their lives and staying involved for life. We are here for you that long, too!



Action Steps

For your relationships to grow, you need to grow. Go to the Action Guide for links to our *Advanced* parenting programs and resources and using the Universal Blueprint® in *Adult Relationships*.

What's Next?

This book is just a quick overview of the basic concepts and tools for busy parents, like you, who are committed to being the best parent you can be. Now that you know the key components of this amazing parenting system, you understand why it's so powerful --- and *empowering*.

So what's next? You can get *Done4U solutions* to dozens of the most common parenting challenges in the Action Guides and the ParentsToolshop.com website. You can apply them in *minutes!*

Even better would be to learn, digest, practice and master the *entire* system, the *advanced* uses of the basic skills, and *all* the tools, *with* personalized support from a certified coach/trainer, if you want it. Then you can **experience a total transformation of your parenting --- and life!**



Your children are the most important people in your life. You would do *anything* for them. Will you invest just a *little more* of your time and resources to create healthy, rewarding family relationships that will last a *lifetime* (not just 18 years)?

Not only will *your* children thank you, but your grandchildren, and *their* children. Because your choice today can create a legacy of love that will live on for generations to come!

Children really are the future of our world. We want leaders with the skills and qualities you have set as goals for your children. So your investment in your parenting skills can literally change the world!

I look forward to connecting with you again soon. Until we meet again, I am truly...

Yours in Service to Families (especially *yours*),



Jody

