THE TOOLBOX PROJECT

TOOLS FOR LEARNING • TOOLS FOR LIFE

Building children's resilience, self-mastery, and empathy for others

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The 12 Tools

Breathing Tool
Quiet/Safe Place Tool
Listening Tool
Empathy Tool
Personal Space Tool
Using Our Words Tool
Garbage Can Tool
Taking Time Tool
Please & Thank You Tool
Apology & Forgiveness Tool
Patience Tool
Courage Tool

"Of all the programs on the Federal lists, Toolbox is the only one that teaches children about their own resilience."

—Bonnie Benard
Author, *Resiliency: What We Have Learned*

What is Toolbox?

Filling a gap in today's educational assumptions, *Toolbox*, by Dovetail Learning, honors children's innate capacity for managing their own emotional, social, and academic success by giving them tools that empower them.

The *Toolbox* curriculum teaches 12 simple yet powerful "Tools." With practice and in a classroom community that shares them, these inner skills become important personal and social proficiencies for: self-awareness, self-management, healthy relationships, and responsible decision-making. The common language and practices of *Toolbox* help children quickly adopt the Tools and use them with autonomy, resilience, and self-mastery.

Toolbox starts with the individual child, building self-knowledge and self-trust; it quickly creates improvements in communication, civility and conflict resolution in the classroom, on the playground, and across the whole school community. *Toolbox* is an upstream prevention/intervention program that restores hope and optimism to teachers, children, and their families.

Academic and Life Success

Toolbox is a discovery that offers a core-solution in education, producing a quantum leap in our ability to help children access their innate capacity as human beings. Thirty-years of research in the field of childhood resilience has proven that 1) these skills are critical for academic learning, 2) they can be taught and learned, and 3) this kind of training produces enduring benefits for lifelong success.

A Social and Emotional Learning Program for Kindergarten to Grade Six

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The 12 Tools

Tools for Learning • Tools for Life

Breathing Tool

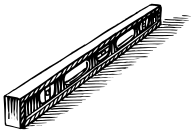
I calm myself and check-in.

Quiet/Safe Place Tool

I remember my quiet/safe place.

Listening Tool

I listen with my ears, eyes, and heart.



Empathy Tool

I care for others. I care for myself.

Personal Space Tool

I have a right to my space and so do you.

Using Our Words Tool

I ask for what I want and need.

Garbage Can Tool

I let the little things go.

Taking Time Tool

I use time wisely.

Please & Thank You Tool

I treat others with kindness and appreciation.

Apology & Forgiveness Tool

I admit my mistakes and work to forgive yours.

Patience Tool

I am strong enough to wait.

Courage Tool

I have the courage to do the "right" thing.

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THE 12 TOOLS

TOOLS FOR LEARNING • TOOLS FOR LIFE

1. **Breathing Tool:** *I calm myself and check-in.*

   Awareness of breathing brings immediate calm and time to think. It is a bridge to self-reflection that guides one toward effective choices and positive change. Cultures across the world have recognized the breath as a gateway to wisdom. Without the healthy ability to practice inner-calm and self-reflection, it is difficult to learn, relate to others, or know oneself. Attention to breathing is the key to self-control, understanding, and genuine connection with others.

2. **Quiet/Safe Place Tool:** *I remember my quiet/safe place.*

   Quietness gives one strength. When we have a "place" of solace, safety, and quiet, then creativity, imagination, and self-expression emerge naturally. One way we feel safe is when we have a quiet, safe place *physically*. The Quiet/Safe Place Tool is away of remembering our quiet stillness. When we listen from the quiet place within our hearts, we make space to hear our natural wisdom.

3. **Listening Tool***: I listen with my ears, eyes, and heart.*

   Listening with one's heart is the key to strong relationship and conflict resolution. Listening with one's heart brings empathy. This is most important. When we listen, the rest of the Tools work easily. This ability to listen is naturally within each of us. When we breathe from a quiet place inside, listening becomes easier.

4. **Empathy Tool:** *I care for others. I care for myself.*

   Empathy is noticing how another person is feeling and being able to understand what they must be feeling. Empathy is caring about someone else. Empathy is the root of tolerance, kindness, and forgiveness. Turned inward, this becomes care and understanding for oneself.

5. **Personal Space Tool:** *I have a right to my space and so do you.*

   We all have an indelible right to our personal space and the responsibility to give others the same right. Noticing the physical space around us helps us see our own needs and those of others. In addition, this Tool encompasses intelligence through awareness of our body wisdom: body language, sensations, gestures, position, posture, voice tone, quality, and volume.

6. **Using Our Words Tool:** *I ask for what I want and need.*

   Careful use of words encourages understanding, connection, and intimacy. Careless or offensive words harm relationships. By learning the importance of words and how they impact relationships, the Using Our Words Tool helps us with conflict resolution. This is a skill we must learn. Using the "right" words, in the "right" way, at the "right" time, for the "right" reasons creates deep connection. Using Our Words requires practice, practice, and more practice.

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7. Garbage Can Tool: *I let the little things go.*

We do not have to take unkind words personally (into our personal space). We can take responsibility for what we do with other people's words and actions, and how we feel about them. Sometimes the best choice is to throw harmful words way. Sometimes we need to listen more carefully to what is behind the words. This Tool has its origins in the martial art of Aikido, The Art of Peaceful Reconciliation. It is one of the younger children's favorites.

8. Taking Time Tool: *I use time wisely.*

There are many useful ways to use time intelligently for one's well-being and the well-being of others. When we choose how to use our time we can be more effective. Stepping back and taking Time-Away renews our resiliency. Taking Time-In (within oneself) to self-reflect leads to better self-understanding and more authentic connections with others.

9. Please and Thank You Tool: *I treat others with kindness and appreciation.*

Please and Thank You are "magic words" that make people feel good. Expressing gratitude and giving thanks are basic principles of kindness and generosity. This opens the doorway to intimacy and caring relationships. When added politely to a request, the word "please" encourages others to want to be helpful and kind. Saying "thank you" lets people know you value them. These simple words create warm connections with others.

10. Apology and Forgiveness Tool: *I admit my mistakes and work to forgive yours.*

A sincere apology opens the door to self-responsibility and forgiveness. It takes self-esteem and inner strength to admit a mistake and do the right thing. Using the Apology & Forgiveness Tool is a giant leap towards maturity. Forgiveness takes equal strength. It requires letting go of anger and judgment. It does not mean we have to forget, but there must be a willingness to forgive. If we are still holding the hot ember of anger, resentment, or hatred, we are the one still getting burned.

11. Patience Tool: *I am strong enough to wait.*

Patience is the ability to wait quietly. Patience develops our capacity for tolerating situations that are not in our control. Children learn patience when we model it. If patience is not modeled, children may learn to be impatient, demanding, and impulsive.

12. Courage Tool: *I have the courage to do the "right" thing.*

Courage is having inner strength and bravery to do the "right thing" even when it is difficult. When we feel troubled by our own or others' behaviors, it takes courage to use our Tools. Helping children to have courage lets them explore the unfamiliar. Courage, from Latin *cor* ("heart"), means to act with "heart." Acting with courage is empowering.

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are small matters compared to what lies within us."

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

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Toolbox Implementation

Training: Schools begin with a one-day training in which all teachers, administrators, office staff, yard-duty aides, and custodians learn the language and practices of the 12 Tools. The introductory training includes:

- Research
- Practices
- Pedagogy

Research: The science of why emotional regulation is critical to learning is a basis of this workshop. Linking adult attitudes to child responses brings the importance of the inner-work of the teacher to the core of teaching.

Practices: The 12 Tools are taught experientially so that adults can feel the impact of these skills in their own life. We teach that teachers must "go first" in learning and using the Tools.

Pedagogy: Teachers are introduced to the pedagogy of resilience: the power of the relationship, high expectation messages, and giving children opportunities for meaningful contribution. This includes working with the curriculum flow, sequence, and function within each of the 12 Tools units and lessons.

Advanced Training: We offer multi-year support on using the Tools within academic instruction, as a bully-prevention program, within disciplinary procedures, in assemblies and class meetings, and in parenting.

Curriculum Instruction

Toolbox is embedded within the context of the classroom and whole school. Two developmentally distinct binders (K-3 and 4-6 curricula) are in their 5th Edition. Each curriculum is laid-out for multi-year use, with sections for:

- Introducing the Tools (K-3 focus on learning the Tools; 4-6 focus is on using these Tools for their Journey) through literature, puppets, role-play, journaling, and ongoing conversation.
- Putting the Tools to Work by exploring together the impact of when each Tool is used (or not used) within oneself and in others.

As soon as a Tool is introduced it becomes part of the "common-language" in academics, discipline, and school culture.

Toolbox is an inquiry-based model. Asking, "what three Tools have you tried?" gives children the competence and confidence to solve their own problems. Every Tool can be communicated through embodied hand-gestures and modeling by adults.

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THE TOOLBOX PROJECT

Teaches Children

Self-Mastery: Autonomy, Agency, and Self-Efficacy

- How to realize their innate goodness and intrinsic wholeness
- How to belong and contribute their uniqueness
- How to achieve emotional intelligence in 3-5 seconds
- How to be proactive and not reactive
- How to organize and understand their internal experience and make sense of it
- How to care for themselves and experience empathy for others
- How to understand and make sense of what is going on around them
- How to find their voice and self- knowing (internal locus of control)
- How to listen to their inner-voice non-judgmentally and make fair self-assessments
- How to let the little things go
- How to use time intelligently
- How to be grateful and give thanks from a place of authenticity
- How to be forgiving when it is time
- How to apologize when aware of harming others
- How to understand the value and intelligence of patience
- How to be courageous in a world without *Toolbox*

Toolbox helps children become effective learners, friends, community members, and citizens.

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