

# Imagine These Scenarios

Life has been pretty normal for the Judson family. They have two daughters: Elizabeth is in college and Rebecca is a sophomore in high school. So far, things have gone well. Both girls have been honor students and each has had friends whom the parents have enjoyed. Elizabeth is an athlete and Rebecca loves to play the cello.

Starting a few months ago, however, the parents began to worry about Rebecca. It became apparent that she had been lying about where she was going and with whom she was spending time. She has also ignored her curfew for the past three weekends. The Judsons never had these problems with Elizabeth.

Meanwhile, in the Miller family, a shouting match between Dad and daughter Susan once again ended with her angrily storming off. Moments afterward, a frustrated Dad recalled his high-school days, and realized that he was beginning to sound just like his own father had. He remembered how he hated fighting with his dad, and how he had sworn that he would not be inflexible and closed-minded with his children. Dad would like to do things differently.

***The Tool Box*** is designed for use with mainstream teenage scenarios. All families have times when everyday life feels overwhelming and, when that family has a teenager in the picture, stress can be high. This hands-on, easy-to-understand program will provide a variety of strategies and specific tools to help parents communicate with and nourish teenagers.

This is an action-oriented reference guide, a “how-to” manual for people whose children have become, or are about to become, teenagers. The 'chapters' offer new skills to apply to various situations, including discipline, communication, negotiation, compromise, trust, tips for self-esteem, peer pressure, basic coping skills, money issues, and physical activity. It will be helpful for those who are already wading through difficult issues as well as for those who want to enter this phase with new tools in hand.

Kids today live in a very complicated world, and raising them is more complex than ever before. Gathering a lot of theory or devoting time to too much study will not help us be successful with the spontaneous interactions in which we often find ourselves with young people. ***The Tool Box*** provides a variety of strategies and specific tools, coaching adults who live and work with adolescents, so the adults survive and the kids thrive.

## How to Use The Tool Box

Read this in a time of calmness. It is helpful to become familiar with the tools when we are not amidst a stressful situation. Plan to revisit it often. Some ideas and concepts hold current interest and some will be more appealing than others. If it seems like a good idea to try a certain tool right away, *go for it*. Try using one or two tools. Remember to go back to the book when something feels off target. Each time a chapter is reread, it may offer a new insight.

Raising our children is an ongoing process because our kids change, the world changes, and we change, too. What did not work last month might work this month. Emotional, social, and financial stressors are a huge part of our culture. Influences that did not even exist 10 or 15 years ago affect our families today.

**The Tool Box** understands that parenting is a constantly revolving process, and it has been designed with this in mind. Treat the contents of this book as a collection of tools. All of the ideas are easy to understand and simple to use. Find five likeable tools, try three, and discover one that works!

## Why The Tool Box Helps

**The Tool Box** is for first-time parents as well as for seasoned mommas and poppas. For day-to-day living, many caregivers—including parents, grandparents, and even teachers—need simple ways of doing difficult things.

Parents may feel perplexed by certain issues, such as a teen’s escalating social life and the need for curfews, worldly consequences as well as personal ones, self-respect, and respect for authority. These challenges are not very different for the seasoned parent or the veteran teacher, who has tried *everything*! Each child is unique, each community offers its own challenges, and each stage of our own lives brings specific issues. This **Tool Box** is helpful for these varied circumstances.

For example, just because the sink has clogged up—*again*—it does not mean the same thing is clogging it or that the optimal method used to unclog it will be the same. If there is a construction project, and we go to the hardware store to pick up some nails or screws, we may have to try a few before we get the one that will fit the job the best. Likewise, we have spent years collecting techniques, trying them in various situations to see which ones work where and why, and discarding those that don’t.

The goal of **The Tool Box** is to share these tools with adults and their kids so that families can work *together*, with a try-one-on-for-size, *solution-focused* approach. In the process, parents—and children—will establish clearer ways to talk with each other.

Sometimes we need a little help to get through a sticky situation with our kids. What works for one child might not work for their sibling, and what worked when that child was 15 won’t necessarily work when they’re 16.

Perhaps we feel cornered and cannot seem to find our way out. We may realize that what we are doing is not working and want to try something different. **The Tool Box** will provide specific skills for difficult situations and show how to:

- Communicate effectively.
- Identify core issues.
- Be better able to prioritize needs and wants.
- Navigate conflict.
- Learn the wonders of true compromise.

Life can feel overwhelming for a teen, so we have a section “Building a Tool Belt,” which is dedicated to creating a Tool Belt for our teen. This begins with identifying the skills that teens need to incorporate into their lives to steer through the day-to-day challenges of growing up. It is important that our teen knows we are available as they master their independence. One way we can be helpful is by learning and sharing specific techniques that point them in the right direction. When

we, as adults, have the right tools, it is easier to get any job done. Teens need access to their tools, too.

***The Tool Box*** is a combination of what we have learned from our academic years, private practice, seminars, conferences, workshops, books, children, parents, teachers, and therapists. This collection of techniques is offered as a “menu” of ideas, and a list of tools as useful as the varied supply of nuts and bolts in the hardware store.

A young person’s problems are just as diverse as the reason for a clogged drain or a leaky faucet. In either case, we try different tools until we find something that improves the situation. ***The Tool Box*** offers the best available ideas and tools, and all are practical and easy to use.

Remember: Find five tools of interest, try three, and discover the one that works!