



# The Toolbox Project

Tools for Living, Tools for Life

## Building Community & Citizenship Through A Common Language Based On Personal And Social Awareness, Self Knowledge, Non-violence and Empathy for Others.

### The twelve tools described:

#### 1. Breathing Tool: *Calming ourselves, checking in.*

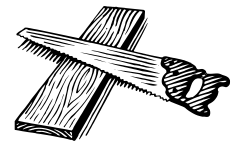


Building a bridge to awareness guides us towards more effective choices which lead us to positive change. For centuries many cultures have recognized that the breath is the gateway to an individual's spirit or true self. Without the healthy ability to self-reflect, it is impossible to achieve a meaningful relationship to oneself and others. Conscious breathing is the keystone to self-control, understanding and emotional intelligence.

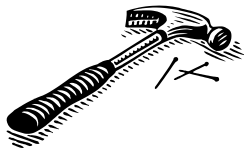
**“The unexamined life is not a life worth living.” –Socrates**

#### 2. Listening Tool: *We listen with our eyes, ears and heart.*

The art of active listening is the keystone to conflict resolution. Listening with our heart brings empathy. This is most important. If we listen, the other tools will speak for themselves. These are skills/ideas that we know somewhere within ourselves; yet embodying these skills, so they become naturalized, is a life-time of work. Along with daily intention and practice it takes self-control, discipline and reminding.



#### 3. Personal Space Tool: *Where my space ends and yours begins.*



We all have an indelible right to our personal space and the responsibility to afford others the same rights. This flexible line determines our sense of safety or caution, well-being or threat. Besides physical space, this Tool also encompasses body language, gestures, position, posture, voice tone, quality and volume.

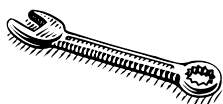
#### 4. Using Our Words Tool: *We can be our own problem solvers.*

Careful words encourage connection and intimacy. We start by using our stop sign (arm outstretched, hand up): “Please stop, I don't like that” or “You are not listening to my words.” This is our first “I” statement. We progress through the grade levels learning the complexities of feelings, engaged dialogue, and conflict resolution. These are learned behaviors to be taught and practiced. Using the right words, in the right way, at the right time, for the right reasons, requires skillful crafting.



**“Careless words make people love you less.” –Arundhati Roy**

#### 5. Empathy Tool: *Caring for others, caring for ourselves.*



Empathy is thinking of how the other person is feeling and the willingness to participate in or experience the feelings or ideas of others. Empathy is the root of tolerance, kindness and forgiveness.

#### 6. Garbage Can Tool: *Put it in the garbage can and walk on by.*

This is one of the younger children's favorites. This tool has its origins in the martial art of Aikido, The Art of Reconciliation. We do not have to take all issues or unkind words into our personal space; we have other choices and must take responsibility for the battles we choose and their outcomes. This is not about denial, conflict avoidance, or being a victim. Rather, it is about timing, informed choices, pro-activity, and effectiveness.



**7. Taking Time Tool:** *Time in and time away.*



We continue to find useful ways to use time intelligently for our well-being and the well-being of others. The idea that we make choices about how we use time is empowering. Time to breathe and time to self-reflect make for healthy life-affirming choices.

**8. Quiet/Safe Place Tool:** *Remember your quiet place.*

This is an important extension of Taking Time. Here we access our inner resources or inner guide, that part of us that is all-knowing, to “find” a “place” of solace, comfort and quiet. (The quiet place can exist in the mind and/or reality.) The concept of inner peace or well-being requires that we hear and trust our innermost voice. Creativity, imagination and self-expression stem from our quiet place.



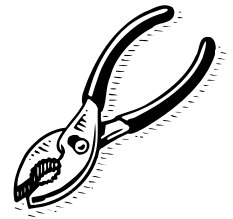
**9. Please and Thank You Tool:** *A simple reminder.*



These two phrases encourage positive regard and affirm a favorable connection to others. Expressing gratitude and giving thanks raises the bar on kindness. The expression of gratitude can happen in many ways, at any transition point. For example, at the dinner table each night we might ask if anyone has something they would like to give thanks for or share about the day. If added politely to a request, the word “please” is an inducement to action.

**10. Apology and Forgiveness Tool**

The act of a sincere apology takes self-reflection, self-esteem and emotional intelligence. Personal power is found in one who can make a mistake without feeling a loss of self-worth. The recognition of crossing personal or social boundaries and using the Apology Tool is a giant leap towards personal growth. Forgiveness is the reciprocal behavior that requires one to let go of the debt or infraction. It does not mean we have to forget, but there must be a willingness to forgive. If we are left holding the hot ember of anger, resentment, or hatred, we are getting burned.



**11. Patience Tool:** *Quiet waiting.*

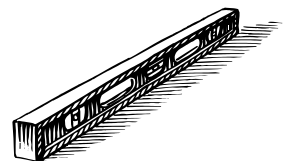


In the thesaurus the final word in the definition of patience is serenity. To gain serenity, we must be able to consciously (physically, mentally and emotionally) hold the tension between our need of the moment and the lack of having that need met because of circumstances beyond our will. Modeling this behavior for children is the way they will learn it. The converse is also true—if patience is not modeled they will learn to be impatient, demanding and impulsive.

**“The beauty of careful sewing on a shirt is the patience it contains.”** –Rumi

**12. Courage Tool:** *to use your Tools when others are not using theirs.*

It takes courage to do the right thing, to know what the right thing is or even to want to do the right thing. Acknowledging the courage it takes to be brave or to do things when we are afraid is empowering. Conversation is a way of normalizing fear. When these concepts are part of a curriculum, children are free to explore the unknown and the unfamiliar without apprehension, shame or prejudice.



**“Courage is grace under pressure.”** –Ernest Hemingway