CHAPTER 3
THE UNIVERSAL BLUEPRINT

STEP A: PREVENTION TOOLBOX

STEP A:
Prevent
problems.
Walk up the
steps.
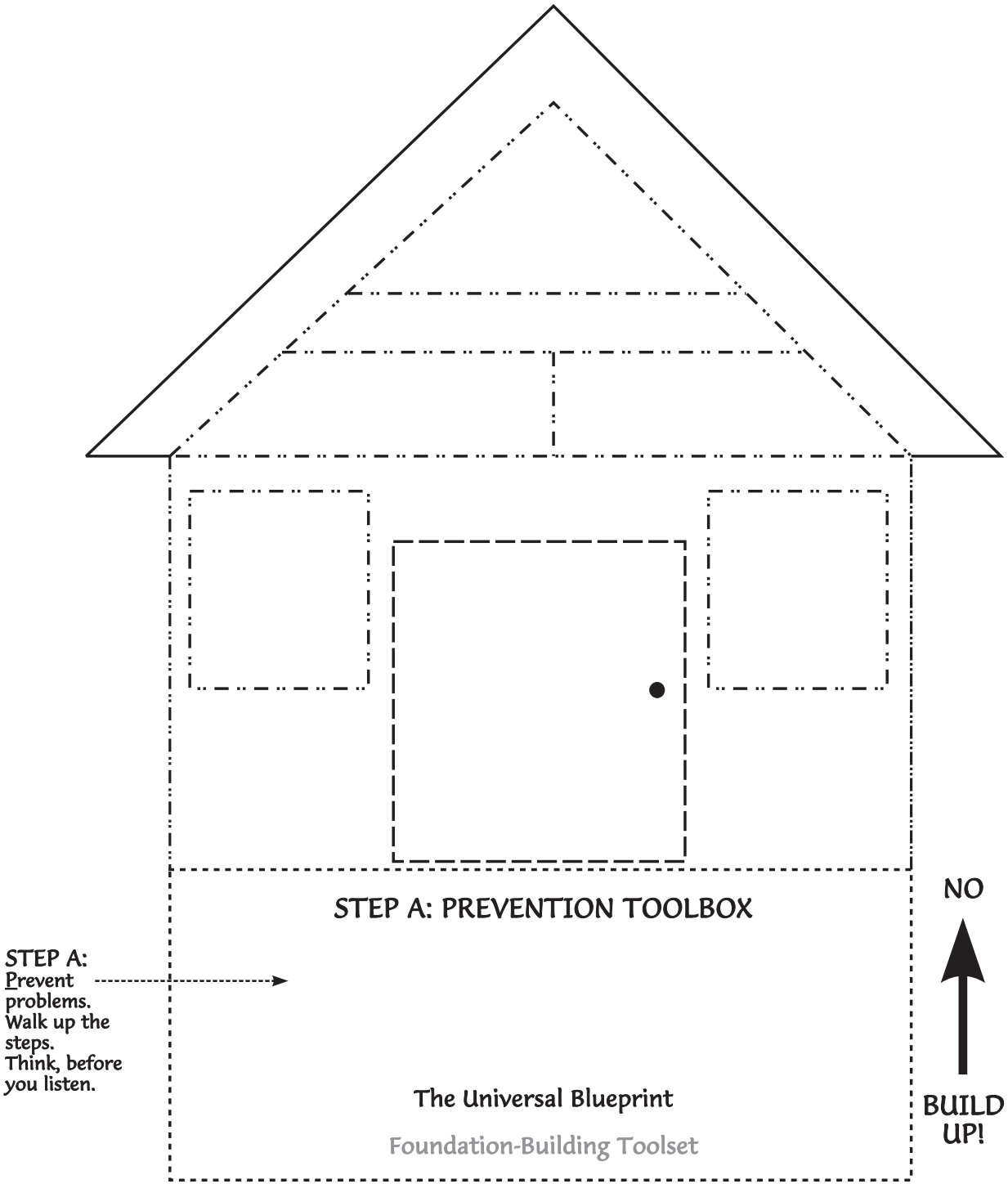Think, before
you listen.

The Universal Blueprint

Foundation-Building Toolset

NO

BUILD
UP!

3 THE UNIVERSAL BLUEPRINT

Once our foundation is set and balanced, we are ready to build our house. We first review the blueprint with the workers, so they know the general plan they are following. "First, the carpenters will build the structure, then the electricians will install the wiring . . ." If the details of the blueprint seem overwhelming, we reassure the workers that we are going to build the house one step at a time. Later, when the workers are focusing on specific tasks, they can refer to the blueprint to see how all the different parts fit together.

Parents also need a blueprint for child-rearing—a general plan that tells them where to find the specific tools they need and what steps to take. "First, we want to prevent problems. Then, if problems arise, we first identify what type of problem it is . . ." Parenting can seem overwhelming, so it helps if we summarize our general plan before focusing on each part. Later, when we focus on specific problems and their solutions, we can refer to the blueprint to better understand the details of each step we are taking.

IN THIS CHAPTER

This chapter teaches us the tools we need to meet our first two mission goals (see page 9 in Chapter 1): **STOP and THINK for 1–10 seconds** and **PLAN an effective response**. We learn two important skills in this chapter:

1. Countless situations can occur in a relationship, but each individual situation will fall within one of six general problem "types." This chapter explains how to identify each problem type.

2. There is a basic flow to effective responses. Once we know what *type* of problem we are facing, we follow certain steps in this universal response formula. Within each step, there are a variety of tools we can choose.

When we combine these two skills, we can take *any* situation, identify what type of problem it is, and follow the universal response formula in an individualized way, using tools we learn in later chapters. As we look at examples of the different types of problems, we refer to some of the individual tools, but you do not need to remember them. **The only skills you need to learn now are the two listed above**. Don't worry if you get to the end of this chapter and don't have the fine details of the Universal Blueprint memorized. The rest of the book follows the Universal Blueprint, step by step, repeating and reinforcing the problem-identification process and universal response formula.

WHEN TO USE THE UNIVERSAL BLUEPRINT

At any point in time, in every relationship, we are in one of the "problem areas," because one type of problem is a "NO problem." Therefore, **we use the Universal Blueprint all the time.** We make a *special* effort to use the Universal Blueprint, however, before we respond to problems. The Universal Blueprint helps us correctly identify what type of problem we are facing so we will choose the most effective tools for our response. ***With each problem, the steps we take and tools we choose depend on the type of problem and the individual needs of the situation or child.*** When we use the Universal Blueprint regularly, this process becomes a quick, natural step in our response.

A Graduate's Story. *Knowing how to identify problem types and when to use each toolset are the most important skills I learned in* <u>The Parent's Toolshop</u>*. As an emergency room nurse, I have*

found that deciding how to choose a parenting response is similar to the basic ABCs of emergency assessments: airway, breathing, and circulation. Each emergency room staff member memorizes these ABCs until they are ingrained and second-nature. Then, if a person with a spectacular injury comes in and the staff becomes embroiled in the crisis, they won't overlook these key areas of the patient's treatment. If someone walks into the emergency room and tells me he has a broken finger, I can quickly assume he's breathing and has a clear airway. I'm not skipping or overlooking these steps, I'm just moving through them quickly, hardly noticing the steps I take mentally. With practice, I've found that using the Universal Blueprint also takes only a split second. I might go through the steps fast, but I'd never want to skip them altogether. I've avoided making many problems worse because I stopped to think before I responded.

BALANCING LOGIC AND EMOTION

People are not used to viewing parenting, relationships, and communication logically. Human behavior can seem unpredictable and overwhelming, but there *are* somewhat predictable patterns to it. Once we see the patterns in one relationship (parenting) we start seeing similar patterns in *all* our relationships.

Many people also find it difficult to respond to problems logically. Instead, they do the first thing that comes to mind to get a quick fix. Gut reactions are usually ineffective. If they *do* give a quick fix, they often have negative long-term effects. For example, when children have a problem and parents offer a quick solution, the children don't learn how to solve the problem independently. In the long-run, parents spend more time solving their children's problems than it would have taken to teach the children problem-solving skills. Plus, the children *still* don't know how to solve their *own* problems so they make poor decisions.

To respond to problems as effectively as possible, we need to balance emotions with logic and common sense. Planned responses increase our consistency and our chances of handling situations helpfully.

Because we are looking at the "bigger picture" in this chapter, your learning style will influence how easily you will learn and remember the Universal Blueprint the first time it's presented.

- *Whole-to-part learners* need to see the bigger picture and how all the pieces fit together before they learn the different parts. They usually understand the Universal Blueprint the first time it's presented, but need to refer to the Universal Blueprint (the bigger picture) now and then. (Look at the last page of this book for a quick reference).

- *Part-to-whole learners* need to learn a process step by step. They are overwhelmed with the big picture if they haven't learned the separate parts that go into it. These learners might not remember the entire Universal Blueprint the first time it's explained because it is a formula with missing pieces. **Remember, when you first read this chapter, you** *only* **need to understand how to identify types of problems and the basic steps of the universal response formula.** Since we use these two skills throughout our tour, every chapter brings an increasingly better understanding of how all the pieces fit together.

  *A Graduate's Comment. When I first looked at the Universal Blueprint it seemed complicated, but as I used it, I quickly realized it was simple common sense. Before long, a light bulb went off in my head and I realized just how profound the Universal Blueprint really was. Now, I use the Universal Blueprint in **all** my relationships, to help me resolve **any** problems that arise.*

Problems Are Like Onions

Problems, like onions, have many layers. Negative behaviors and emotional outbursts are often the symptoms of deeper issues. If we only respond to the negative behavior, we might get a temporary quick fix. However, the deeper issue *causing* the problem is still there and usually erupts again,

sometimes through different behavior. This surface approach to problems is like using bandages to treat a disease. We can treat the symptoms (problem behavior), but also need to diagnose and cure the disease (the real issue). When we have a problem and follow the universal response formula, *in order,* we will always address the child's feelings or perspective *first*. This step "peels onions," revealing the real issue behind the behavior. When we resolve the *real* issue, the symptoms (misbehavior) often disappear.
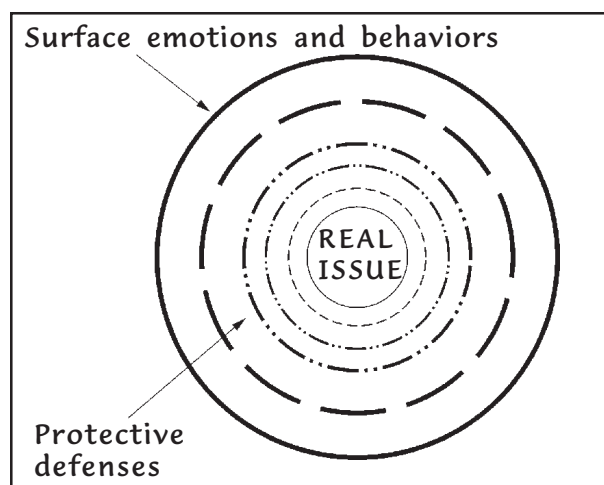
Change often occurs from the inside-out. If we don't see an immediate change, there might be change occurring inside that isn't observable, yet. For example, one common parenting goal is to help children develop *self*-discipline. If the parent or child is in the habit of using power struggles to deal with problems, the prevention tools might not work immediately. When we follow the Universal Blueprint, we might have to reach the discipline step only once or twice. Since discipline helps children *learn* from mistakes, the next time we might only need to give a simple reminder, acknowledge the child's feelings, or offer choices within limits to prevent or stop the problem behavior. Step by step, with each response, we eliminate specific problem behaviors. Soon, the child is *self*-disciplined in these situations.

> **The universal response formula not only addresses problem behavior, but also the issues and emotions that *cause* misbehavior. Consistently following the Universal Blueprint's steps can eliminate misbehavior and reduce the need for stronger responses.**

TYPES OF PROBLEMS

In this section, we learn how to identify each of the six types of problems and apply the universal response formula to each. The sample situations reinforce the *general* steps and offer a few examples of useful tools. We do *not* learn exactly what to say and do at each step with each example, nor are *all* the possible responses listed. Our purpose is to learn how the Universal Blueprint works, in general.

In *The Parent's Toolshop,* there are no standard responses to particular *behaviors*. The appropriate response depends on the *type* of problem or the *reason* the child is behaving that way. For example, children might not do chores for several reasons—they don't think the chore is important, don't know how to do the chore, feel overwhelmed, want help, or are exercising their power by refusing to do the chore. Each of these reasons could be the "core of the onion." To respond most effectively, we must identify and resolve the correct *cause* of the behavior we are facing (the type of problem) in *that* particular situation.

Although parents might seem to face an infinite number of possible problems, each individual problem will fit into one of six categories. Throughout our *Parent's Toolshop* tour, we use the following symbols to represent these six general problem types.

Symbol	Type of problem	Description
NO	**N**o problem	There is no problem or a problem could develop.
C	**C**hild problem	The child has a problem that doesn't involve/affect the parent.
P	**P**arent problem	The parent has a problem that does not involve misbehavior.
PU	**P**arent problem, **U**nintentional misbehavior	The parent has a problem with misbehavior that results from the child's lack of maturity, skills, or knowledge.
PO	**P**arent problem, "**O**n purpose" misbehavior	The parent has a problem with misbehavior that seems intentional, to serve a purpose.
C/P C/PU C/PO	part **C**hild problem and part **P**arent problem	The problem involves/affects *both* child and parent. C/P problems do *not* involve misbehavior. If misbehavior is involved, add the appropriate symbol to the end. 　　The **P**arent problem involves **U**nintentional misbehavior. 　　The **P**arent problem involves **O**n purpose misbehavior.

★ **We can use the Universal Blueprint and problem identification process in *any* relationship.** Simply replace *parent* with *I* and *child* with *other person:*

NO = Things are going well and I want to build a better relationship.
C　 = The other person has a problem.
P　 = I have a problem.
PU = I have a problem with the other person's behavior, but the other person doesn't realize how the behavior affects me or it's just the way he or she is.
PO = I have a problem with the other person's behavior, and the person seems to be acting this way on purpose. I wonder why?
C/P = *We* have a problem.

THE UNIVERSAL RESPONSE FORMULA

There are five ways to remember the steps of the universal response formula:

　1. **The letter/number of the step.** For example, "Step B."

　2. **What you do; the PASRR formula.** For example, "**A**cknowledge feelings."

　3. **The tools you use.** For example, "Child Problem Toolbox."

　4. **A visual reminder of the house diagram.** For example, "Open the door."

　5. **A quick reminder.** For example, "Listen, before you talk."

The two-page table on pages 78 and 79 lists the different reminders for each step. Choose the one that is easiest for you to remember. In this chapter, we'll list all of them to help you learn them. Throughout the remainder of the book, we will mostly use method #2, which we will call the "PASRR formula" (pronounced "passer").

PASRR Response Formula
(pronounced "passer")

Prevent the problem from starting or worsening.
What you *say*
   Acknowledge the other person's feelings or perspective.
   Set limits or express concerns.
What you *do*
   Redirect misbehavior (PU or PO).
   Reveal discipline or take action.
Now *follow through!*

★ **At any step, we can use tools from previous steps.**

Using the PASRR formula may take only two or three sentences in all—and each part of the statement serves a specific purpose. Use your better judgment to decide if you need a quicker, firmer response or can give each step time to work.

> **Sometimes we move through the steps with each attempt to resolve a problem. Other times, we take the steps quickly, with each sentence (or half sentence).**

When we flow through the steps using two to four sentences in all, it sounds something like the following example. The partial sentences in this example are just *one* choice of many that we might make when filling in the blanks of this formula. We might also use fewer or simpler words.

Step A: Prevent the problem with the **Prevention Toolbox.** Walk up the stairs. Think before you listen.
   "You can (one acceptable option) or (another acceptable option). You decide."

Step B: Acknowledge the other person's feelings or perspective with the **Child Problem Toolbox.** Open the door. Listen before you talk.
   "It (looks/sounds/seems) like you are feeling/wanting _____."

Step C: Parent Problem Toolbox. Address your part of the problem. Enter the house.

   C1: Set limits or express concerns with the **Keep Your Cool and Clear Communication Toolsets.** Open the windows. Talk before you act.
      "(Negative behavior) can (state the negative effect/rule/value)."

   C2: Redirect misbehavior with the **PU *or* PO Toolset.** Choose a bedroom. Redirect, before you react.
      "If you want to (what the child wants), you can (acceptable alternative) instead."

C3: <u>**Reveal discipline or take action**</u> with the **Discipline Toolset.** Move to the attic. Take action, without a reaction.

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

Step D: **Maintain progress** with the **Maintenance Toolbox.** Check the roof regularly. Follow-up.

"Since this affects the whole family, let's bring it up at our next family council and see if we can decide how to handle this situation in the future."

At this point, you don't have to remember exactly what to say or do at each step, only *what* each step is. With each chapter, we reinforce and practice the Universal Blueprint's steps. Soon, you will flow through the process and hardly think about the steps.

To help you memorize the steps of identifying problem types and using the PASRR formula, review the two-page table on pages 78 and 79. ***Start at the bottom*** of the first page and read each row from left to right, crossing from the first page to the next page. It may be helpful to refer to these pages while you are reading this chapter.

IDENTIFYING PROBLEM TYPES

Identifying problem types involves a simple process of elimination. By asking three questions, we narrow down what specific type of problem we are dealing with. The type of problem determines the steps we take (or stop at) and the toolsets we use. As we learn to use the Universal Blueprint, remember the following four rules:

★ **Answer the three questions based on who is involved and the situation you are facing** *at that moment***.** Your answers might vary from other parents' answers in a similar situation. Your child's abilities might be different from what they were last month or from another child's abilities. *Your* individual answers decide the course *you* want to take at *that* moment with *that* child. This is how we apply the Universal Blueprint to individual situations.

★ **Regardless of the type of problem, follow the PASRR response formula's steps** *in order.* The location of each toolset is specific, according to the order in which it is most effective. Decide whether and when to take each step by the type of problem it is or if the problem continues.

★ **Every response can begin at Step A, but may not have to go further, depending on the type of problem or response we get.** Once we know what type of problem we are dealing with, we know which toolsets to use and which step is our final "stop."

★ **At each step, we can use any toolset from previous steps.** Since the Prevention Toolbox is Step A, we can use it *anytime* in our response.

Now let's look at each problem type separately. We'll review how we answer the three problem-identification questions, which PASRR steps to take, and offer two examples of each type of problem.

3 Problem ID Questions	+	5 PASRR Steps
NO problems		<u>**P**</u>**revent problems** from starting or worsening • Foundation-Building Toolset (parenting styles) • Self-Esteem Toolset • Cooperation Toolset • Independence Toolset

When Problems Arise
Look at the smaller problem "parts" and identify the problem type for each part.

QUESTION #1: Is this a **C**hild problem (**C**) or a **P**arent problem (**P**)? (Narrow it down.)

Child problems—involve "PESS" **P**eers, **E**motions, **S**iblings, **S**chool	**SAY**	<u>**A**</u>**cknowledge the child's feelings** (If *only* a Child problem, stop at this step: Child Problem Toolbox.)

Parent problems—involve "SHARP RV"
     Safety, **H**ealth, **A**ppropriateness,
     Rights, **P**roperty, **R**ules, **V**alues
		<u>**S**</u>**et limits or express concerns**. (If no misbehavior, stop at this step: Keep Your Cool, Clear Communication Toolsets.)

When There Is Misbehavior
QUESTION #2: Is the misbehavior in this **P**arent problem **U**nintentional (**PU**) or "**O**n purpose" (**PO**)? **Yes or No:** Has *this* child *consistently shown* that he or she has *mastered* the skills to behave properly in this situation? (Narrow it down.)

PU problem = **No.** Child has *not* mastered skills due to: immaturity, personality, accident, medical condition or lack of information	**DO**	<u>**R**</u>**edirect the misbehavior** (PU *or* PO Toolset) **PU** = Teach skills or offer acceptable alternative
PO problem = **Yes.** Child *has* mastered skills and misbehavior is deliberate. **QUESTION #3:** If the behavior is "On purpose" (PO), what is the purpose? Attention, Power, Revenge, Giving up		**PO** = Avoid payoff/escalating and show child how to meet purpose through positive behavior

For *either* PU or PO...	**FOLLOW THROUGH**	<u>**R**</u>**eveal discipline** Must meet the "4 R's"

Combination types: Identify the problem type for each part. ***Address the Child problem first.***
    C/P   =   Part **C**hild problem *and* part **P**arent problem involving no misbehavior.
   C/PU   =   Part **C**hild problem *and* part **P**arent problem involving **U**nintentional misbehavior.
   C/PO   =   Part **C**hild problem *and* part **P**arent problem involving "**O**n purpose" misbehavior.

Maintain Progress
• Family Council Toolset—when problems/decisions affect the whole family.
• Three C's: Consistency, Criticism, Confidence

NO = No Problem

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Neither parent nor child is experiencing a problem. Nevertheless, there are tools we can use to prevent situations from developing into problems.

WHAT WE DO

Stay at Step A: Prevent problems (**Prevention Toolbox,** walk up the stairs, think before you listen.) Maintain a balanced approach, build self-esteem, promote cooperation, and foster independence.

★ **The Prevention Toolbox is useful** *anytime,* **whether there is a problem or not.**
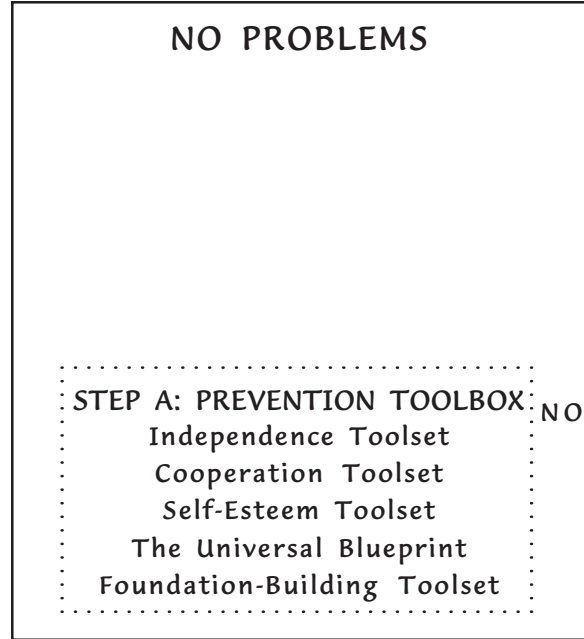
EXAMPLES OF NO PROBLEMS

1. *A child wants to do something that is difficult.*

Step A: Prevent problems (Prevention Toolbox). Encourage the child's efforts (Self-Esteem Toolset). Offer helpful tips and allow the child to try, rather than taking over and doing the task for the child (Independence Toolset). These tools increase the child's skills and prevent discouragement.

2. *A child has had difficulty in the past making transitions from one activity to another. It will soon be time to leave a fun party.*

Step A: Prevent problems (Prevention Toolbox). Using the Cooperation Toolset, plan ahead by giving a five-minute notice to the child before leaving. If the child resists, the parent can offer choices about how to leave. **If the child** *still* **resists, it is no longer a "No problem."** It is either a PU or PO problem. The parent needs to figure out which type of problem it is to know what will be the most helpful response.

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│           NO PROBLEMS                     │
│                                           │
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│  STEP A: PREVENTION TOOLBOX  N O         │
│       Independence Toolset                │
│       Cooperation Toolset                 │
│       Self-Esteem Toolset                 │
│     The Universal Blueprint               │
│   Foundation-Building Toolset             │
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When There Is a Problem, STOP and . . . THINK for 1–10 Seconds

During that time, begin asking yourself the three questions to identify what *type* of problem you are facing.

QUESTION #1: IS THIS A CHILD PROBLEM OR A PARENT PROBLEM?

(Narrow it down.)

This question is not as easy to answer as we might think; it's easy to misidentify Child problems. Without guidelines, we might simply ask ourselves, "Who does it bother?" or "Who is it a problem *for*?" These questions might help us recognize *some* Child problems, but consider situations such as children not doing their homework. Is the child upset about not doing homework? Usually, it bothers the parent more. If we look beyond the surface of this onion, we find that the *reason* the child isn't doing homework. For example, the child might not understand the work, is overwhelmed, doesn't share the value of homework, or hasn't established good study habits. If parents conclude homework is a Parent problem, they might take over and children won't learn how to take responsibility for solving the problem on their own. If parents exert too much control, doing homework can turn into a power struggle. Since it is easy to confuse Child and Parent problems, consider the following issues.

Does the problem (or any part of it) involve:

"PESS" = Peers, Emotions, Siblings, School
Child problems involve these areas of responsibility that belong to the child.
If *any* of these PESS issues are present, that *part* of the problem is a Child problem.

OR

"SHARP RV" = Safety, Health, Appropriateness, Rights, Property, Rules, Values
Parent problems involve these areas of concern to parents.
If *any* of these SHARP RV issues are present, that *part* of the problem is a Parent problem.

If the problem involves issues in *both* areas, it is a Combination problem, which we'll look at soon on page 70. For now, let's take a closer look at 100% Child and Parent problems, before moving to Question #2.

## "Yes" to *any* PESS issue *and* "No" to *Each* SHARP RV Issue = A Child Problem

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The child (or other person) has a problem that does not directly involve or affect the parent, OR involves areas of responsibility that belong to the child: "PESS" = Peers, Emotions, Siblings, School.

WHAT WE DO

Step A: Prevent problems (Prevention Toolbox). Offer encouragement, teach skills, and prevent sibling and peer conflicts.

Step B: Acknowledge feelings (**Child Problem Toolbox**, open the door, listen before you talk.) Offer supportive guidance, without taking over. **Use the F-A-X Listening Toolset** to better understand children's thoughts and feelings about the problem. **Use the Problem-Solving Toolset** to mediate sibling/peer conflicts and guide children through the process of resolving problems to the degree they are able.
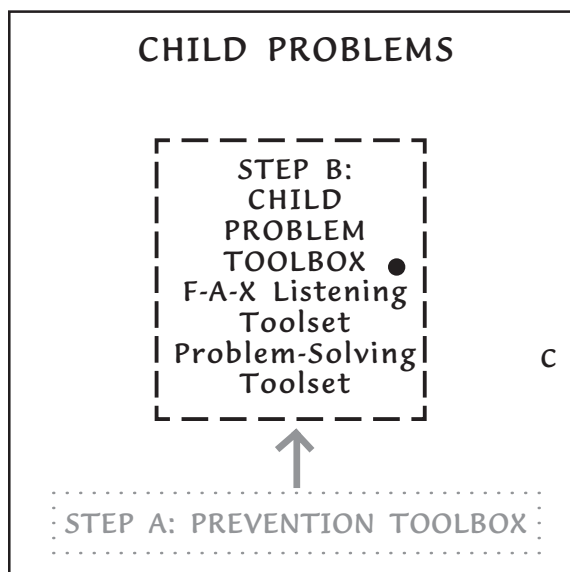
★ **In Child problems, we work *exclusively* from the Child Problem and Prevention Toolboxes.** Alternate between these two steps (toolboxes) as necessary.

★ **If the situation is a Child problem, do not take over or solve it *for* the child.** This deprives children of important learning experiences. When people get angry about our attempts to help, it is a clue that we might be trying to solve a problem that belongs to someone else. We can still care and be involved, by using the Child Problem Toolbox to offer support and guidance as others resolve their *own* problems.

EXAMPLES OF CHILD PROBLEMS

1. *Two children are having a disagreement. They are not being disrespectful or physically fighting.* This problem is between the children. They need to learn how to resolve such conflicts.

*Step A: **P**revent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). Encourage the children, expressing faith in their ability to work out the problem. Use the Independence Toolset to teach conflict-resolution skills.

Step B: **Acknowledge feelings** (Child Problem Toolbox). Use the F-A-X Listening Toolset to empathize with the children's feelings and thoughts about the situation. Do not give advice. Instead, use the Problem-Solving Toolset in the Child Problem Toolbox to help them generate ideas for resolving the conflict. If their ideas are inappropriate, ask them to consider the effect of that approach. This is how parents can raise their concerns without criticizing ideas or taking over.

2. *A child feels left out at school.* It's difficult to see children feeling hurt or being treated unfairly. It's natural to want to rescue or protect them. If we solve the problem, children might feel incapable of solving the problem. They might also have information we don't have, which would make our solution less effective. Children need to learn how to handle such situations on their own.

*Step A: **P**revent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). Use the Self-Esteem Toolset to point out the child's positive qualities. Use the Independence Toolset to teach skills for making friends or dealing with rejection.

Step B: **Acknowledge feelings** (Child Problem Toolbox). Use the F-A-X Listening Toolset to recognize the child's feelings of rejection. Then use the Problem-Solving Toolset to explore alternatives for how the child can resolve the problem.

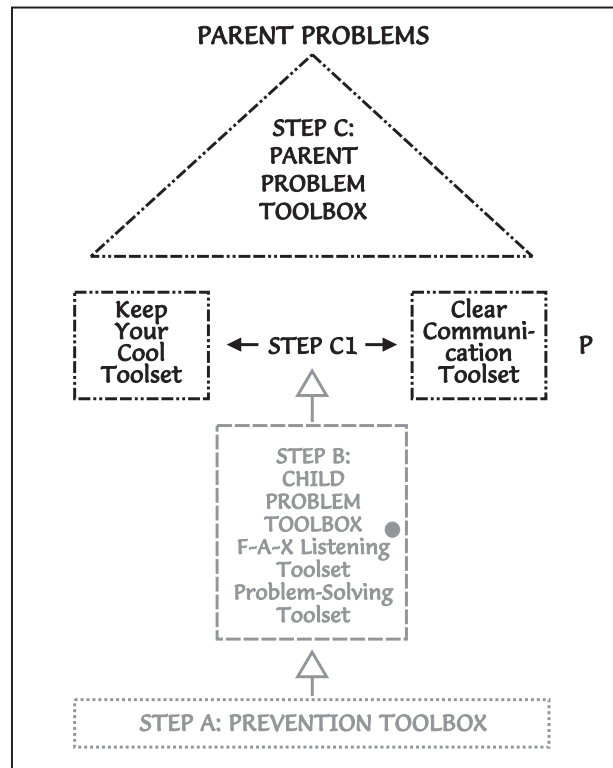## "Yes" to *Any One* SHARP RV Issue = **P**arent Problem

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

The parent has a problem or concern that does not bother the child.

WHAT WE DO

*Step A: **P**revent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). Make requests in positive words and offer choices within limits (Cooperation Toolset). Teach children the skills they need to comply with the request (Independence Toolset). Express faith in their ability to figure out a solution, based on the information and skills they've learned (Self-Esteem Toolset).

*Step B: **A**cknowledge feelings* (Child Problem Toolbox). Often, just acknowledging children's feelings reduces their defensiveness and they cooperate. Other times, we need to bring the problem to their attention. Here, we recognize the children's feelings in the first part of our sentence and finish the sentence with tools from the next step.

PARENT PROBLEMS

STEP C: PARENT PROBLEM TOOLBOX

Keep Your Cool Toolset   ← STEP C1 →   Clear Communication Toolset   P

STEP B: CHILD PROBLEM TOOLBOX
F-A-X Listening Toolset
Problem-Solving Toolset

STEP A: PREVENTION TOOLBOX

Step C1: <u>Set limits and express concerns</u> (**Parent Problem Toolbox: Keep Your Cool and Clear Communication Toolsets,** open the windows, set limits and express concerns, talk before you act.) Stop, take a deep breath (keep your cool), and respond assertively. Describe the problem, briefly and respectfully.

★ **If we have already taken the first two steps (A and B) in the past and the same situation occurs,** we can jump right to Step C1 and offer a quick one-word reminder. This is a time when skipping steps is appropriate, because the parent already took the other steps first, in the past.

★ **If *no* problem behavior is involved (P), stop at this step.** Alternate between the steps, choosing the appropriate tools to work through differences of opinions, values, or needs until you reach an agreement.

★ **Just because a situation is a Parent problem does *not* mean the parent is always responsible for *resolving* the problem.** Consider the example of a child not doing a chore. Children don't care if their chore isn't done. Yes, they may care that they won't get to play if it's not done, but this is how they feel about one possible *effect* of the problem, not the problem itself. This is a Parent problem, because it violates a family rule, value, or the parent's right. The parent is responsible for bringing the problem to the child's attention, but the child is responsible for doing the chore.

EXAMPLES OF PARENT PROBLEMS

1. *The children are playing loudly and it's distracting you from your work.* The noise violates the parent's right to work in a peaceful setting. The children are not misbehaving, just playing loudly. Therefore, it is strictly a Parent problem.

Step A: <u>P</u>revent problems (Prevention Toolbox). The Cooperation Toolset suggests telling children what *to* do, instead of what *not* to do. Parents can offer choices within limits, "You can play quietly inside or play loudly outside—you decide." Another option is to combine the next two steps into one sentence:

Step B: <u>A</u>cknowledge feelings (Child Problem Toolbox). "I can tell you are having lots of fun . . ." (Listening Toolset)

Step C1: <u>Set limits or express concerns</u> (**Clear Communication Toolset**). ". . . but I can't concentrate on my work when there is so much noise." If it happens again, you can say one word, "Quiet!" (Any further disruptions suggest problem behavior, which is a PU or PO problem. Since you've already taken these first few steps, go right to Step C2, using the PU *or* PO Toolset.)

2. *Your son's soccer practice was rescheduled to the same time as your daughter's gymnastics lesson.* Trying to drive both children violates the parent's *right* to manageable schedule. Being in two places at once is simply impossible. The parent and children have a conflict of needs. The child has not misbehaved in any way, so this is strictly a Parent problem. Our response could have three sentences that quickly move through the steps.

Step A: <u>P</u>revent problems (Prevention Toolbox). "I've seen a lot of improvement in your coordination since you started gymnastics . . ." (Self-Esteem Toolset)

Step B: <u>A</u>cknowledge feelings (Child Problem Toolbox). ". . . and can tell how much you enjoy going."

Step C1: <u>Set limits or express concerns</u> (**Clear Communication Toolset**). "Your brother's soccer practice was moved to the same day and time as your gymnastics lessons. I can't be in two places at once, so we need to look at some ways you both can do what is important to you." At this point, the parent and children can brainstorm possible solutions. The first sentence (Steps A and B) prevents the child from jumping to conclusions, such as "You're going to make me quit gymnastics." If there is no risk of this, the parent could say the last sentence (Step C1) first and, at some point, say the other statements. Remember, at any step, you can use the toolsets from previous steps.

If the Parent Problem Involves Misbehavior, Ask QUESTION #2: Is the Misbehavior Unintentional or "On Purpose"?

(Narrow it down.)

To tell the difference between PU and PO behavior, consider the following questions:

1. Is this behavior the result of the child's **immaturity** or developmental stage?
2. Is this behavior part of the child's **personality** (it doesn't come naturally)?
3. Is this an **accident** or is a **medical condition** influencing the child's self-control? (Illness, mental retardation, ADHD, autism, food allergies, etc.)
4. Does the child **lack information** to know better?

★ 5. **Has the child *not consistently shown* that he or she has *mastered* the skills to behave properly in this situation?** (This one often covers the first four issues, which might explain why the child hasn't mastered the skill.)

"Yes" to *any one* question = **PU** problem (**P**arent problem, **U**nintentional misbehavior).

"No" to *all* questions = **PO** problem (**P**arent problem, "**O**n purpose" misbehavior).

★ **When in doubt, assume the behavior is PU.** The child's reaction to your response will confirm whether their behavior is unintentional (PU) or on purpose (PO). Give information or teach skills. If the child masters the skill and *still* repeats the misbehavior, you *know* it's PO behavior.

★ **Remember the difference between PU and PO with these simple analogies.** PU reminds us of something stinky, like a dirty diaper. Situations, such as toilet training accidents, are frustrating but a normal part of development. They are problems that may involve safety or health (**P**arent issues), but the problem behavior is **U**nintentional.

> *A Personal Story. I took Amber and her friend, Emmy, both two, to an indoor playground with some friends and their children. It was hard to keep an eye on both of them every second. Amber was still in diapers, so I didn't remember to tell Emmy to go to the bathroom, as her mother did. A man walked up and asked me if that little girl was mine, as he pointed to Emmy. Emmy was squatting on the floor, with her pants pulled down to her ankles and a pile beneath her! I was tempted to say I'd never seen this child before, but said, "Yes, she's with me today. Thank you." I took Emmy to the bathroom and cleaned her up while another mother cleaned up the mess. (I've got great friends, don't I?) I felt so bad for Emmy. She didn't know to ask to go to the bathroom and I had not reminded her. I had a problem (**P**), but her behavior was **U**nintentional.*

PO problems involve misbehavior (a **P**arent problem) that seems to be **O**n purpose. When it seems a child is misbehaving on purpose, we usually feel "PO'd"—you know, p - - - ed off! (You did fill those blanks with p-e-e-v-e-d off, right? I want this to stay G-rated!)

> *A Parent's Story. My son, age four, is fully potty trained and can hold it when he needs to. But if he is mad at me, he does something to get my attention, gives me a defiant look, and then pees on the floor, furniture, bed, or whatever is close! (Clearly, this **P**arent problem involves behavior that is "**O**n purpose," to get revenge—and the mother feels quite PO'd!)*

"Yes" to *Any One* Question = PU (<u>P</u>arent Problem, <u>U</u>nintentional Misbehavior)

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The parent has a problem (P) that involves "un-intentional" misbehavior (U). In PU problems, the reason we say "yes" to one of the SHARP RV issues (Question #1) is usually *because* the child doesn't know any better or hasn't developed appropriate behavior skills (Question #2). For example, "I'm worried about my child climbing the jungle gym (safety issue) *because* she hasn't had much experience and isn't very coordinated (child has *not* shown mastery of the skills)." We learn more about the five issues in identifying PU behavior (developmental stages, etc.) in Chapter 11, "PU Toolset."

★ **Even if you've "told them a million times," it does not mean children *know* better.** "Knowing better" means children *fully* understand the information. Until children *master* a skill, PU behavior can still occur.

★ **"Unintentional" is *not* an excuse.** Medical conditions, such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or learning disabilities, can influence a child's self-control and behavior. These conditions, however, should not become a crutch or excuse for a child's behavior, "He has ADHD, so don't expect him to _____." Identifying these behaviors as PU diagnoses the *cause* of the behavior and what skills we need to teach.

★ **PU behavior can turn into PO behavior *if* we react to it or respond unhelpfully.** The classic example is a child who repeats a cuss word, without knowing what it means. The first time this happens, it is PU behavior. If the parent gives a shocked, extreme reaction or laughs, the child might repeat the behavior later, to get a similar reaction. *Then,* the behavior is PO, to serve a purpose.
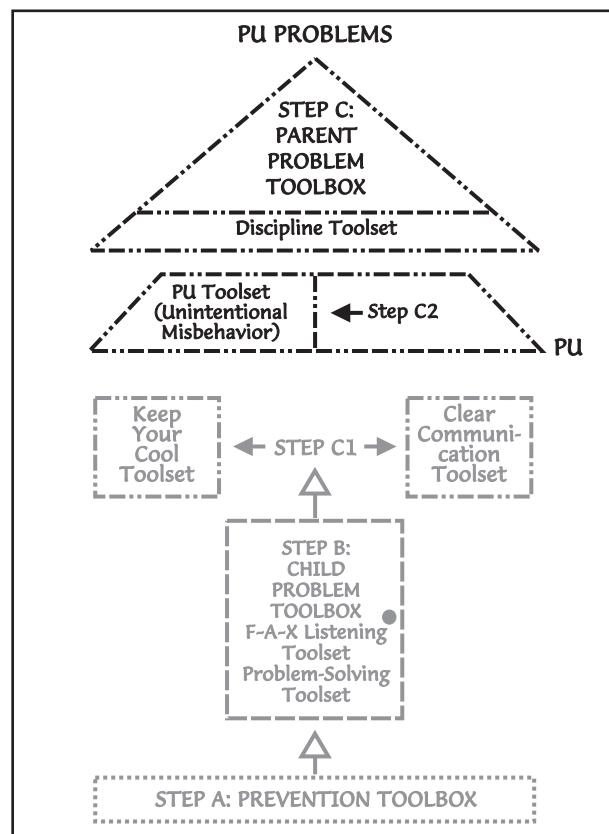
WHAT WE DO

Step A: <u>P</u>revent problems (Prevention Toolbox). This step is *vital,* because these tools can prevent *or* respond to unintentional misbehavior. These tools can increase a child's confidence, engage cooperation, and teach appropriate behavior skills. Until these skills and behaviors become habits, parents often need to take additional steps.

Step B: <u>A</u>cknowledge feelings (Child Problem Toolbox). Notice the child's feelings, thoughts, or perspective about the situation. (Sometimes this can be the first half of your first sentence, for example "You seem (<u>feeling</u>) . . .")

Step C1: <u>S</u>et limits or express concerns (**Clear Communication Toolset**). Be clear and respectful. (This can be the second half of the sentence, ". . . but (<u>the negative behavior</u>) can (<u>give information.</u>")

*Step C2: **Redirect misbehavior*** (**PU Toolset**). (Choose the PU bedroom, redirect problem behavior before you react.) These tools help us correctly identify PU problems and redirect the behavior until children master the necessary skills. For example, a possible second sentence can be, "If you want (or feel) _____, you can (describe appropriate behavior) instead."

★ **If the behavior continues or action is necessary, use the PU Toolset *before* moving to the Discipline Toolset.** (Step C3, **R**eveal discipline, move to the attic, take action without a reaction.) The PU Toolset teaches children skills and the Discipline Toolset helps children *learn from* their mistakes. Together, they can eliminate similar PU behavior in the future. Our last sentence could be, "Until I see you can (describe positive behavior), I'll know you need to (reveal discipline)."

EXAMPLES OF PU PROBLEMS

1. *A high-spirited child.* Children are born with certain personality traits. Sometimes, skills that might come easily to many children (such as the ability to adjust to change or handle noise and activity) are more difficult for other children to learn—it just doesn't come naturally to them. Their behavior is often inappropriate (P), but unintentional (U). These children need to build on the positive strengths of their personality, while learning skills to balance these difficulties.

Step A: *Prevent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). Look at your beliefs using the skills in the Foundation-Building Toolset. Recognize that there is nothing wrong with spirited children and that their difficult behavior is not an intentional attempt to irritate others.

Step B: *Acknowledge feelings* (Child Problem Toolbox). Recognize the child's feelings (frustration, hunger, etc.).

Step C1:   *Set limits or express concerns* (**Clear Communication Toolset**). State rules and realistic expectations in simple, positive words.

*Step C2: **Redirect PU misbehavior*** (**PU Toolset**). Model and teach appropriate behavior. Until children master the skills, use distraction or environmental engineering. (These tools are in Chapter 11, "PU Toolset.")

*Step C3: **Reveal discipline*** (**Discipline Toolset**). When necessary, discipline can help children make amends, learn self-control or other important lessons from the effects of their behavior choices.

2. *A teenager who is individuating.* A parent might think that the *way* the teen is individuating involves a SHARP RV issue (P), such as driving too fast or wanting to stay out past curfew. It is normal, however, for teens to want more freedom (U). "Individuation" is the process every teen goes through on the way to adulthood. It is the process of becoming an individual: deciding who I am, who I want to be, and what I believe about the world and myself. Teenage individuation is as normal and age-appropriate as an infant learning to walk or a toddler wanting to touch everything. Individuation is different from rebellion, which is a reaction to control. ***Every teen individuates, but not every teen rebels.*** If teens do not have positive, appropriate ways to express their individuality and have some control in their lives, they may choose more negative, defiant ways to *prove* their parents can't control them (PO). This is one example of how PU behavior can turn into PO behavior, depending on the parent's reaction. (The Independence and PU Toolsets explain individuation in more detail.)

*Step A: **P**revent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). Educate yourself about adolescent development, so your beliefs and expectations are realistic and you don't take their behavior personally. Make requests using positive words that offer choices within reasonable limits (Cooperation Toolset).

*Step B: **A**cknowledge feelings* (Child Problem Toolbox). The F-A-X Listening Toolset opens the door to communication (and keeps it open). Empathize with the teen's perspective, frustrations, and desire to be an independent individual. Deal with the feelings as soon as possible. If parents only address *their* concerns (moving directly to Step C1), teens will think the parents are trying to control them, which *increases* their resentment and invites rebellion.

Step C1: Set limits or express concerns (Clear Communication Toolset). Voice concerns about any SHARP RV issues. Use parent/child problem solving to help teens see the long-term effects of their behavior choices.

Step C2: Redirect PU misbehavior (**PU Toolset**). Generate ideas for more acceptable ways to assert their independence. These steps often result in solutions and agreements that help teens feel more independent, without violating any SHARP RV issues.

Step C3: Reveal discipline (**Discipline Toolset**). Make agreements that reveal the effect of the teen (or parent) breaking the agreement. When teens have options for appropriate behavior, they can make better behavior choices in the future-and know what to expect if they don't.

"No" to *Any One* Question = PO (Parent Problem, "On Purpose" Misbehavior)

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The **P**arent has a problem *and* the child *has* consistently shown he or she has mastered the skills to behave properly but seems to be misbehaving **O**n purpose.

WHAT TO DO

Step A: Prevent problems (Prevention Toolbox). This step is *vital*, because these tools can prevent *or* respond to intentional misbehavior. The Self-Esteem Toolset can prevent attention-seeking behavior and the Cooperation Toolset is the best toolset for preventing power struggles. The Independence Toolset helps children learn skills, so they don't get so discouraged they give up. (Remember, the Prevention Toolbox is useful *anytime,* even when responding to problems.)

Step B: Acknowledge feelings (Child Problem Toolbox). This step reveals the *real* issue beneath the misbehavior. Try to understand the child's feelings, wishes, and viewpoint. (This does not mean we *agree* with the child.) F-A-X-Listening can prevent revenge cycles *or* respond to revengeful behavior by building trust.

PO PROBLEMS

STEP C: PARENT PROBLEM TOOLBOX

Discipline Toolset

Step C2 → PO Toolset ("On purpose" Misbehavior) — PO

Keep Your Cool Toolset ← STEP C1 → Clear Communication Toolset

STEP B: CHILD PROBLEM TOOLBOX F-A-X Listening Toolset Problem-Solving Toolset

STEP A: PREVENTION TOOLBOX

Step C1: Set limits or express concerns (Clear Communication Toolset)**.** These tools help parents avoid gut reactions, which usually escalate the situation or give PO misbehavior a payoff.

(You'll learn what to do instead, when we get to the PO Toolset.) Our goal is not to *control* children, but to maintain our *self*-control, which increases the effectiveness of our response.

Step C2: Redirect PU misbehavior (**PO Toolset,** PO bedroom, redirect problem behavior before you react.) Use the PO Toolset to identify the purpose of the behavior (Question #3), avoid escalating the problem or giving a payoff, and show children how to meet the purpose with positive behavior. (You'll
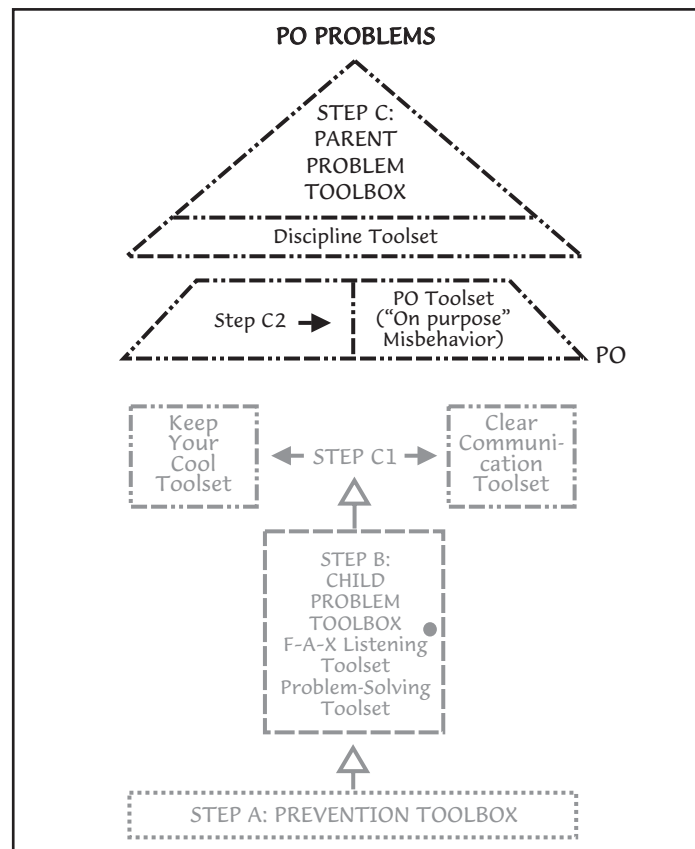
learn the specifics of identify the purpose of PO behavior in Chapter 12.) If the problem behavior continues or action is necessary, move to the next step.

★ **In a PO problem, use the PO Toolset (Step C2)** *before* **moving to the Discipline Toolset (Step C3:** move to the attic, reveal discipline, take action without a reaction.) Skipping this step can turn the discipline into punishment and escalate the problem. Once PO cycles are broken, discipline can help children learn from their mistakes, take responsibility for their actions, and make amends for the effects of their decisions—which leads to *self*-discipline.

★ **Some parents ask, "Why do I need to take all these steps when yelling or threats get children moving?"** There are two answers to this question.

1. When most parents are "PO'd," they nag, remind, or threaten two to three times before following through with action. If we are going to say two to three sentences, we want to make each part of each comment to be as effective as possible and account for the real reasons the problem developed. This is how our responses can prevent future PO behavior.

2. Quick fixes might get children to comply, but often have negative long-term effects. Competent responses often solve the problem in a similarly short time, but have positive long-term effects.

EXAMPLES OF PO PROBLEMS

1. *A child makes up "lame" excuses at bedtime to delay the inevitable "goodnight."* Who cares that the child goes to bed or sleep? The **P**arent. Since the excuses are "lame," it implies the child doesn't have a real problem and is making excuses **O**n purpose.

*Step A: **P**revent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). Plan ahead and have pleasant, consistent bedtime routines. Offer choices within limits—the limit is how much time you are willing to spend at bedtime and the choice is how the child chooses to spend that time. More choices are, "You don't have to go right to sleep. You can (list quiet activities), but need to stay in bed and be quiet." Avoid threats or catering to the lame excuses, since this gives the behavior a payoff. Parents can also teach children skills (Independence Toolset), such as how to relax when they aren't tired and how to put themselves to sleep.

*Step B: **A**cknowledge feelings* (Child Problem Toolbox). Show that you understand the child isn't tired or doesn't want to go to sleep. (This might be the first half sentence.)

*Step C1: **S**et limits or express concerns* (Clear Communication Toolset). Express your concerns about the child's health and assert your right to have some quiet time. (This could be the second half of the sentence.) If the child balks or expresses negative emotions, it is now a C/P problem. Go back to the Child Problem Toolbox to acknowledge the child's feelings, then move back to the Parent Toolbox to restate your expectations.

*Step C2: **R**edirect PO misbehavior* (**PO Toolset**). If the child refuses to stay in bed, the lack of cooperation is intentional, because the previous three steps have covered the possibility that it is PU. Use the PO Toolset to identify whether the purpose of the child's behavior is power or attention. If it's power, shift the focus of the choices, maybe to *how* or *when* to go to bed. If children try to keep the parent involved by procrastinating, remind them of the positive activities the parent already did during the bedtime routine. Ignore further requests.

*Step C3: **R**eveal discipline* (**Discipline Toolset**). If necessary, reveal the natural effect of not getting enough sleep; children will be tired the next day. Also let children know that if they choose to delay bedtime tonight, they are choosing to go to bed that much earlier the next night. When following through the next night, remind them that they will have another chance tomorrow night, to *show* they can go to bed at the regular time and in a cooperative way. Remember, if we discipline without breaking the negative behavior cycle, our discipline will be less effective and might make the situation escalate into revenge, more intense power struggles, or attention-seeking behavior.

2. *A child eats food while playing on the family computer, knowing this violates a family rule.* The last half of the sentence confirms that this is a PO problem.

*Step A: **P**revent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). Use the Cooperation Toolset to offer choices within limits or state rules in positive words, such as "You can play on the computer or take a break to eat. You decide."

*Step B: **A**cknowledge feelings* (Child Problem Toolbox). In the first part of your next sentence, recognize that your child wants to keep playing on the computer. Move to the next step to finish the sentence.

*Step C1: **S**et limits or express concerns* (Clear Communication Toolset). Explain the negative effect of eating near the computer; it can ruin the electronic components. Then make your expectations clear. Post a sign as a reminder for *everyone* who uses the computer. If the child still eats at the computer after understanding the rules, move to the next step.

Step C2: *Redirect PO misbehavior* (PO Toolset, "On purpose" misbehavior). These tools help you identify the purpose of the child's misbehavior as power. Threats or punishments invite testing, sneaking, or rebellion. Offer choices within limits in a firm, but friendly, tone of voice. "People who want to use the computer need to keep food away from it." Make sure any power struggles are diffused before moving to the next step.

Step C3: *Reveal discipline* (Discipline Toolset). If they choose to break the rule, they are choosing to *give up* their computer privileges. If this is revealed ahead of time and the parent follows through, it is clear that the child *chose* this outcome.

Combination Problems = C/P (Part Child Problem, Part Parent Problem)

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Problems can get complicated when more than one type of problem occurs at the same time. When this happens, **look at the smaller issues and identify the problem type for each part of the bigger problem.** Often, both people have a problem. It could be more than one problem or different perspectives of the same problem. Part of the problem involves/affects the child (**C** problem) and part of the problem bothers the parent (one of the three types of **P**arent problems).

The type of parent problem decides the final diagnosis:

C/P   Part **C**hild problem *and* part **P**arent problem with no misbehavior, just a difference of opinion or needs.

C/PU   Part **C**hild problem *and* part **P**arent problem with **U**nintentional misbehavior.

C/PO   Part **C**hild problem *and* part **P**arent problem with "**O**n purpose" misbehavior.
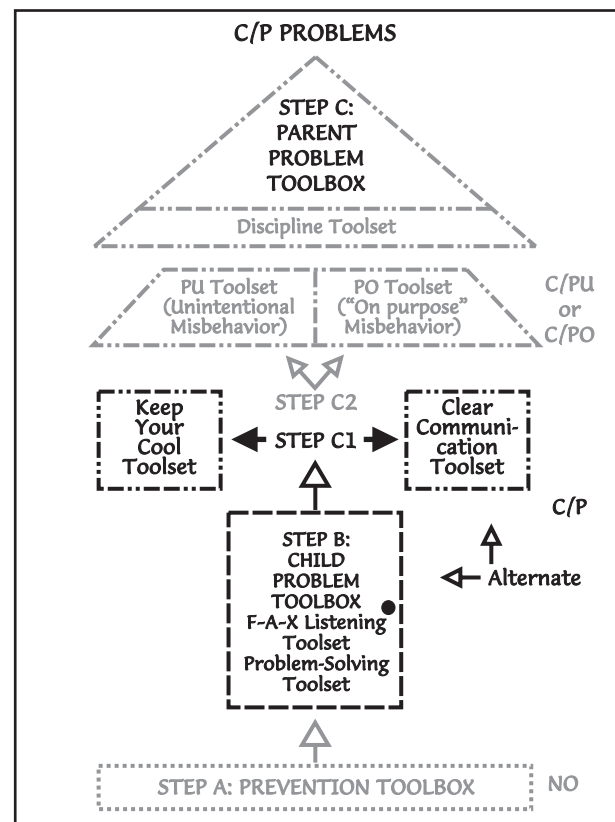
WHAT WE DO

*Step A: **P**revent problems* (Prevention Toolbox). These tools provide encouragement, teach skills, and promote teamwork. We can use these tools any time in our response.

***Step B: **A**cknowledge feelings* (Child Problem Toolbox).** Work exclusively from this and the Prevention Toolbox when addressing the Child problem.

★ **In a C/P problem, always address the Child problem** *first,* unless the Parent problem poses real or immediate danger. When parents voice *their* concerns first, children often conclude that the parents don't understand or care about the children's feelings or opinions. They usually shut down or defend themselves. When we acknowledge children's feelings first, they are more likely to listen when we express *our* concerns. When we use the Child Problem Toolbox, we might find that our children already understand our concerns, or we may only have to use one or two sentences to express our values or concerns. Applying the tools in this order helps keep the lines of communication open. Remember the quick reminder, "listen before you talk!"
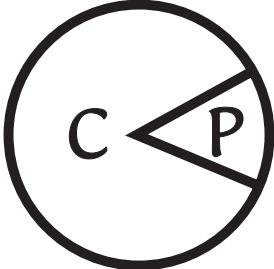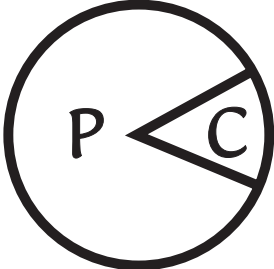
The house reminder is also a good way to remember this rule. The best way to come into a house is through the front door. This reminds us that the door, the Child Problem Toolbox, is the first step of *every* response. When parents state their part of the problem first, it's like they are climbing into the house through the window. If parents use discipline as a *first* response, the parents have climbed a ladder into the attic! The door, not the windows or attic, is the best way to enter a house.

***Step C1: **S**et limits or express concerns* (Clear Communication Toolset).** Use these tools to address *only* the parent's "SHARP RV" concerns, respectfully and assertively. If it is a C/P with no problem behavior, alternate between the F-A-X Listening and Communication Toolsets (Steps B and C1) to reach a mutual agreement.

*Step C2: **R**edirect misbehavior* (PU or PO Toolset). If misbehavior is involved, choose the toolset for that type of behavior. Teach skills (if PU) or break misbehavior cycles (if PO), to redirect the behavior.

*Step C3: **R**eveal discipline* (Discipline Toolset). If necessary, build discipline into the agreements you make. By revealing discipline in this way, children understand they must keep agreements and *they* are responsible for part of the solution.

★ **Select tools from the Child or Parent Problem Toolbox according to how much of the problem is the child's and how much is the parent's.**

Mostly a **C**hild problem.
Mostly use the Child Problem Toolbox
Only use the Parent Problem Toolbox
for the **P**arent part of the problem.

Mostly a **P**arent problem.
Still start with the Child Problem Toolbox,
but mostly use the Parent Problem Toolbox.
Go back to the Child Problem Toolbox
for the **C**hild part of the problem (feelings).

EXAMPLES OF C/P PROBLEMS

1. *A child wants to quit music lessons.* Children need to be involved in making decisions about their extracurricular activities; they are Child problems. If this problem didn't involve quitting a commitment (a Parent problem that violates *rules* and *values*), it might be a 100% Child problem. Thus, the smaller part of the problem (not to be confused with its importance) is the Parent part.

Step A: Prevent problems (Prevention Toolbox). Before children make the commitment to take music lessons, parents can confirm that children are agreeing to finish the series.

Step B: Acknowledge feelings **(Child Problem Toolbox).** Listen to the child's reasons for wanting to quit. Perhaps the child is reacting to another problem, such as feeling overwhelmed, discouraged, or embarrassed. F-A-X Listening helps children feel comfortable revealing these underlying issues.

Step C1: Set limits or express concerns **(Clear Communication Toolset).** Use these tools *only* to address the value or rule of fulfilling commitments. In this situation, parents would probably need to go no further than Step C1: Clear Communication Toolset and use parent/child problem solving to resolve the problem.

Step B: Go back to the Child Problem Toolbox to help children generate ideas for fulfilling the current commitment and consider the effects of quitting. By asking helpful questions, children can realize the consequences *on their own,* without parental lectures. Since the major part of the problem is a Child problem, the final decision must be the child's, as long as he or she considers commitments already made.

2. *A young girl bites another girl when she doesn't get what she wants.* The biter's part of the problem (C) is her frustration about not getting what she wants. Biting, which involves safety and health issues, is the parent's part of the problem. Since the girl is young, she probably doesn't have the skills to express herself appropriately (PU). With dangerous behavior, the parent needs to *act* immediately, but still follow the PASRR steps for the *verbal* statements made *during* the action.

Step B: Acknowledge feelings **(Child Problem Toolbox).** While physically separating the children, the parent acknowledges the biter's angry feelings. "I can see you are *really* angry."

Step C1: Set limits or express concerns **(Clear Communication Toolset).** State limits firmly, yet respectfully. "Biting hurts!"

Then: Go back to the Child Problem Toolbox and tend to the victim. Recognize her feelings. "Biting hurts your arm and your feelings, huh?" Offer a hug, stroke, or pat on the back.

Step C2: Redirect misbehavior (PU or PO Toolset). *Focus again on the biter.* If she doesn't already know acceptable anger management skills (PU), teach them. If the child knows not to bite and has consistently shown that she can control her anger, use the PO Toolset instead. Show the child how to get attention, power, or justice through positive behavior. Only give the biter enough attention to stop the biting, but not so much that it rewards the behavior.

Then: Shift back to the Child Problem Toolbox and tend to the victim. Use problem solving to discuss options for what she can do in the future if someone tries to bite her. (The bully/victim section of the Problem-Solving Toolset offers suggestions.)

Step C3: Reveal discipline (Discipline Toolset). Let the biter know that if she wants to play with other children, she must show she can treat other children respectfully. The child has shown she's not ready to do this, so she needs to take a break from playing until she has calmed down. Before the child returns to play, use the Prevention Toolbox to get agreements and review the child's options in future conflicts. Use the Discipline Toolset to reveal what will happen if biting occurs again. The child will give up play privileges for a longer, but still reasonable, period of time. The child can practice the skills the parent just taught while the lesson is fresh in her mind.

★ **Whenever possible, resolve the issues closer to the "core of the onion" first.** (Unless it would be dangerous to do so.) Complicated problems have several problems occurring at once, with some closer to the core of the onion than others. Identify each part of the bigger problem. If you know what

the "real issue" is, address it first. If not, follow the PASRR response formula. At "Step B: Child Problem Toolbox," the F-A-X Listening Toolset can help reveal the deeper issues.

> ***A Parenting Class Discussion.*** *A parent shared a rather complicated scenario in class. When her eight-year-old son came home from school, she reminded him that he had his first religious education class that night and would need to get his homework done before leaving. He threw his books down, saying "I want to play with Ryan! I'm not going to do this stupid homework and I'm not going to that stupid religion class." The mother reacted to the son's behavior and things deteriorated quickly. She knew she didn't handle it well, but wasn't sure what she could have done instead. The class helped her see that there were several problems happening at once. I drew the following onion diagram and we helped her come up with a general plan that might have resolved each part of the bigger problem.*
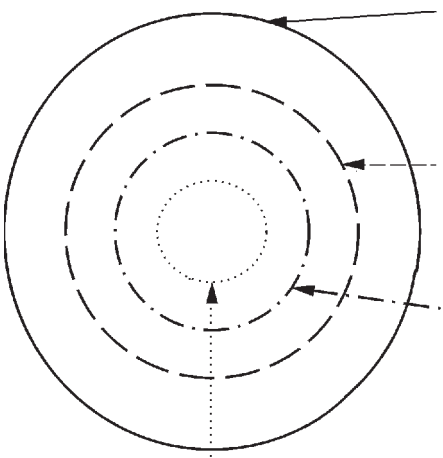
Presenting Problem: Son threw down books, refused to do homework and complained he couldn't play. Type of Problem: C/PO, the child complained, which means he has a problem. Throwing books is intentional misbehavior, a PO problem. Important Question: Why is he so upset? The answer determines the response.

*Problem: Child **thinks** he can't play. Type of Problem: PU, because he doesn't know for sure that he can't play, he is assuming this. Response: The parent first lets him know he can play, **if** he comes up with a plan to get his homework done before he needs to leave.*

Problem: Child is overwhelmed by homework. Type of Problem: C, because homework is his responsibility and he has a problem with the amount. Response: The parent acknowledges his frustration and uses problem solving to guide him.

*Real Issue: Child doesn't want to go to religion class. (The mother thought this was the core issue, more than the child feeling overwhelmed.) Type of Problem: C/P, because the child doesn't like something the parent values. Response: The parent listens to the child's reasons for disliking it, **briefly** states her values, and uses problem solving to arrive at a win/win solution.*

Use the Maintenance Toolbox (Step D) for Family Decisions and Problems or to Follow-up.

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

There is no problem and we want to maintain progress. We also might need to make decisions or solve problems that involve or affect the entire family.

WHAT WE DO

Step D: Maintenance Toolbox. (Check the roof regularly, maintain progress, follow-up.) When we are in the No problem zone,

FAMILY PROBLEMS/DECISIONS

Step D: MAINTENANCE TOOLBOX

Family Council Toolset

Three C's: Consistency, handling Criticism, Confidence
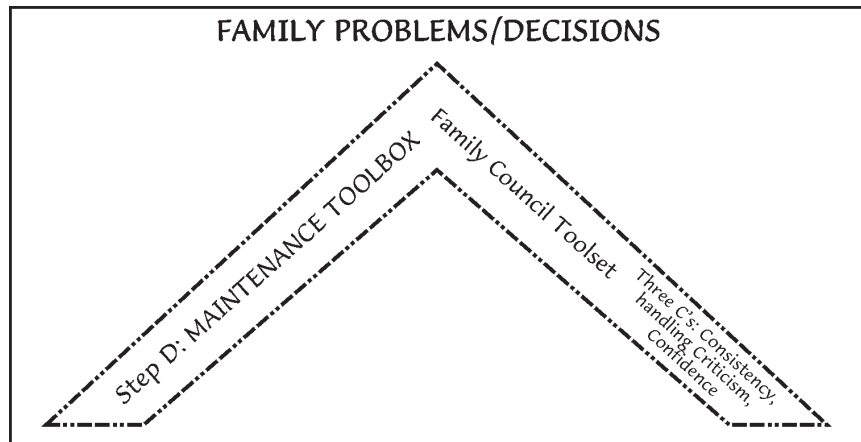
we can use the Family Council Toolset to build teamwork, discuss issues, teach healthy communication skills, and build the self-esteem of all family members. When decisions or problems affect the entire family, we can use the Family Council Toolset to involve family members in the problem-solving process. When family members agree on solutions, they are more likely to follow through with them. We can also use the Three C's (Consistency, Criticism, Confidence) to maintain our *personal* progress.

FINAL POINTS TO REMEMBER

★ **One type of behavior can be more than one type of problem, depending on how we answer the decision-making questions.** We decide which tools to choose at each step of our response by the type of problem it is at *that* time with *that* person. A good example is temper tantrums. People of any age can have "tantrums." Teens and adults might yell, stomp, or slam doors. Young children might throw themselves on the floor, kicking and screaming. The *type* of tantrum decides our response.

Frustration tantrums (C) usually occur after a build-up of emotions. We first want to offer comfort and recognize the difficulty of the situation (Child Problem Toolbox). Then, we can offer encouragement and teach skills, without taking over the problem (Prevention Toolbox).

Over-stimulation tantrums (PU) usually occur when young children are hungry, tired, or overwhelmed. They don't know how to handle these physical changes and "fall apart." **P**revent problems by establishing regular routines and teach children how to listen to their bodies (Step A). Parents need to repeat these lessons often and be patient, until children mature and master these skills. During over-stimulation tantrums, **A**cknowledge the child's feelings (Step B). Give children information to help them better understand what's happening (Step C1: **S**et limits or express concerns). **R**edirect the child by offering acceptable options that meet the child's immediate need (Step C2). Until children's skills improve, we can either remove the source of stimulation (which might be the parent) or gently but firmly remove children from the source (Step C3).

Attention tantrums (C/PO) usually occur when children use extreme behavior (PO) to get their parents to notice them (C). If attention tantrums have paid off in the past, children will escalate their behavior, until the parent *must* notice them. We can avoid some attention tantrums by spending regular quality time with children and involving them in activities that help them feel important and noticed (Step A: **P**revent the problem). When responding to attention tantrums, we recognize the child's desire to spend time with us (Step B: **A**cknowledge the feelings). We keep our cool and state our needs (Step C1: **S**et limits). Teach children positive ways to ask for attention and offer activities they *can* do, until we can give them our full attention (Step C2: **R**edirect misbehavior). If these responses don't stop the behavior, any further attention will only reward it. Selectively ignore the negative behavior long enough to make it clear that we do not pay attention to this type of behavior. If necessary, briefly remove the source of attention, which might be the parent (Step C3: **R**eveal discipline). After a brief period, suggest an activity that will result in positive attention (Step C2).

Power tantrums (C/PO) occur when children use resistance (PO) to get what they want (C). We can **P**revent many power tantrums by offering children choices about what they can have or do (Step A). When children resist, **A**cknowledge what *they* want (Step B), keep cool, and offer choices within the bottom line limits (Step C1: **S**et limits). If the tantrum continues, arguing will escalate the tantrum and giving in will give it a payoff. Instead, restate their choices, then disengage (Step C2: **R**edirect misbehavior).

If tantrums involve destructive behavior (P), we firmly but gently guide children to a place they can safely calm down (Step C3). *As we do this,* we acknowledge the child's feelings (Step B) and use controlled, calm communication (Step C1) to de-escalate the situation. Then we provide appropriate anger energy outlets (Steps C1 and C3).

★ **If you misjudge the problem or it shifts from one type to another, adjust your skills accordingly.**

> *A Personal Story. When I was a teen, I went on a camping trip with my church group. On the way home, our bus broke down and we were stranded for over two hours without a phone. It was important for me to get home on time because my mother needed help preparing for a dinner party. As I raced home, I planned my apology and how I could clean up and fulfill my duties.*
>
> *When I walked in the door, I hardly opened my mouth when my mother explained how worried and pressured she was because I was late. I started to explain what happened, but she was too over-whelmed to listen. Tired, dirty, and frustrated, I burst into tears and ran to my room.*
>
> *I'll never forget what she did next. She stopped what she was doing in the kitchen (she was already terribly behind and didn't really have the time), calmed down and came to my room. She apologized for not letting me explain what happened. I told her about the events that were totally out of my control, how I knew she was counting on me, and my plan for getting things done. She let me clean up and we worked together, finishing everything on time.*

Before I arrived, my mother thought this was a PO problem and prepared her response accordingly. When I started crying, she immediately shifted gears and dealt with my part of the problem. She realized, by the time I was done with my explanation, that it was really a C/PU problem (unintentional misbehavior). My comments addressed her concerns, so we moved on to a solution, instead of arguing.

TIPS FOR TOTS TO TEENS

Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers. Parents of young children find that most of the problems they encounter are PU problems, due to the child's immaturity and lack of skills. Parents need to be careful not to do too much for young children (taking over responsibility for a problem). Parents of infants and toddlers mostly use the Prevention Toolbox (Step A) and PU Toolset (Step C2). The Child Problem Toolbox (Step B) helps parents show empathy, teach children appropriate ways to express their feelings, and guide children to their own solutions. Use the following "rule of thumb" with young children.

> **Let toddlers help solve problems, moving gradually from small challenges to more difficult ones. When young children are close to solving a problem on their own, let them try and try again, offering skills, encouragement, and empathy at every step.**

"Tweens," elementary school-aged children and preteens. Parents of tweens experience a variety of problem situations and use every tool in this book. As children mature, they have more ideas, opinions, and values of their own. It is important that they have increasing opportunities to practice making decisions and resolving different types of problems. Use the following "rule of thumb" with tweens.

> **As children mature, we want to use tools that help them resolve their own problems and involve them in generating ideas for resolving problems that affect us.**

Teens. Parents of teens need to work primarily from the Child Problem Toolbox (Step B). When parents are concerned about SHARP RV issues, they need to use open-ended questions (Child Problem Toolbox) to help teens realize *on their own* the potential problems or parents' concerns. If potential mistakes are not serious or dangerous, let teens experience these trials and errors. These events, rather than a parent's moral lectures and rescuing, will prepare teens for adulthood. Use the Child Problem Toolbox to help teens process the lessons they learn from these mistakes. We can handle most of the problems our teens encounter as either C or C/P problems. Use the following "rule of thumb" with teens.

> **Let teens resolve problems independently whenever possible. Teach decision-making skills while offering supportive guidance. When problems affect the parent, involve teens in two-party problem solving, which will result in win/win solutions teens are willing to follow.**
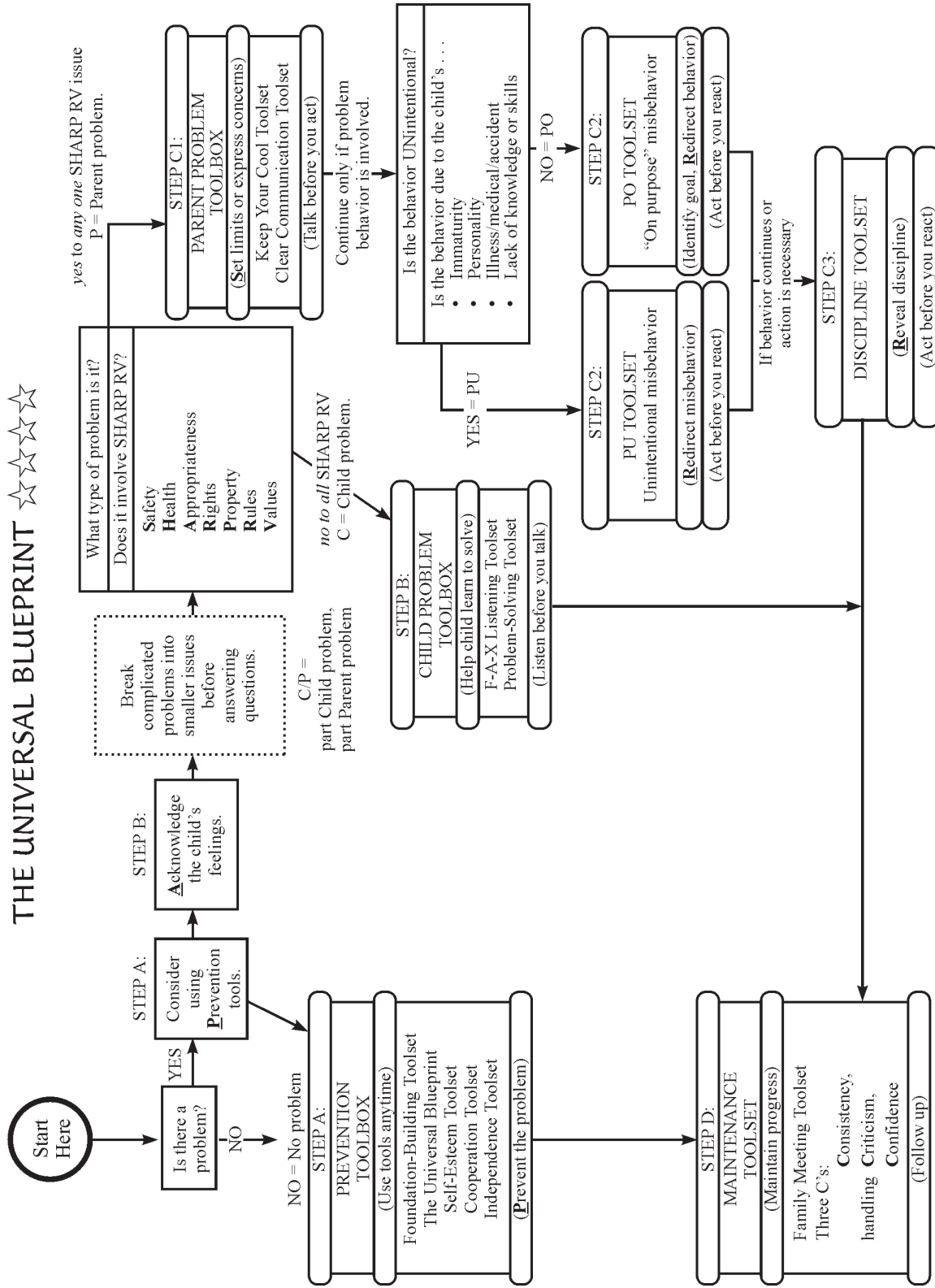
NOBODY SAID PARENTING WAS EASY

Quick fixes often have negative long-term results. The Universal Blueprint offers a simple, reliable process for planning effective responses to problems that not only work in the short-run, but help us reach our long-term parenting goals. The hardest parts of using it are stopping to think, using the tools appropriately, and following through consistently until we see results.

In every problem situation, ask first, "What type of problem is this?" The logical thinking may be difficult now, but it *will* get easier the more you practice it.

> *A **Parent's Story to Her Class.** I had an interesting experience after learning the Universal Blueprint last week. My twelve-year-old daughter never confides anything to me. This week she came home, upset about a problem with her friends at school. I stopped to think about what type of problem it was. I could tell the problem was a Child problem and knew I didn't want to do what I always did—tell her what to do about the problem. I didn't know exactly what to do, so I just listened. I said, "umm-hmm" and "I can see why you'd be upset by that." To my surprise, she shared more with me than she ever had before! Although I haven't learned exactly what to do at each step, the Universal Blueprint worked anyway!*

At this point in the book, just practice stopping to think before you respond. Use the PASRR formula as best you can with your current level of knowledge and skills. Figure out what you are already doing that is effective and what doesn't work. As you learn to use the individual tools, use them to replace those you've discarded. By the time you've finished the book, you will have *many* tools at your disposal. Soon, you will move through the decision-making process in a split second.

SUMMARY SHEET
THE UNIVERSAL BLUEPRINT ☆☆☆☆

Start Here

Is there a problem?

NO = No problem

YES

NO

STEP A: Consider using **P**revention tools.

STEP B: **A**cknowledge the child's feelings.

Break complicated problems into smaller issues before answering questions.

What type of problem is it?
Does it involve SHARP RV?

- **S**afety
- **H**ealth
- **A**ppropriatenesss
- **R**ights
- **P**roperty
- **R**ules
- **V**alues

yes to any one SHARP RV issue
P = Parent problem.

STEP C1: PARENT PROBLEM TOOLBOX
(**S**et limits or express concerns)
Keep Your Cool Toolset
Clear Communication Toolset
(**T**alk before you act)
Continue only if problem behavior is involved.

Is the behavior UNintentional?

Is the behavior due to the child's . . .
- Immaturity
- Personality
- Illness/medical/accident
- Lack of knowledge or skills

YES = PU

NO = PO

STEP C2: PU TOOLSET
Unintentional misbehavior
(**R**edirect misbehavior)
(**A**ct before you react)

STEP C2: PO TOOLSET
"On purpose" misbehavior
(Identify goal. **R**edirect behavior)
(**A**ct before you react)

If behavior continues or action is necessary

STEP C3: DISCIPLINE TOOLSET
(**R**eveal discipline)
(**A**ct before you react)

C/P = part Child problem, part Parent problem

no to all SHARP RV
C = Child problem.

STEP B: CHILD PROBLEM TOOLBOX
(Help child learn to solve)
F-A-X Listening Toolset
Problem-Solving Toolset
(**L**isten before you talk)

STEP A: PREVENTION TOOLBOX
(Use tools anytime)
Foundation-Building Toolset
The Universal Blueprint
Self-Esteem Toolset
Cooperation Toolset
Independence Toolset
(**P**revent the problem)

STEP D: MAINTENANCE TOOLSET
(Maintain progress)
Family Meeting Toolset
Three C's:
Consistency,
handling **C**riticism,
Confidence
(Follow up)

THE UNIVERSAL

(Read each row from left to right,

Identifying Problem Types

Problem Type[1]	Questions to Ask to Identify the Problem[2]	Toolbox/Toolset to Use	When to Use It
ALL	If the problem or decision affects the entire family, use family councils to solve.	**MAINTENANCE TOOLBOX:** Family Council Toolset & Three C's	To prevent or resolve **problems that affect the entire family**
PO	**Q3: If PO, what *is* the purpose?** Attention, Power, Revenge, Giving Up	**PARENT PROBLEM TOOLBOX:** PO Toolset and Discipline Toolset if needed	**PO problems,** When *intentional* misbehavior occurs
PU	**Q2: Is the misbehavior PU or PO?** Has the child *consistently shown mastery* of appropriate behavior? A: PU = no PO = yes	PU Toolset and Discipline Toolset if needed	**PU problems,** when *unintentional* misbehavior occurs
P	Yes to *any* SHARP RV issue *and no* misbehavior involved = Parent problem. *If misbehavior is involved, go to Question #2.*	Keep Your Cool & Clear Communication Toolsets	**Parent problems, with *no* misbehavior**
C	**When there is a problem, ask: Q1: Is it a Child or Parent problem?[3]** Child = Yes to *any* PESS issues: Peers, Emotions, Siblings, School Parent = Yes to *any* SHARP RV issues: Safety, Health, Appropriateness, Rights, Property, Rules, Values	**CHILD PROBLEM TOOLBOX:** F-A-X Listening & Problem-Solving Toolsets	**Child problems,** which directly affect or involve the child *and* as the first step in *all* responses
NO	If there is no problem, we can still teach skills and develop positive qualities.	**PREVENTION TOOLBOX:** Independence Cooperation Self-Esteem Foundation-Building	**NO problems,** to prevent problems or ***anytime*** in response to a problem

1   C/P combination problems: Break problems into smaller parts and identify type for each part. Always address Child problem first. Select tools according to how much of the problem is C or P.

2   Answer the questions for *that* moment with *that* person in *that* situation.

BLUEPRINT

from the bottom, up.)

Universal Response Formula (PASRR)

Step[4]	What We Do	Quick Reminder	House Reminder	House Graphic
D	Maintain progress.	Follow-up.	Check the roof regularly for maintenance.	STEP D: MAINTENANCE TOOLBOX / Family Council Toolset / Three C's: Consistency, Criticism, Confidence
C3	**Reveal discipline,** the outcome of poor behavior choice.	Take action, without a reaction.	Go to the attic.	STEP C: PARENT PROBLEM TOOLBOX / Discipline Toolset
C2	**Redirect** misbehavior.	Redirect, before you react.	Choose a bedroom.	PU Toolset (Unintentional misbehavior) / PO Toolset ("On purpose" misbehavior)
C1	**Set limits** or express our concerns and feelings.	Talk before you act.	Open the windows.	Keep Your Cool Toolset / Clear Communication Toolset
B	**Acknowledge feelings** or the other person's perspective.	Listen before you talk.	Open the door.	STEP B: CHILD PROBLEM TOOLBOX / Problem-Solving Toolset / F-A-X Listening Toolset
A	**Prevent problems** from starting or worsening.	Think before you listen.	Walk up the stairs.	STEP A: PREVENTION TOOLBOX / Independence Toolset / Cooperation Toolset / Self-Esteem Toolset / The Universal Blueprint / Foundation-Building Toolset

3   In adult relationships, C = the other person and P = me.
4   Follow the steps in order. At any step, you can use tools from previous steps.

PRACTICE EXERCISES

A. Sample Situations. Here are some common situations. For each, ask three questions:
- *What type of problem is this?* (Use the six symbols)
  - NO = No problem
  - C = Child problem
  - P = Parent problem
  - PU = Parent problem, Unintentional misbehavior
  - PO = Parent problem, "On Purpose" misbehavior
  - C/P = Part Child problem, part Parent problem. If it involves problem behavior, add the appropriate symbol: C/PU or C/PO.

- *Why?* (How did you answer Questions 1 & 2 to identify the type of problem?)
- *What toolbox or toolsets can you use?* Use the summary sheets in this chapter, the color poster, or the house diagram on the last page of the book to help you select the toolboxes and toolsets that are most appropriate. You don't have to include specific tools or responses, since we haven't learned them yet. After you give *your* answers, read the detailed answer key. It offers some specific suggestions and shows how some problems can be more than one type of problem, depending on the individual answers people might give to the three problem-identification questions (SHARP RV, PU or PO, etc.).

1. Your daughter, 2, is grabbing another child's toy, but won't to share her toy.

2. You are at a restaurant with your son, 4, waiting for your food. Your son is being loud and climbing around. It's starting to bother the people around you.

3. Your son, 7, delays getting ready in the morning.

4. Your daughter, 8, says she feels left out at school.

5. Surprise! An old childhood friend just called. He's in town for the day and would like to drop in and visit. The house is a bit cluttered and you have a half hour to clean it up. Your children, ages 4, 9, and 13 are outside playing.

6. Your daughter, 10, doesn't want to set the table because she's in the middle of a video game.

7. Your daughter, 13, brought home a note from her teacher, saying she is missing three homework assignments. This is unusual, since she normally completes her work on time.

8. Your son, 16, peels out of the driveway, squealing the car tires and speeding down the street.

B. Personal Application. List several problems you have experienced. Identify the problem type for each. Decide what toolbox or toolsets you could use next time. Notice if answering these questions offers insight to the *real* cause of the problem or a more effective way to respond.

C. Practice for Home. As problems arise at home or work, practice identifying the type of problem it is before responding. You can also observe others and how they handle problem situations. It's easier to stay objective when you aren't emotionally involved. When you see others experiencing a problem, decide what type of problem it is and which toolbox or toolsets *you* would use. Don't judge others or interfere. It is *their* problem and they are probably responding the best they can with the knowledge and skills they have. (The only exception is if you witness child abuse, which you should immediately report.) Practice the PASRR steps in your mind in case *you* ever have to respond to a similar situation.

Detailed Answers

Look at the poster, flow chart, or two-page table to see the logic in the following answers. As we go through the individual toolsets, you will learn about the tools that are mentioned in the answers.

1. Your daughter, 2, is grabbing another child's toy, but won't to share her toy.

Type of Problem: C/PU

Why?   Your daughter wants something she can't have and doesn't want to share or trade her toy (the Child part of the problem). Several SHARP RV issues are present (the Parent part of the problem): Grabbing is *inappropriate* behavior that violates the other child's *rights* and family *rules* or *values*. Since the child is immature, she doesn't understand or have the skills to share properly (PU). Although this behavior is considered "normal" for children this age, it should not be *excused.*

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?
Step A: **P**revent the problem by closely supervising and guiding young children. Allow them to have *some* toys they don't have to share. Let them put away these toys before playing with other children. Encourage young children to "parallel play," playing independently near each other. Teach sharing skills, such as asking permission to borrow toys, trading toys for ones she wants, and taking turns. Don't expect young children to make progress quickly. It takes time for their skills and maturity to develop. When property disputes arise, continue the PASRR process.

Step B: **A**cknowledge the child's desire to play with the other child's toy.
Step C1:   **S**et limits and express your rule or value about sharing, *while* taking the next step.
Step C2:   **R**edirect the behavior by teaching the skills and exact words she can say, "If you want that toy, you need to say 'May I please have . . .' or 'Can we trade toys?'"
Step C3:   **R**eveal the outcome of grabbing or not sharing toys: one or both children will be upset and have hurt feelings. If she can't share, she may need to play elsewhere.

2.   You are at a restaurant with your son, 4, waiting for your food. Your son is being loud and climbing around. It's starting to bother the people around you.

Type of Problem: C/PU or C/PO

Why?   Your son is bored and hungry (C). His inappropriate behavior is interfering with other people's rights (P). At four, children often fall apart when hungry or still lack good manners (PU). If he can usually handle being hungry and bored, but is trying to get attention, it is intentional misbehavior (PO).

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?
Step A: **P**revent or respond to this problem by using the Cooperation Toolset. Tell children what they *can* do while they wait, offering choices within limits. Use the Independence Toolset to teach manners, public behavior skills, and how to entertain oneself. Do activities *with* them, instead of reading a paper and ignoring them. If there aren't any activities, flip over the paper placemat and take turns drawing pictures, letters or words and guessing what they are. Play tic-tac-toe or connect the dots.
Step B: **A**cknowledge the child's boredom or hunger. Recognize the difficulty in keeping quiet and still for a long time. (You can take this step first, if you choose.)
Step C1:   If you do these first two steps and the problem continues, quickly **S**et limits, "When we are in a restaurant, we need to be quiet so other people can enjoy *their* dinner."
Step C2:   Decide whether the behavior is intentional and use the appropriate toolset to **R**edirect the negative behavior. Take a walk, look at paintings on the wall, or trees outside as a distraction.

Step C3: When misbehavior is severe or previous attempts fail, it's time for action (**R**eveal discipline). Temporarily leave the room or restaurant. Go to the parking lot or car. (There are several ways this action could escalate the situation, so there are step-by-step guidelines in Chapter 13, "Discipline Toolset.") If you leave completely, you are violating your right to occasionally eat out. If it comes to this, as it might, go alone next time.

3.   Your son, 7, delays getting ready in the morning.

Type of Problem: NO, PU, or PO, depending on your answers.

Why?   It is a NO problem if you don't need to go somewhere or have a flexible schedule. It is a PU problem if you need to go somewhere, but the child is still learning the skills to perform his morning routine. It is a PO problem if you are in a rush and your child is skilled and mature enough to understand and perform his morning routine, but is purposefully delaying.

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?
If it is a NO problem:
Step A: Use *only* the Prevention Toolbox. Allow more time in the morning, plan the night before, offer choices, or make requests in positive words. Teach skills and offer encouragement for his efforts.

If it is a PU problem:
Step A: **P**revent the problem with the Prevention Toolbox (same as above).
Step B: **A**cknowledge the difficulty of doing so many tasks in a short time.
Step C1:   If necessary, **S**et time limits and state your concerns.
Step C2:   **R**edirect the behavior by teaching skills and/or structure the environment, such as rearranging the order of the routine.

If it is a PO problem:
Step A: Use the Prevention Toolbox first.
Step B: **A**cknowledge that the child doesn't want to wear particular clothes.
Step C1:   If necessary, **S**et limits and describe your expectations and feelings.
Step C2:   If the child resists, use the PO Toolset to identify the purpose. It could be attention, to keep you involved or power, to exert independence and control in the situation. **R**edirect the misbehavior by helping him accomplish this goal in a positive way.
Step C3:   If this is not enough, **R**eveal the natural consequences that will occur. (Children can go hungry, but not naked!)

4.   Your daughter, 8, says she feels left out at school.

Type of Problem: C

Why?   Although you certainly care about what your child experiences at school, it doesn't involve any SHARP RV issues. (*She* isn't violating anyone's rights). If others are violating *her* rights, this is a problem for her (a Child problem). It's important for children to learn how to handle such situations on their own and work through their feelings of rejection. If you solve these problems *for* children or offer solutions, they might not feel understood or capable of solving the problem.

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?
Step B: **A**cknowledge your daughter's feelings of rejection and hurt. Use F-A-X Listening and problem solving (the Child Problem Toolbox) to empathize and explore options for how she can prevent or deal with the problem at school. At any point in the conversation, you can offer encouragement and teach skills (Step A: **P**revent the problem from starting or worsening.)

5.   Surprise! An old childhood friend just called. He's in town for the day and is visiting in a half an hour. The house is a bit cluttered and your children, ages 4, 9, and 13 are outside playing.

Type of Problem: NO or P, depending on your values.

Why? If you don't care whether your house is cluttered when company visits, this is a NO problem. Go fix some iced tea. If you want the house to be clean, that's *your* issue. Since you were not already planning to clean, you could choose, in *this* situation, not to ask your children for help. Normally, household duties are the *family's* responsibility and it violates your *rights* to do all the work. If you choose to ask for help, plan a helpful way to gain their cooperation, which will prevent a power struggle.

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?
Step B: Acknowledge their needs and perspective up front. "I see you are all having a lot of fun."
Step C1: Explain the problem and own your issues. "An old friend will be here in a half hour. We should have cleaned the house already and some of the messes aren't mine, so I'd like everyone to pitch in."
Step A: Add one last sentence (from the Cooperation Toolset) to prevent resistance. "If we all work together we could get it done in 20 minutes. You can go right back to playing when we are done."
If they still resist or complain, *they* have a problem (C/P).
Step B: Shift back to the Child Problem Toolbox, "I know, it really isn't fair that I'm asking you to do this on such short notice. I feel bad interrupting you when you're having so much fun."
Step C1: "It also isn't fair if I clean up other people's messes."
Step A: Don't get stuck in a back and forth negotiation; the clock is ticking. Use your creativity and the Prevention Toolbox to move forward. "We don't have to dust, mop, or vacuum. All you need to do is pick up stuff and put it in your rooms. Let's play music and see how much we can get done."

★ Did you notice we didn't go PASRR this time? In this situation, we knew the children would probably resist, so we tried to prevent a power struggle by acknowledging their feelings *first.* Since we can use the Prevention Toolbox *any time,* this was the most flowing way to say what we wanted to say.

6. Your daughter, 10, doesn't want to set the table because she's in the middle of a video game.

Type of problem: C/PO

Why? The parent cares that the table needs to be set. There is not much time flexibility, and it would violate the parent's *rights* to do all the work for a family dinner. The child's problem (the smaller, but not less important part) is that she is still playing her game.

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?
Step A: **P**revent the problem by planning ahead.
Step B: Use the Child Problem Toolbox to **A**cknowledge her perspective. "I see you're in the middle of your game . . ."
Step C1: Use the Clear Communication Toolset (Parent Problem Toolbox) to **S**et limits and state your needs. ". . . but the table needs to be set in five minutes."
Step C2: Use the PO Toolset ("On purpose" misbehavior) to **R**edirect a power struggle, offering choices within limits. "You can either pause the game or turn it off. It's your choice."
Step C3: If she doesn't come in five minutes, **R**eveal discipline. Either the child can turn off the computer or the parent can. The child's behavior will show her choice. (Remember, don't move to discipline, unless you present it as a choice. If you don't, it will turn the discipline into a power play.)

7. Your daughter, 13, brought home a note from her teacher, saying she is missing three homework assignments. This is unusual, since she normally completes her work on time.

Type of Problem: C

Why? Homework is *her* responsibility and this problem is between her and the teacher (C/T?). Naturally, the parent will be concerned and want to discuss the problem with the child. Since

this is a Child problem, the parent must keep the ball in her court and hold her accountable for the solution. If this were an ongoing problem, then it would violate rules or values (C/P).

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?

In Child problems, we only use the Prevention and Child Problem Toolboxes. Ask a few *helpful* questions, pausing between each, to listen respectfully to her answers. "What happened?" "How do you plan to make up this work?" (No blaming or criticizing!) Use problem solving to finalize the details of her plan. Express faith in her ability to handle this situation promptly.

8. Your son, 16, peels out of the driveway, squealing the car tires and speeding down the street.

Type of Problem: PO

Why? Who cares about speeding? Probably not the teen. Since the behavior endangers safety (SHARP RV), it is a **P**arent problem. Although taking risks is a common developmental behavior of teens, this teen is aware of the laws and rules regarding driving. (He *did* pass a driving exam to have the *privilege* of driving.) This makes the misbehavior intentional, "**O**n purpose."

What toolbox or toolsets can you use?

Step A: **P**revent the problem from worsening or happening again by *planning* a helpful response. Express faith in the teen's ability to be a safe driver and describe his past efforts.

Step B: **A**cknowledge the teen's natural desire to experiment with the thrill of speeding (or wanting to impress his friends). Then listen carefully to the teen's perspective; it will reveal the purpose of the misbehavior.

Step C1: **S**et limits and state your concerns about the dangers of speeding and his agreement to abide by the driving laws. Focus on driving being a privilege. To have the privilege, one must show responsibility. Get agreements for the conditions of maintaining the privilege. *Avoid lecturing.* Be ready to shift gears between the Clear Communication Toolset (Step C1) and the Child Problem Toolbox (Step B).

Step C2: **R**edirect the behavior by identifying the purpose behind it. Is the child speeding to impress his friends (attention) or to prove he has power? If we listen effectively, he will give us the clues to know the difference. When problem solving, brainstorm more appropriate ways to meet this purpose.

Step C3: **R**eveal the effects of violating the driving laws by building discipline into your agreements. If he chooses to speed or drive dangerously, he is showing he is not ready for the privilege of driving. He will be temporarily giving up his driving privileges or could be forced to give them up by getting a speeding ticket. Should it happen again, follow through, reminding the teen that his behavior and the resulting effects are *his* choice.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Let the information from this chapter sink in for a week and then read the next chapter. Observe the world around you. Practice identifying problems and rehearsing the PASRR formula flow in your mind.

The rest of the book teaches us the tools we need to meet our third mission goal: **DELIVER it [the response] effectively.** Beginning with the next chapter, we will go through each step of the Universal Blueprint and explain exactly how to use each individual tool available at that step.

When you are ready to start learning about specific tools and how to use them, begin your tour of the toolsets with the next chapter, Chapter 4, "Self-Esteem Toolset." We discuss unconditional love, seeing the positive side of every situation, comparisons and competition, internal and external motivation, and how to handle mistakes (ours and our children's). We learn the special language of descriptive encouragement, which builds self-esteem without unintentionally pressuring or discouraging our children.