## CONTENTS

**CD 1**

Introduction 5

Track 1: Focus on What You Want 11

Track 2: Understanding What Teenagers Want 13

Track 3: Common Concerns 17

Track 4: Letting Go 18

Track 5: Successful Parents: Always Be Prepared! 20

Track 6: Teenage Emotions 24

Track 7: One Point 25

Track 8: Family Talk Time 27

Track 9: Handling Anger Positively 29

Track 10: Ways to Listen 32

Track 11: Different Ways to Show Affection 44

Track 12: Is Something Seriously Wrong? 45

Track 13: Drugs 46

Track 14: Drinking 48

Track 15: Smoking 50

Track 16: Sex and Relationships 51

Track 17: Friendships 53

Track 18: Encouraging Good Behaviour 55

Track 19: Your Parenting Style 60

Track 20: Who’s Problem Is This? 71

Track 21: The Empty Nest Syndrome 73

Track 22: Looking Back from Your Rocking Chair 74

**CD 2**

Track 1: Living the Dream—Ways to Live Magically 76

Track 2: Time Travel 81

Track 3: One Point 86

Track 4: The Circle of Confidence 88

## Introduction

Hello,

I’m Sue Atkins and I’m the Director of Positive Parents = Confident Kids and the author of *Raising Happy Children for Dummies* one in the black and yellow series that you see in lots of bookshops throughout the world.

I’d like to read you a quote by a man called Forest Witcraft that changed my life and has been the driving passion behind all the work I do.

“Fifty years from now it won’t matter what kind of car you drove

What kind of house you lived in

How much you had in your bank account

Or what your clothes looked like

But the world may be a little better because you were important in the life of a child”

You are that important person in the life of your child.

I’m passionate about parenting and I love helping parents get back into the driving seat of their family relationships, boosting their confidence and putting back the bounce and laughter into their family life again and this TOOLKIT is a way for me to do just that with you now.

I’m not a Supernanny or a Mary Poppins and I don’t tell people how to run their lives as every family is unique and different but what I can do as a Parent Coach is to help you find your own answers to your own family and to take you from where you are now to where you would like to go in your family relationships with your teenager or young adult.

I help you to look at the bigger picture to your parenting not just stuck in the rows, arguments and confrontation of trying to get them to study and do well at school, tidy their bedroom or come in when you tell them scenarios that most parents get stuck in.

This TOOLKIT will help you to focus on the bigger picture and will help you develop and fine tune the way you help your children handle the difficult business of becoming independent- this TOOLKIT will also help you as a parent develop your own confidence, style and rhythm -helping you feel less stressed, more energised and in control of your family life which I think is absolutely vital for bringing up happy, confident, well-balanced adults - today’s children -tomorrow’s future.

Throughout this TOOLKIT I will support, encourage and believe in you because I know first hand how difficult and demanding bringing up teenagers really is - as kids don’t come with a handbook and I’ve got two kids of my own! My son is 15 and my daughter is 13 and I am clearly a work in progress too - as my teenage daughter likes to point out when I’m losing the plot with her!

Before we begin on our journey together I want you to imagine that you’ve hired me to be your very own personal parent coach and just like when I work with parents I really want to make sure that you get the best out of our sessions together and this TOOLKIT is no exception.

I want you to enjoy doing the exercises and enjoy learning about new and different ways to parent and handle the changes and challenges of bringing up teenagers in the 21st century.

It takes courage to be curious about exploring new ways to do things. It was Einstein who said the definition of madness was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result!

So by doing the exercises on this TOOLKIT you are unlocking your confidence and exploring your parenting potential and the key thing to always remember is “What you practise you become” - so it’s a bit like learning anything new it just takes a bit of practise to make something new into a natural habit.

This TOOLKIT is about looking at one of the key habits of successful parents - developing flexibility and the ability to handle parenting change easily and effectively.

Handling change with children of any age is often a difficult experience but there are ways to remain centred, calm and in control of your own emotions even when the world seems to be spinning faster than usual.

I believe success and happiness are not just accidents that happen to some people and not others - I believe that they are predicable results created by deliberate ways of thinking and acting.

I remember going on my first Paul McKenna and Richard Bandler Neuro Linguistic Programming Training (NLP) where I overcame my fear of falling. Since I was 12 I had a fear of falling because I had jumped off the diving board at Putney swimming pool and thought I was going to die but just through listening to Paul cure another woman’s lifelong phobia of flying on the stage, my unconscious was using her story to help me sort out my fear so I put it to test myself! I went on to do a skydive from 12,000 feet and loved it !

Powerful stuff and it taught me that handling change is often just the way we perceive it.

Changes that matter most are often just a small or slight change in your perception of things.

It got me thinking about why people expect the teenage years to be so full of angst, confrontations and stress and be so painful for everyone.

I’m not underestimating the often difficult emotions involved in handling your teenager’s striving to become more independent but I passionately believe that change can be handled easily if you develop some strategies and ways to perceive it and this TOOLKIT is about exploring ways for you to handle your young adults growing need to become more assertive, more independent and more of an individual so you can act as a positive role model for your children to help them go through change less arduously which I believe is a very important life skill.

I genuinely think it’s the smallest changes in life that often make the biggest differences.

And the changes start with **you.**

For years people thought that a human being couldn’t run faster than a 4 minute mile - then something amazing happened - Roger Bannister did the impossible - he ran a 4 minute mile on May 6th 1954 and the world stood back in amazement and awe…… but then for me the most interesting thing happened…….. more and more people started to run a 4 minute mile when they had previously thought it was impossible.

So what made the difference?

Their perception had changed to what was possible in the world

You may believe going through the teenager years will be difficult to handle and because you belief that - guess what…. they **will be** difficult!

In life you get what you focus on - so if you learn ways to relax, stay centred and positive and filter the experience in a generally positive manner - the whole experience will be better for you and your children. And your teenager will pick up on your attitude and approach to the changes happening in a more positive and healthy way too.

My purpose as a Parent Coach is to encourage you to find your own answers and take responsibility for your own family ways of doing things - there is no “right and wrong” way to handle your growing teenager’s need for independence but my intention on this TOOLKIT and in all the work I do is to help you feel more in control of your life, back in the driving seat of your family life, centred, balanced, at ease and happier in life generally.

The world is a very fast paced, hectic and frenetic place and things are forever changing at a greater speed than in past generations. There is a great deal of advice out there on the telly, the Internet or in books telling you how to bring up your teenager so of course you may feel that you aren’t “doing it properly” or aren’t “getting it right” according to the experts - well Parent Coaching isn’t like that

I believe you can get it right and I also believe the answers lie within you - you know your own child the best, you love your child completely and you know deep down what’s right for them and what’s right for you.

So it’s not about me telling you how to do it - it’s about me asking you good questions to help you find your own answers.

It’s about me giving you confidence in your own ability as a parent during a time of transition.

By even listening to this TOOLKIT you have done a remarkable thing - you have invested your time and money on learning and exploring a key skill that sets you out from 98% of people who spend more time learning how to work their new DVD player or washing machine than exploring their parenting skills.

Together we are going to help you handle the changes of your child growing up more effectively so you can be happier, more confident and more relaxed and at ease.

So …these are my basic assumptions about you!

* You love your children and want the best for them
* You are curious, intrigued and open -minded about exploring new ways to parent your teenage kids
* All the resources and answers you need for your family are already within you
* You are fascinated about better ways to communicate with your teenager
* You are willing to “have a go” at new ways of doing things
* You realise there is no “right” or “wrong” way to bring up teenagers or no “perfect” parent - just personal choices
* There is no such thing as being a failure - there’s only learning and feedback. Everyone makes mistakes and has setbacks - it’s what you learn from these experiences that’s the most important part

For me the really simple Secret to Parenting Success is

Know what you want

1. Take action
2. Notice what’s not working
3. Try something else!

So with those ideas in mind, let’s *get started!*

**Visualisation**

Before we begin on our journey together I’d like you to stop the TOOLKIT and ask yourself these questions: It’s a good idea to use your workbook to jot down your thoughts as that gives you clarity and a new way of looking at things.

* What would it be like if you woke up one morning and I had waved a magic wand in the night and you’re life had become exactly as you wanted and dreamed it to be?

Relax and breathe deeply and slowly - that’s right just relax into the fantasy and vividly imagine it.

* How would you know that the dream had come true?
* What would you see?
* What would you hear?
* How would you feel deep down inside?
* What changes would have had to occur to make this dream come true?

As you relax allow yourself this time and space to explore what it is you really want.

Let go of your sense of fear and uncertainty.

Let go of all the judgements and harsh words you say to yourself inside your head.

Imagine everything is all right.

Imagine everything is going to be OK.

* How do you look?
* How do you sound?
* What are people saying to you that is so positive?
* How do you feel when you are relaxed, in control and going with the flow of the situation?
* How does it feel to know things will be fine in the future?

Imagine a situation that you would like to change or improve on - see what you see - hear what you hear and feel how you feel in this imaginary wonderful world free from reality.

What are you doing - what are you saying -how are you breathing - what is your body doing when you are relaxed - how are standing, feeling and what are you hearing?

What are your children doing in this perfect world - what are they doing, what are they saying, how are they feeling - what do they see?

Imagine stepping into their shoes and socks - really get inside the mind of your teenager - see the world as they see it - hear the world as they hear it - feel the world as they feel it - that’s right just relax and breathe deeply and imagine the world from their point of view.

And as you relax and continue to breathe deeply take the learning and discoveries from doing this exercise back with you into your present moment and life now. Gradually become aware of yourself back in the present.

end visualization

The challenge for families going through change is that they want a new instant result but they continue to act in the same old way - and it was Einstein who said that the definition of madness was doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

I believe the resources you need to handle your teenager easily are within you now so just relax and have some fun exploring this transition with me.

## track 1 Focus on What You Want

The Teenage Years are a time of transition and change – just like all of parenting really but the Teenage Years get a bad press and sometimes bringing up a teenager can be a self-fulfilling prophecy – where you expect it to be difficult, fraught and full of confrontation – and guess what … it is!

You get what you focus on – so my message is “Why not focus on what you do want”: the harmonious, interesting and fulfilling experience of nudging, guiding and gently influencing your growing, maturing teenager into adulthood.

There really isn’t that much of a difference between handling a toddler and a teenager – just take a few moments to relax and re-frame how you see your teenager.

Teenagers and toddlers are similar in that they both want to be more independent, want to assert themselves and be individual, have more control about what happens to them, yet they both lack the maturity and experience to understand all the potential dangers and risks around them and also both feel confused around their emotional and physical changes and are both likely to throw a tantrum if they don’t get what they want!

You negotiated and navigated your child through their toddler years so take the learning from some of those experiences and apply them to this new phase of your life now.

Start to look at your teenager as actually no different from a toddler and in some ways you’ll start to relax around this whole issue and things will start to improve.

Naturally it’s also a time to prepare your child for the bigger issues of life: for the pitfalls of falling in with the ‘wrong crowd’, taking drugs or dropping out of school but with careful navigating and negotiating and keeping the lines of communication really open there is absolutely no reason why you can’t all sail through this transition easily.

Perhaps you want to hold on to your child’s childhood and have mixed feelings about these changes and yet recognise that it’s inevitable that your teenager is becoming more independent from you.

Perhaps it’s about you accepting that you are growing older and your children will soon be flying the nest and you’re scared of your new role in your own life.

Whatever your own emotions, your teenager can’t wait to rush into the excitement of adult life.

But it’s all about teaching, or better still, nudging, guiding and coaching your teenager to learn to walk before they can run.

I see the analogy of a your teen as a toddler as a useful one because it takes the fear out of the “Kevin and Perry” or the “Am I bovvered?” stage of parenting.

Toddlers learn to walk by first holding your hand or holding onto something familiar and steady until they are able to take their own steps alone – it’s the same with teenagers – psychologically they need your guidance and support while they take small steps towards total independence. It’s like when they first learnt to ride their bike – they had the stabilizers on until they were ready to take them off and ride on their own.

It’s a bit like 2 steps forward and 3 steps back because becoming independent is not a linear process – sometimes my own daughter who’s13 seems incredibly mature and sensible, but another day she can be immature and silly!

Problems and conflicts arise in most families because teenagers (quite literally) want to run before they can walk and this TOOLKIT and toolkit is designed to help you and your teenagers walk confidently towards a balanced future of independence, resilience, worldly wise common sense and strategies to help them and you manage their growing maturity sensibly.

## track 2 Understanding What Teenagers Want

Part of the transition during this time of change is that as parents you have been used to making all the important and critical decisions for your children – up until now. You’ve got used to having your views, judgments, values and beliefs accepted with no argument or challenges. You’ve got used to being obeyed and listened to without question.

But now your young adult who is emerging like a chrysalis out of its pupa is asking more questions, challenging your views, exploring your values and taking **you** out of your comfort zone.

It’s an uncomfortable time for **you.** You probably find that your teenager is constantly pushing your boundaries – wanting more independence and wants more freedom and more choices.

Suddenly their mates, their friends or their music and clothes are more important then their family, schoolwork or grandparents and there’s no “naughty step” for teenagers!

So…

It’s all about you!

It’s all about helping you become more flexible, confident and clear about what’s acceptable and not acceptable to you and helping you handle the changes, challenges and frustrations that bringing up a teenager offers you.

You can close down, hide behind your newspaper and pretend it’s not happening OR you can relax, remain curious and open-minded about new ways to parent your maturing young adult and enjoy the adventure together building bridges not walls.

I think it’s helpful to know that the underlying energy undermining the teenage years is a push for increasing freedom to explore life, friendships and experiences away from potential interference from you. So one key aspect we’ll be exploring is how to handle these flashpoints of conflict between the two of you.

Another issue is friendship. Being part of a group and having friends is vital to a teenager. It’s where they share experiences, attitudes, values and find their sense of identity.

**Visualisation**

Just relax for a few moments and breathe really slowly and deeply and let all the tension go out of your body while you take yourself back to the days when you were a teenager. Really relax and enjoy reminiscing about the things you liked to do as a teenager – the places you went – the people you mixed with – the laughs you had – the adventures – see yourself clearly then – what you were wearing – remember the colours, the make-up, the perfume or the after-shave – really hear the music you loved, the songs you sang along to or danced late into the night to – remember the deep and meaningful conversations – the hours on the phone and the feelings of being in love and the feelings of belonging to a “group” of like-minded people of the same age.

Just relax and embrace all the memories – the hopes – the dreams – the sense of excitement – wonder – danger – and fun of being young with your whole life stretched out in front of you.

If some of the things you see or feel aren’t positive just breathe deeply and relax as you now have the opportunity to learn from these experiences and can make a difference in the life of your teenager through the new techniques, strategies, and skills that you are going to learn from this toolkit so they don’t have to make the same mistakes as you did or experience some of the hardships or difficulties that you experienced – so breathe slowly and deeply and let go of your fears anxieties and tension – let them go and take all the positive, funny, exciting and great feelings from your own teenage years back with you into the present. Take all the learning from those days back with you into the present and remember your past doesn’t equal your future.

And now step into the trendy trainers of your own son or daughter and see the world from their point of view.

That’s right.

See what they see, hear what they hear, feel what they feel. Really imagine you are seeing the world from their viewpoint – what are their dreams, what are their hopes for the future, what are their feelings and emotions, their expectations?

As you relax and see and hear the world from their perspective what do your kids see when they look at you? – What do they hear – how do they feel when they are with you?

What small changes could you make right now that would improve things? Is it changing your tone of voice, or your body language, is it relaxing when your child comes in the room, is it listening properly to them without rushing in with advice?

That’s right… just let your imagination tell you what you need to do to make things better all round.

And as you trust and listen to your imagination and trust your intuition notice how things begin to improve.

Now as you relax and breathe slowly and deeply – picture a time in the future where everything is going really well – a magic wand has been waved and everything has become exactly as you always dreamed it to be – your teenager is relaxed, happy, resourceful, sensible, independent, and safe – you are relaxed, confident, positive and at ease knowing that they are safe, sensible, happy, independent and able to handle whatever life throws at them easily and effortlessly.

Really make the picture colourful and bright and bring it really close up to you – step into the picture and really see it clearly – hear what you hear when things are harmonious and happy – feel how good you all feel when things are happy, relaxed and harmonious – and as you see, hear and feel all these wonderful scenarios in this perfect world take the learning back from this experience back into the present – and start to come back from this daydream and feel yourself more present in the room – calm, confident and positively looking forward to making this come true in reality now.

end visualization

The power of visualisation is a really powerful tool in your parenting toolkit – by listening and relaxing each day and doing that visualisation or daydream you are training your unconscious to find new ways to make your relationship with your child happier. Commit to making daydreaming the perfect relationship part of your daily routine – and watch your relationships dramatically improve. I often advise the parents I work personally with to do it last thing at night as it sends you off to sleep in a positive frame of mind, and helps you to wake up in a good mood – which is a great start to your day!

Part of becoming an adult is about developing your own personal identity – your own character, beliefs, values and principles so teenagers often challenge as a way to explore your key values and beliefs. So they’ll start to swear if you don’t, or wear outlandish clothes if you’re a conservative dresser, or challenge your religious views if you are of a particular faith. It’s the humour in “Absolutely Fabulous” where the roles are completely reversed and as Jennifer Saunders behaves as the outrageous mother and her daughter is the calm sensible!

It’s all a phase of exploring their own values and what they stand for – and after awhile things settle down as the key values of compassion, tolerance, and self-discipline are universal.

You’ll find that your teenager will be thinking about wider issues including the wider issues of the world like global warming, re-cycling or political issues and will commit to “a cause” that they can give their whole-hearted support to – like Religion, Politics, Environmental Issues and Animals Rights; they are all part of the search for meaning and significance in one’s life.

Teenagers want to feel respected for their values and their choices and I always feel that respect is the key energy in every successful and happy family. It’s the oil that eases relationships.

So it’s really helpful not to criticise their appearance, their choice of music, their friendships or their schoolwork. If you “diss” or disparage their lifestyle it builds a wall between you.

So press your imaginary pause button (and imagine it physically like on your remote control to your TV) to stop yourself saying something unhelpful judgmental, damaging or confrontational. Put a post-it note that says “You don’t have to like my choice but give me some respect – don’t criticise me” in your pocket to remind you to bite your tongue more often!

There’s one empowering question I get parents to remember is to ask themselves “Is this remark going to take me closer to or further away from the relationship I really want long-term with my child?”, as this quickly takes you into the bigger picture to your parenting and helps you to stand back.

As pre-teens become teens they have more responsibility – and this often begins from travelling on the bus or train to school once they start secondary school and ends with them finding work, buying their first flat, or getting married!

So be aware of how you begin to delegate this sense of responsibility. Treating them as if they are 4 when they are 14 is bound to stir up trouble!

Keep in mind of course the maturity of your teenager as every child is unique in their development and in how much responsibility they can handle but it’s your job to start granting them responsibilities and training and preparing them for handling the wide world.

But I remember reading a poem by a teenager that begged parents not to abandon teens as they grow older, as they still really need the security and support that being a parent offers them – I remember hopping in my car really late at night after a row with a friend at College to get home to the security, safety and love and advice of my Mum and Dad. I needed the reliable and trustworthy feeling of being at home. That’s what families are for!

So by understanding the key issues of freedom, friendship, identity, meaning, respect, responsibility and security you have made a massive step to understanding their needs and have taken a major step closer to empathising and respecting them. What a great gift to give to your kids!

## track 3 Common Concerns

So now let’s take a look at your concerns, worries, dilemmas, and niggles.

Most parents want their kids to be safe in a potentially dangerous, hectic, frenetic and busy world full of new technology and vast choices.

You already know that being a teenager is about taking risks, trying new things and making mistakes as you’ve already been there and got the t-shirt!

But how do you keep them safe from paedophiles, drugs, binge drinking, teenage pregnancy and casual sex?

We’ll be covering these topics in the track – “The BIG issues” later on but the common mantra of “you treat this place like a hotel” is often a common concern I hear from frustrated parents fed up with kids who are never home and never seen to spend any time with the family anymore.

The hiding away in the bedroom and being aloof is another common theme and the withdrawal from the affectionate cuddles and hugs that also to be part of family life can be tough on parents.

It’s very common for you to feel powerless, rejected and sometimes angry and frustrated. So is the feeling of loss of control. Your teenager’s new found freedom often feels like your loss of control – your loss of even the ability to influence your teenager anymore.

It’s really all about balance – if you try to over-control your teenager they will push back but equally if they feel lost, insecure and afraid they need your support and guidance. It’s a difficult one but it’s all about just recognising this see-saw and doing your best to keep things balanced – recognising your child’s growing need for independence and responsibilities and allowing them the space to make their own mistakes so that they can learn from them.

And finally it’s about you letting go of seeing your children as clones of you and recognising that they are unique, special and individual and that that should be embraced, celebrated and something to be proud of.

## track 4 Letting Go

As kids become more assertive, confident and confrontational it’s a natural reaction of some parents to match the behaviour and to become more assertive, more confrontational and more controlling but that is where, in my opinion things can go wrong.

It’s about NOT matching that behaviour, it’s about recognising what’s happening and trying the new strategies and techniques of negotiating, discussing, and talking – the time for telling is over.

One useful technique to adopt is the

1 I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2 when you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,

3 because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4 I would like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

### **4. I would like…**

### “you to come home at the agreed time”

### **3. Because…**

### “Something might have happened to you…”

### **2. I feel**…

### “Worried, anxious, stressed….”

### **1. When you**…

### “Come back later than we agreed……”

As this is very clear about how you feel and what you would like to see happen and opens up the lines of communication.

Start to encourage both of you to adopt this simple but really effective technique as it is very effective.

Part of this letting go process is to recognise the signs of growing independence – the wanting to spend time alone in their bedroom, wanting to be more with friends then family, wanting to go on trips to the cinema or shopping centre on their own, developing their own opinions, answering back, the unpredictable mood swings, and wanting their own money.

It’s also about recognising that kids want to do these things perhaps earlier from when you were growing up. Perhaps your 14 year old is asking for these privileges rather then at 16 – but it’s about being your own best advisor, knowing how mature your teenager is and sticking to your guns and trusting your intuition and not about just “giving in” because “everyone else’s Mum or Dad let’s them”.

I believe you love your children and have done a brilliant job up until now so I also think it’s about having faith and trusting the work you have already put in – they won’t let you down – if you truly believe in them.

Just be there to provide back-up when things go wrong or they make a mistake – don’t say “I told you so” – no-one likes a smart Alec – just be quietly “there for them” while they dust themselves off to start a new day.

## track 5 Successful Parents: Always Be Prepared!

Successful parents are prepared for the mood swings, constant looking in the mirror and spending time in their bedroom. They choose their battles and don’t pick fights on every single little thing – they take the longer term view and see the bigger picture. They also don’t lower their expectations to accept rude, surly, bad manners or bad behaviour. They don’t hide or run from unacceptable behaviour or language as they know things will only get worse if they let things go short-term

The first time your teen swears at you or their sibling under their breath – don’t ignore it – make it very clear that this kind of behaviour is not acceptable to you in any circumstances.

Teenagers are not too different from disciplining them when they were toddlers except there’s no naughty step or stickers to help you out but if you just see them as trying to assert their independence and are trying to “test you out” then you can stay calm, collected and focused on what you expect from them and tell them that clearly - as you are there to be their parent not their friend. For more in-depth ideas, strategies and techniques see my “The Secret To Well Behaved Kids” Toolkit.

Successful parents are very clear on what’s really important to them and are clear about what’s non-negotiable.

### Your Parenting Values

What’s *really* important to you as a parent? What values or principles are really important to you?

What’s your ethos in life …. What do you stand for?

The reason for doing this is that your values are like your personal compass - they guide your decisions - they are what you stand for and most people or parents don’t spend any time actually analysing what they stand for but if you’re not absolutely clear about your values how can you possibly pass them on to your children?

So let’s take a few moments to think about and write down a whole list of what principles are important to you - things like honesty, determination, kindness, the ability to finish a task, being considerate of others, working hard, doing well at school, keeping your body fit and healthy

Take some time to think about the values that you hold dear.

What are the values that you must honour in your life? Which are the most important?

What values would you like to pass onto your children?

Spend some time writing them all down.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
4. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
5. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
6. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
7. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
8. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
9. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 
10. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 

Now give each of these values a score of 1-10 - 10 being your most important and 1 the least of your values and think about how you are honouring these values in your life right now.

Now put your top 3 values in order.

1.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Are there any areas where you might like to make a change?

Just take a few moments to think how you pass on your values - how do you pass them on in your words, in your actions or in the way you talk to your kids? Do you talk about being patient and tolerant but scream at the driver who cuts you up at the roundabout?

What can you do differently or remember to say to yourself to remind yourself that you are always a role model?

*Write down your thoughts here*.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is your actual goal as a parent?

**My personal goal as a parent is to help my children become:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

So…

Let’s get clear about what’s important to you as a parent of a teenager:

Is it important that your teenager gets enough sleep so they can get up on time and without being grumpy and function effectively at school?

* What time would be a sensible and realistic for your teen to go to bed?
* How can you encourage them to take responsibility for getting enough sleep?
* What are your views on going out on week nights?
* What time do you expect your kids back?
* What are your expectations and routines if they get delayed? What do you want them to do (call you, ask you to pick them up, get a cab etc)? By getting clear you pre-empt any misunderstandings which prevent arguments and recriminations later on.
* What are your views or rules about mobile phone use?
* What is a balanced amount of TV/DVD/computer games to watch or play each day/week?
* How can you encourage responsibility in those areas? What things can you do to encourage balance, commitment and honesty?
* What are your views on education, schoolwork and passing exams?
* How can you actively and positively support, encourage and remain interested in what they are doing at school?
* How can you help them set goals and achieve them?
* How do you develop good habits like being on time, eating healthily, exercising, having good personal hygiene, showing tenacity, keeping their word, telling the truth, passing exams, and giving back to their community?
* How do you develop their rather fragile self-esteem at this time? (Picking up on what you **like to** see, and praising them, talking with them, spending time together, doing activities with them, eating together)
* How do you help them manage money?
* How do you encourage them to earn their own money?
* How do you encourage them to cook, iron, wash up, tidy up, wash their clothes and help around the house?
* How do you encourage them to show respect to others, other people’s property and younger and older members of the family and community at large?
* How do you show an interest in the films they watch, games they play, music they like and things that make them laugh?
* How do you spend time together? What new ways could you find to spend time with them?

These questions are meant to help you get clarity about what’s important to you and although I’m suggesting you remain flexible, centred, grounded and mature in your approach it’s not all about you making all the compromises – it’s about choosing your battles so your kids feel you care but also respect that you’re all learning to handle the new changes in your family dynamic and relationships.

Changes can happen quickly but I always think it helps to remember that habits take a little longer – so be patient with yourself.

## track 6 Teenage Emotions

It’s tough being a teenager – there’s a lot of demands on them for academic expectations, peer pressure, advertising and raging hormones, to name but a few. So it’s no wonder their emotions and moods fluctuate from one moment to the next!

It’s a time of learning that your Mum and Dad don’t actually know everything!

As Mark Twain wrote:

“When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant; I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learned.”

Being a teenager is about being idealistic, possible naïve and critical of themselves and others as they are exploring themselves as well as the world.

So it’s no wonder emotions run high!

Let’s look at how to handle some of them:

### Anger

Many kids behave badly at home – it’s a safe place to let off steam, be themselves and explore reactions. They can be short-tempered, irritable, and rude and off hand and in some cases physically violent. So it’s the family and those closest to them that bear the brunt of that frustration and anger. Blaming you is an easy and convenient way out but what can you do to guide and teach them that taking 100% responsibility for their own life, moods and expectations is actually down to them?

* How can you teach your kids to take responsibility for their actions?
* How can you teach them about not complaining and being a victim to their circumstances?
* How can you help them to create the outcomes, moods and goals that they really want?
* How can you teach them to be pro-active about their life and their circumstances rather then full of excuses and justifications?

“The man who complains about the way the ball bounces is likely the one who dropped it”

- Lou Holtz: NCAA coach of the year

One technique that I teach parents on my workshops is the ‘One Point’ technique as it is very simple but effect way to stay calm, grounded and centred when your teenager’s behaviour or attitude is challenging.

### track 7 **ONE POINT**

Stand relaxed and thinking about feeling tired and fed up and stressed you are with arguing with your teen - notice your body, shoulders, facial expression and strength. Notice how wobbly you are.

Now stand with your legs firmly planted into the ground and imagine you are like the roots of a tree - going deeply and strongly down like the roots of a very old and solidoak tree deeply planted in to the soil - immoveable, unswayable, anchored to the ground and strong.

Imagine you are strong -like a bull and incredibly determined.

Now take your energy to just below the centre of your tummy to a place called your one pointand imagine breathing and feeling centred from here.

Notice the difference - and how you feel strong and solid. Keep this strong stance and stay centred in your one point.

Your one point is a place of perfect balance where you can’t be knocked over, swayed or upset - it’s a place of total control.

Let’s imagine a time when things have gone really well with your kids: see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how you felt - really enjoy the lovely feelings of success, make the picture brighter and closer to you and the sounds really much louder and the feelings more intense.

Notice how you are standing, breathing and feeling and put that confidence and happiness into your one point.

Now imagine a time when everything goes pear shaped and is a real challenge - see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how you feel - but this time take your energy to your centre of balance to your one point to your confident, unflappable and strong centre and see the situation from here - this place of unmoveable confidence.

Now see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how you feel but this time from this new place of strength and control. How does that feel?

Now let’s imagine a time when things have gone really well again with your kids -

see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how you felt - really enjoy the lovely feelings of success, make the picture brighter and closer to you and the sounds really much louder and the feelings more intense.

Now you can imagine no matter what happens you can handle whatever life throws at you calmly and from a place of control and balance if you take your awareness to your One Point

You can do this exercise in the supermarket, the garden centre or at your mother-in-laws - it just grounds you and no-one need know what you are doing and remember to breath slowly and deeply at the same time.

## track 8 Family Talk Time

When I coach parents I often encourage them to have regular family chats that have a purpose because family chats or "family meetings" are a great way sort out the usual ups and downs of family life as they help you all go in the same direction together and help get things out in the open.

Getting your kids involved is a great opportunity to make them feel part of the decision making process at home as creating solutions to family niggles provides a real incentive for everyone to co-operate.  
 If you're interested in trying this idea here are some ways to organise yourselves:

Choose a natural time when you will all be together like at a mealtime and imagine the conversation having a purpose and a gentle agenda of airing family niggles, stresses or flash points.

1. Develop a set of "Family Meeting Rules" that suit your family at your first meeting and be sure to write them down so everyone is clear about what to expect. Things like - “the person holding the chicken egg cup is the person allowed to speak so no-one is allowed to interrupt them” ,or “we all let the other person say what’s on their mind without arguing or criticising them” we don’t storm off and leave the table until we’ve all spoken” or “We turn off the TV while we’re eating together”
2. Have the family meeting at the same time and place each week or month as it builds routine and expectations.
3. Make sure that ALL your family members are present and have a chance to be heard.
4. It's often a good idea to put all decisions from the meeting in writing and have everyone sign the sheet when the meeting ends to show their commitment to what's been talked about and agreed - get one of the kids to design it on the computer!
5. Keep the meeting positive and have rules against disrespectful behaviours such as interrupting, insulting, or yelling or laughing at other people's suggestions.
6. Avoid distractions - so turn off the TV and radio, take the phone off the hook etc. so you can relax and enjoy chatting together.

Remember the whole point of the chat or family meeting has a purpose which is to spend constructive, quality time discussing the concerns and issues which need to be addressed. So think of it like a business meeting but with a more relaxed atmosphere - and plan an agenda.

### The Agenda

An agenda helps you to discuss progress, problems, and changes over the week and it helps you to discuss your family problems and decide on possible solutions.

It encourages each family member to give positive feedback to everyone else too and allows you to discuss the roles and expectations of each family member.

It's also a place to sort out your plans and agendas for the coming week so no one feels left out or doesn't know what everyone else is up to.

It's also a great place to look at how the jobs in the house are getting done and who does what - and also a good place to discuss your family rules and the consequences for breaking them.

Finally it's a good idea to relax and have fun together so set aside a short period of time to play a game or chat and laugh together as a family when the “talk time” is over.

Here are some suggestions for topics that are really fascinating to explore with your whole family either once week, once a month or now and again - whatever suits the rhythm and style of your family.

#### Self-esteem

1. What is it that makes you special?
2. What is it about yourself that you are most proud of?
3. What special talents or abilities do you have?
4. Tell each family member what you appreciate most about them.

#### Managing your anger or frustration

1. What do you do when you feel annoyed or angry with someone in the family - what could you do instead?
2. Give examples of some techniques that work for you - counting to 3, pressing an imaginary pause button, leaving the room to cool off for a moment
3. Give examples of times that you could use these techniques to help you.
4. Give examples of times when you DID use of these techniques to calm down.
5. Talk about some new ways you could all try this week to make a change.

#### Taking the initiative

1. What does it mean to "take initiative?
2. Name three things that you have done lately to demonstrate initiative.
3. What can you do this week to show that you are taking initiative?
4. How would things be different in our home if nobody took initiative?

#### Being helpful

1. What does it mean to be helpful?
2. Who was the last person that you helped? How did you help them?
3. Who was the last person that helped you? How did that person help you?
4. Talk about whether there is ever a time when you should NOT help someone?

#### Seeking attention

1. Chat about what it means to seek attention? Are there good ways to get attention….and bad ways?
2. What are some of the ways that YOU seek attention? Are these positive ways?
3. What are some new ways that you could seek positive attention?
4. How does it make you feel when nobody notices you?

#### Being responsible

1. Talk about what it means to be responsible?
2. Name three things that you have done lately to demonstrate responsibility.
3. What can you do this week to show that you are being responsible?
4. How would things be different in your home if nobody was responsible?

### Focus for the week

Sit down with your family this week around the kitchen table and have a chat about some of the ideas for setting up House Rules.

Explain that you'd like to help the atmosphere in the house improve and run more smoothly and you'd like their input and suggestions. Ask each member of your family to think of at least one house rule and write it down. Then put them up somewhere where everyone can see them clearly and easily - maybe one of your children would like to design something on the computer to make the rules look attractive.  
Then arrange another chat the following week at the same time to see how it's all going. (Regular times are always a good idea so you don't forget to do it!)

This idea can be amended and tweaked to fit in with your family but the whole idea is just to get you talking properly and calmly about stuff that drives you mad and finding a good time to regularly do it.

Let’s look at handling anger positively

## track 9 Handling Anger Positively

Everyone gets angry with their kids at some time or another - it’s normal - it’s healthy. Kids know just what buttons to push and they push them!

I think as a parent and as a professional parent coach, it helps to accept that anger is an honest emotion, but it’s what **you choose** **to do** with your anger that’s important.

If you don’t express your anger and you suppress it, it can lead to frustration, resentment, bitterness, a sense of hopelessness and depression which is not a good thing for you or your children long term

As I already mentioned resentment builds walls between you and your teen.

So, how do you handle your anger and release your temper healthily?

Well, one way is to press your internal and imaginary “pause button” like the one on your TV and ask yourself “What exactly am I annoyed about?” This helps you step back from the situation that you find yourself in -immediately distancing you and getting you back in control and helping to calm you down.

You will probably discover that you get wound up by the same things over and over again and this is a great opportunity to ask yourself another empowering question.

“What would I like to see happen in a perfect world?” as this helps you start focusing on a new solution to your frustration. Relax and start to breathe slowly and deeply as this too takes the edge out of the anger and get very, very specific about what it is you want to see happen - this gives you clarity and direction and helps you pass this on to your children who don’t often understand what exactly it is you want them to do.

Also ask yourself “Is my attitude moving me **closer to** or **further away** from the relationship I want with my children long term?”

This question takes you immediately out of the mundane and humdrum into the bigger picture to your parenting. It immediately changes your perspective which is extremely powerful and helpful.

Another positive step to take is to talk openly and honestly to your child about how you are feeling and to release your pent up emotion - you can say something like:

“I’m tired telling you this over and over again because I feel……”

“I’m angry with you because …..”

“I’m hurt because you did…..”

This teaches your child about empathy and immediately takes the emotional charge out of your own energy and frustration.

If you feel like screaming and shouting at your kids then your own anger has been building up for a long time.

A helpful strategy to explore is talking to a mirror. Get a mirror and imagine talking to your teenager as if they were looking at you in that mirror. Imagine them sitting calmly, attentively and in a relaxed state listening to you properly. Tell them exactly how you feel - pour out your heart - speak truthfully - explain all the frustration, anger, hurt or disappointment. You can even imagine a rainbow going between you bridging the gap of misunderstanding.

The important aspect of these different techniques is to get all your feelings out in a safe and healthy way.

Some people hit pillows, bounce on the bed, hit golf balls in the garden or go for a long hard walk round the block - I have even been known to go into a cupboard and have a good swear to myself! Do something physical to release your charged -up emotions. Don’t be reckless or dangerous to yourself or your teen. Just step back, breathe deeply and slowly and find what suits you and experiment with it - you can even make yourself laugh after you look or sound ridiculous - which is great way to change your state too.

Don’t be afraid to let your anger take its natural course - there’s no need to feel guilt and shame because your thoughts are your feelings in action or motion. That’s why some people describe them as e-motion.

Your anger can be a really positive opportunity to serve a purpose to find out what’s really bothering you deep down. Just stop and ask yourself “What am I so angry about?” You will get clarity from asking that question which will help you identify what you’d like to change. It’s usually something small that can make a big difference in your life and help you move forward -not stay stuck.

Once you’ve expressed your anger about **the behaviour** that you don’t like in your child (never use a personal vitriolic attack as it damages your child’s self esteem) do your best to forgive your teen and to forgive yourself - have a hug, say sorry and move on to learn the lesson from the experience.

Teach your teenager this technique too as a healthy way to release their pent up emotions and frustrations.

Maybe you’re a person who’s been angry for a long time or a major part of your life. I call this “habitual anger” because you’ve got used to behaving in this way so it’s become a habit.

Habitual anger is trying to tell you something - ask yourself some better questions - questions that empower you and give you an insight into yourself:

* Why am I choosing to be angry all the time?
* What am I doing to create these situations time and time again?
* What is it that’s making me angry?
* Who am I really angry at?
* What do I believe about my life that causes all these frustrations?
* Is this the only way I can react to life?
* What could I do differently?
* How could I feel more in control of my life?

Habitual anger is not good for your body as it creates stress, tension and illness. So it’s really a great relief when you start to understand what’s causing it and start to make some small changes to help you feel more in control of your life generally. It’s recognising that by asking yourself better questions you can start to find some new answers.

Many women and particularly Mums have been taught that to be angry was something bad and unacceptable and that to lose your temper meant you were a “Bad Person” or a “Bad Parent.” So, many Mums have learnt to feel guilty and to swallow their anger rather than express it healthily.

This is an unhealthy way to handle your anger as it can turn inwards and make you feel unhappy, helpless, stuck, depressed and generally out of control of your life. So acknowledge that it’s perfectly normal to lose your temper sometimes and find a strategy or technique that suits you to release it safely.

You are still a role model for your teenager regardless of their age and in everything that you do so teach them how to handle anger and frustration healthily and talk about it with them.

What better gift can you give your emerging young adult?

## track 10 Ways to Listen

### The need to feel understood

I believe the deepest desire of any human being is to feel understood - whether they are a toddler, teen or a tearaway.

Everyone wants to feel **understood**, **respected,** **heard** and **valued** for who they are and teenagers are, of course, are no exception and that’s why I believe developing your skills in this really important area builds self esteem, confidence and the life time bonds of love between you as a family and eases the tension and misunderstanding that can occur in a teenage household.

As parents we all have a tendency to feel we “know better” than our kids as we’ve “been there- done it - and got the tee-shirt” as we are older and wiser than they are so we often don’t really listen to what are kids are telling us - we presume, judge, make assumptions and often rush into to rescue them with our advice or suggestions like Superman or Tarzan swinging in the jungle!

We mean well - as we naturally have our kid’s best interest at heart but it doesn’t really make for great relationships and lines of successful communication particularly with an emerging independent hormonal teenager.

I actually think nature was trying to tell us something as we have **two ears** and **one mouth** for a reason - and I think that’s a brilliant way to help us remember to listen first and talk later!

There’s a really lovely Native American Indian saying which says

“Listen, or your tongue will make you deaf.”

This is so often the case where we as parents talk so much that we forget to listen to our kids!

Being a good attentive and sophisticated listener I believe is absolutely crucial to being a really successful, relaxed and great parent of a teenager.

So this part of the toolkit is designed to help you look at different types of communication and at different ways to improve your current ways of listening and talking to your kids to make all your lives easier, more rewarding and more fun.

It’s quite simple really like most great truths in life - kids don’t care how much you **know** - until they know just how much you **care** so learning to listen attentively and empathetically is a really great place to start.

We’re all guilty of it…………………. Listening but not really **hearing** what our kids, our mother in law or our partner or our teenager is actually **saying** to us.

There are loads of reasons why this happens - you may be juggling three things at once - like cooking the dinner, helping with a younger child’s homework and unloading the dishwasher or you are just pre -occupied with your own worries or to do list but **actively listening** and **attentively listening** are really important skills to develop as a parent as they can really transform your relationships with your kids.

I think it’s useful to know that there are 3 types of listening modes:

The first one is **competitive or combative listening** where the person (usually the parent) talking is far more interested in promoting **their** point of view instead of listening, thinking and really considering the other person’s point of view.

You know how it feels when you’re actually just waiting for a break in the flow of the other person’s conversation so you can get your penny’s worth across.

I see this **a lot** when I’m working with the parents of teenagers!!

This is often where parents are really not absorbing their teenager’s message and are really just waiting to jump in and attack their child’s point of view - and are always planning what **they** want to say next. They are actually just “pretending “ to listen to their kids.

These styles often results in arguments, frustrations and tears with lots of misunderstandings and anger all round - which is a real shame but with some practice of **active listening** you **can** turn things around - easily and quickly.

The next style of listening is **Passive or Attentive Listening**. This type of listening is where parents are genuinely interested in what’s being chatted about but they don’t really engage or connect with the conversation and stay rather aloof and outside the real energy of the conversation - they stay quiet so this can be interpreted by your children as being rather uninterested- which can also lead to misunderstandings amongst families.

The third type of listening is the one that I want to help you develop as it is the most successful form of communication for getting along well with your teenager.

### Active and reflective listening

This type of listening happens when you are genuinely interested in your child’s point of view or message. You sincerely want to know what your teenager is thinking, feeling and wants. Also parents who listen actively join in and show they are interested by making little comments, nodding their head and really listening carefully to show empathy **before** reacting. This sort of listener is really effective as they also take the time to make sure they’ve understood what’s been said to them.

This sort of listening is wonderful for making your kids feel **heard** and **understood.** Which takes me back to my key point that it’s a basic need of every child to feel heard -because when children feel heard they feel understood and then they can relax and frustration, “bad” behaviour and anger melt away.

But there are also 5 gremlins preventing you from listening well and they are

The 1st is being **pre - occupied** with your own worries, commitments or concerns where you are miles away worrying about deadlines, or the dry cleaning or school pick-ups or general family life juggling.

The 2nd is **pretending to listen** - where you say “uh huh” or “oh dear - that’s terrible” or “that sounds great” when you’ve not really taken on board what’s been said to you properly as you were only half listening. It can all sound a bit patronising too if you’re not careful.

I remember doing that with my own Mum when she wanted to tell me her stories about working in her Charity Shop when she had retired and I would pick up the paper and say “Hummm” and “Aaaah” from time to time - I feel awful now when I look back as she must have felt ignored and unimportant. Your kids will pick up on those times too when you’re too busy peeling the potatoes or unloading the dishwasher and are not really listening to them - over time they will stop talking to you.

The 3rd type of listening is “**selective listening**” where you only pay attention to the parts of the conversation that interests **you** and respond only to those bits - which actually hijacks the other person’s conversation or takes the conversation onto **your** agenda making the other person feel frustrated and sometimes annoyed.

The 4th type of listening is what I call “**words only**” listening - where hear only the actual words being said but don’t pick up on the hidden agenda underneath the meaning - like when my husband says to me “Are you OK?” and I reply “Yeah…fine” when I really mean “No I’m hacked off that you left your shoes out in front of the bed again and I tripped over them.”

The 5th type of listening is the **self centred type of listening** when you are only seeing things from **your** point of view - where you are not really seeing the situation or the story from your teenager’s really expensive pair of Nike Trainers point of view. You actually want your child to see the world from **your** shoes and to stand in them!

This sort of listening can turn into one-upmanship where there has to be a winner and a loser - as if the communication is a competition.

The “**You** think **you’ve** had it tough scenario…. Well let me tell you how tough it was growing up when I was a kid…..!!”

When you listen to your teenager from the “me” type of mode you can fall into the nasty trap of judging, advising or probing them **too** much.

For example, when you only listen from your point of view you make presumptions and judgments based on **your** experiences and expectations of the world - not your kids and you can forget that everyone is different and experiences the world in their own way.

So when you are **judging** you have already **closed down** and are not really listening or being curious or open minded about your teen.

Your kids don’t want to be judged - they want to be **heard -** and also you can fall into the trap of giving advice based on your experience - the “when I was your age” sort of scenario which may not be actually relevant to your child’s situation or experience - but of course this is all perfectly normal and we all do it - I’m just helping you become aware of it so you can change it if you don’t like what you’ve been currently doing.

The other thing parents often do that puts teen kids off is to **probe** too deeply before they are ready to open up - you know the sort of thing - “So how was the party then - who was there - was anyone supervising you?” “ What did you get up to at Pete’s then - I suppose you played the PlayStation all afternoon - hope you weren’t on MSN all evening?” “Was Lily’s Mum around when you watched that film?” “How did Sara get home - did she drink too much?”

Kids don’t like to be interrogated and by lots of questions when they’re not ready to talk.

I often found my son would open up to talk just as I was about to climb into my long awaited bubble bath or my soft, warm bed after a tough day at school teaching - but I was flexible enough to take the long term view and to see the bigger picture which was to listen and chat and to build our relationship - if you listen to them at 4 hopefully they will still be talking to you at 14 !!

For me questions are vital in good communication.

So let’s look at

### What sort of questions you ask?

Questions are the currency of good communication and they are very powerful. They unlock confusion and help understanding but as parents we often don’t stand back and think about **how** we speak, or listen to our children or the sorts of questions we ask our kids.

For me it’s quite simple - The key to really effective communication is in *asking the right questions and then sitting back to really listen to the answers.* **Real listening is not waiting for your turn to speak.**

In fact as parents you have a huge impact on the relationships you develop by the way you ask your kids questions.

Research has shown that kids who are able to communicate effectively through being talked to openly are less frustrated at home - or at school - and they are kinder to other people.

They learn to discuss rather than just shout and they learn how to argue rationally and articulately as they get older. They can even speak in public without being paralysed with anxiety and that all comes from the types of questions you get used to asking them!!!

Powerful stuff!

#### What is an open –ended question?

Well an open-ended question is one that needs a descriptive answer and is quite elaborate, whereas a closed question can be answered really quickly with a short “Yes” or “No” reply.

Here are some examples of open-ended questions:

How………..?

What……….?

Where………?

When……….?

Who………….?

How much….?

Where…………?

So relax and go over in your imagination some new types of questions - imagine yourself becoming more aware of the types of questions you ask and **when and where** you ask them and take your cue from your teen.

It may be when your tired or just falling asleep but a wise parent will sit up, smile and listen -

Imagine the conversations going really well and becoming more involved - see what you’ll be doing, see what your kids will be doing, hear what you’ll be saying and hear what your kids will be saying and imagine all the great feelings of fun, laughter and the achievements of building a better relationship with your kids as you become more aware of how **you’re** speaking and listening to them.

It’s often a good idea to avoid the “Why….?” question as it tends to make teenagers feel defensive as if you are criticising them.

Think of your feelings if someone said

“So why did you leave all those books all over the table?

“Why didn’t you ring me at 10 o’clock like you said you would?”

You might feel a bit strange at first as you are developing a new habit but like everything in life the more you do it will become second nature to you and feel really natural after a while.

I often get the parents I coach to put up post-it notes around the house or somewhere where they can see them of open -ended questions they want to ask at the beginning to remind themselves of the types of questions to start asking.

Parents often find a really dramatic improvement not only the quality of their conversations, but in the length and enjoyment of their exchanges too and everyone seems to enjoy this new way of communicating together.

There’s a huge difference between **“talking at**” your teenager and **“talking with”** them. Rather like “laughing at” or “laughing with” someone. As parents you need to guard against the conversation that feels like a lecture, inquisition or a nag and open-ended questions really change the feel of your conversation and move it away from the “talking at” mode.

### What’s your tone of voice like?

I remember when my Mum used to call me. If she said “Susan” it usually had an edge to it and meant I was in trouble but if she called “Sue” it was ok and just probably time for tea!! It wasn’t just the words she used - it was all in her tone!!

This week start to notice and make a mental note of when you use a sarcastic tone or angry tone, an encouraging tone or a gentle, sympathetic tone and notice what happens just before it - are you reacting to your kids or are you in control first? Which tone of voice creates harmony - and which ones don’t?

If you become more aware of when you may go into your Cruella DeVil voice you are more likely to press your pause button and step back and change it!

It’s a bit like when my husband says “Everything alright?” and I say “Fine!” but my tone and body language say something completely different!!

Children are extremely sensitive to the tone of your voice so pay attention over the next week to how you say things to them and if you don’t like how you say it – change your tone!!

It’s also worth remembering not to match the tone of your child!

Teenagers are masters at getting under our skin. They know what words to use and exactly how to phrase them that will make us hot under the collar. As infants it's their plaintive cry, as toddlers it's the tantrum, as teenagers it's the whine! No matter how hard we try to remain calm when our child acts up, some of us who let our temper get the better of us, can’t help but match the tone of our child, letting it escalate until we have World War III on our hands!

#### How can we put a stop to it?

One of the major reasons is that we fall into the trap of matching their tone. If someone whines at you it's easy to answer in a whiny voice. Try answering a whine with a pleasant, no-nonsense, “Hey -Let’s not speak in that tone of voice to each other you’re older now let’s chat this through properly" to nip it in the bud and remind everyone that's what's happening.

The key to changing any type of unacceptable tone is simply not to match it. **No match. No game.** It's as simple as that!

The trouble is many of us don't realise when we are caught up in the tone game. It may well be **our** tone that we use with our teenager that gets them on the defensive and into trouble in the first place!

PAUSE the TOOLKIT here and ask yourself some questions and jot down the answers as I always feel writing things down really clarifies your thoughts properly.

**Visualisation**

Ask yourself

What tone of voice could you adopt that would change the atmosphere?

Relax and imagine yourself handling the situation easily and effortlessly using a new technique or a new tone of voice .

See what you see - hear what you hear and feel how you feel and make the sounds and pictures brighter and louder and enjoy the lovely feelings of success as you handle this usually challenging situation in a different and more effective way.

Bring back the learning with you.

What phrase or simple expression could you remember to use that would lift everyone’s spirit and might even make everyone laugh which is a great tension breaker?

end visualization

Let’s look at some key ways of talking to your teenager to see how you are doing at the moment. Perhaps after you’ve listed to them you could pause the TOOLKIT and think about each one and how you use these skills yourself at the moment and make some written notes to keep you on track.

Here’s a checklist to tick and fill in. Ask yourself:

* Do you say what you mean and mean what you say?
* Talk positively to your kids or do you nag and moan?
* Communicate calmly in difficult or challenging situations?
* Are you aware of how you listen?
* Do you talk “at” not “with” them?
* Do you ask open ended-questions?
* Do you create quality talk time and put aside special time each day to actively listen and chat with your teenager?

How do you rate your communication skills at the moment on a scale of 1-10 (10 being brilliant and 1 being lousy)?

* Which of these communication skills would you say you are really good at?
* Which one is you’re least effective?
* What do you think is the reason for that?
* If you could develop and improve in just one area which one would you choose?
* Relax and think about how improving in just that area would affect the quality of your communication and relationship with your child?
* Make a commitment to yourself today to practise just one area at a time and record your results in your Positive Parent Journal or notebook over the next week to see how you get on - then choose another one to work on the following week and enjoy the feelings of moving forward positively and enjoy noticing the improvements in your family relationships.
* Be patient - Rome wasn’t built in a day and family relationships and new skills take time to mature - like fine wine!

I like this quote from Paul Tillich which says

“The first duty of love is to listen”

How would that ability to listen affect the quality of your relationships with your family?

Perhaps you’d like to use more positive language with your teen, be more upbeat in your tone- or perhaps you’d like to be calmer in challenging situations- or really listen to your child’s side of the story by stopping what you’re doing -or perhaps you’d like to listen with your eyes and really look into your teenager’s eyes when they are talking to you - or talk **with** not **at** them

Maybe you’d like to ask more open ended questions or even just make more time to talk and chat with them.

This is a wonderful opportunity to step out from the humdrum, mundane routines and look, more objectively at your communication skills.

So relax and become curious about new ways to talk and listen to your teenager and you’re half way there.

Here are some practical tips to also help you along the way which I have found to be invaluable with my own kids.

The first thing to do is to ***stop what you are doing.***

Have you ever tried telling someone something really exciting or interesting to you but they keep on reading the paper or kept on watching the telly?

I know I have it is really awful trying to talk to someone who is only paying you lip service and pretending to half listen to you.

It’s much easier to tell your worries or successes to someone who is **really listening** and as a parent you can do this really easily just by **stopping what you are doing for a few minutes** to give your child your full attention. Often it’s the sympathetic or happy silence that makes all the difference

Another simple technique is to:

**• Listen with your eyes**

Active listening means that you are intentionally focusing on who you are listening to, so you can understand so for your teen they feel valued and heard.

As the listener, you should then be able to repeat back in your own words what they have said to you in your head. This does not mean you agree, but rather understand, what they are saying.

I encourage the parents I coach (to help them remember this new skill) to look into their child’s eyes to show them that they are really listening.This helps to make effective listening a habit.

**• Listen with your heart**

Have you thought about turning your heart towards your child’s heart to help you remember that you are concentrating on them when they speak to you and it also reminds you that you love them even if you are busy?  It's a simple tip but it means you are not judging, and that you show you love them through just listening. Listen with your eyes and don't be in a hurry - stay focused and empathetic. Give your child the gift of self-esteem by looking at them properly when they speak to you.

We’ve all met people who are excellent communicators, people who make you feel good after you have spent time with them. They seem genuinely enthusiastic and interested in you.

So what are they doing?

They are “actively” listening - a skill that all great communicators use naturally or learn to develop and they are getting into **rapport** with you first by relaxing, matching your body language, your speed of speaking, your rhythm of breathing and your way of speaking - they are really engaged in what you are saying and they are genuinely interested in what you are talking about.

On the workshops I run I often spend a great deal of time helping parents improve their rapport skills as this creates a great starting block to build from.

So become aware of matching the speed of your child’s speech, their body language and their breathing. Become aware of the types of language they use - and notice the words they use and use the same type of words back for example do they say things like

“I **see** what you mean”

or

“I don’t think we’re on the same **wavelength** Mum - you never **listen** to me” or

“I **feel** all wobbly inside”

Because we all use language in different ways and if you can get used to using the same sort of language as your kids then they feel more in rapport with you and understood.

Just observe and become curious how you can improve your relationships by just mirroring gently these ways of communicating.

I also help parents develop a skill called “Reflective Listening” which is like acting as a mirror for your kids to bounce off.

Imagine **you** are a long stylish full length mirror - to reflect the beauty, enthusiasm and joy of your teenager when they are speaking to you and to reflect back the message they are trying to convey to you with the underlying emotion.

Remember mirrors can’t give advice or judge - they can just reflect!

Reflective listening is also known as **mirroring** where you repeat back what your child has said to you and how they **feel** about it but it isn’t mimicking or teasing

Mimicking like a minor bird or parrot just squawking back the exact words your child has said to you and that can be really annoying and patronising.

Mimicking is repeating back the same words sounding cold, aloof and indifferent to the meaning behind the words whereas mirroring or paraphrasing sounds warm, caring and searching to give clarity to your child’s feelings and to understand what they are trying to say to you.

Now just a brief look at consistency

**PAUSE** the TOOLKIT after asking yourself these questions to find your own answers

* How consistent are you in what you say to your teen?
* Would you say your actions speak louder than your words?
* How easily do you forgive your children?
* Would you say you give a genuine apology when you are wrong?

If you’re not so happy with what you’ve discovered just reflect about changing some aspect of what your currently doing this week and make a small change that can make a big difference.

Children never “outgrow” the need for quality talk time with you - I still miss the long chats I used to have with my Dad when he was alive about curtains, carpets, kids , gardening, life in general or nothing much in particular because sharing thoughts and feelings and being together is what family life is all about.

Spending quality talk time with your children sends out the message that they are important, valued and loved. It will also teach them how to communicate and become eloquent and help them develop proper relationships with others naturally and easily.

For many families eating together provides the natural place for this to happen - if you are a busy family then perhaps just recognising how important it is to have some quality talk time will make you just reflect when it would be a good time for you all to sit down and just chat together.

Make a note of your own “special talk time” and keep to it regularly and watch your relationships flourish as a result.

There’s a direct connection between how kids feel and how they behave - so when your kids feel understood - they behave well. So by practising some of the techniques on this TOOLKIT in communicating you help your teenager feel understood and their attitude, mindset and behaviour will naturally improve.

### Helping children handle their feelings

Take some time this week to observe just how you respond to your teen – do you say things like:

“No. You can’t go out in that …put your jumper over the top of that ….”

“You’re just hormonal…!”

“You can’t be tired. You’ve just got up.”

“What do you mean you didn’t have a good time - it was lovely?”

“What do you mean the film was boring ….I really thought it was exciting…..That’s not right......”

“If your tutor was cross then you must have done something wrong. You’re always talking too much...”

As parents we have a natural habit of denying or negating our children’s emotions, feelings and experiences – no matter what age they are! Most of us grew up having our feelings denied so it just follows that we repeat the same pattern and it is quite a challenge for us as parents to change our habit.

But denying how your teenager feels is a real block to effective communication because your kids feel angry, confused and frustrated with you.

But just imagine this was happening to you and your friends, family or work colleagues kept speaking to you like this....... how would you feel?

Most of us when we are upset, hurt, annoyed or frustrated just like having someone to listen to us – who doesn’t offer advice, pity or philosophy! Our children are exactly the same – they are just mini – adults really!

#### Acknowledging their emotions

A simple but effective way of helping your teen handle their feelings is to simply acknowledge those feelings by saying something like

“Oooh….I see…..”

Simply allowing your child to have their feelings accepted and not denied by you rushing in with your own take on the situation keeps your lines of communication open and your kids feel supported not judged.

They just have a listening ear and a sympathetic parent who gives them the time they need.

Empathy is a key skill to learn to become a better parent! But it does not come naturally to us.

For more in depth strategies techniques specifically on communicating with kids look at my “Effective Communication” Toolkit

## track 11 Different Ways to Show Affection

I remember when I was teaching at the same school as my son and I went to give him a hug as he went into school in front of his mates – and how red he went!

I’d forgotten that it was OK to give him a hug at home, but not in front of his pals!

Now that your kids are older it can be difficult to show them affection so I think it’s helpful to find new and different ways to display your love for them that seems more appropriate for this stage of your relationships.

If you’re feeling distanced from your teen try spending some time with them shopping or offer them a lift, as a car is a great place to chat on a journey. I remember a Thursday night was my time with Will as I dropped him up to football training and sometimes we just chewed the fat, and sometimes we’d have deep and meaningful conversation or sometimes we just listened to the radio but what was great was that it was “our time” together and it was ring fenced and regular as it naturally fitted into our normal family routine.

So take a few moments here to stop the TOOLKIT and to jot down a natural and regular time to just “chat” with your teenager.

Another easy and normal time together is over a meal – either at home or in a restaurant – make these times relaxed, turn off the telly and just have a chat and catch up with each other’s lives. Don’t feel there always has to be an “issue” or make the event feel like an inquisition – just take a healthy and normal interest in their lives and build the bonds of connection and let them find out about your day too.

We often watch Chelsea on the TV and go to regular home games as season ticket holders and we have our own jokes, traditions and routines as it builds the “we” mentality of a family and builds team spirit and gives us all a sense of “our family”. So write down these things you could do as a family, like watch a comedy programme play an interactive DVD game or take the dog for a walk.

## track 12 Is Something Seriously Wrong?

Motivation is often something I help parents sort out with their teen as sometimes they lie in bed for hours, seem listless and un-focused and generally seem lethargic.

Kids that suddenly lose their motivation at school may be falling behind and finding things difficult so take an active interest in their work and support them if you can, or get a tutor and go and chat with their teacher at school. Perhaps they have got involved in a crowd that see school work as “uncool” so go and find out what’s happening and chat with your son and daughter gently and with the intention of helping and supporting them not accusing or blaming them.

Sometimes bullying and teasing can affect their overall behaviour and de-motivate them in their usual hobbies and interests so find out what’s going on.

And sometimes being “in love” or breaking up after a relationship can have a deep impact on how they feel and behave.

Low moods like sadness, grief and feeling “low” soon pass and the occasional “bad day” is all perfectly normal but it’s important to take your teenager’s feelings seriously and not to mock them or try to “jolly” them out of it unnaturally saying “Oh, you’re such a drama Queen”. By showing empathy and genuine understanding helps your child feels understood, respected and appreciated for who they are.

But when your teenager seems to be more than usually apathetic and has lost interest in their usual hobbies, sport or favourite activity or has a new set of friends and has moved away from old friends it may be time to let some alarm bells ring.

If you notice a real change in the way your teenager acts within your family and you really feel your relationship has deteriorated or you notice a change in your child’s academic performance or attendance or their levels of concentration start to sit up and observe.

Also physical signs like listlessness, excessive tiredness, lack of appetite and sleeping during the day and starting to neglect their appearance coupled with emotional withdrawal and aggression may be signs of drug taking.

## track 13 Drugs

Most youngsters these days will come across drugs at some point before their 18th birthday. So it’s crucial that you are open to talking and teaching them about the dangers and are happy to discuss with them your views and reasons why drug taking wrecks lives.

Begin as early in their lives that seems appropriate – we’ve been chatting and discussing Amy Winehouse and Britney Spears and we talk openly about the pictures in the papers and the awful waste of talent of these stars through their misuse of drugs.

It’s helpful to know what you’re talking about and to remember that drugs have become more hallucinogenic and carry the effects of panic attacks and paranoia and are more dangerous than they ever were so if you don’t know very much …. go and search the internet for information - being ignorant is no excuse and can be something you regret later

There are services for parents as well as kids, like [**www.talktofrank.com**](http://www.talktofrank.com) and [**www.connexions-direct.com**](http://www.connexions-direct.com), so take some time to get clued up.

These services are delighted to answer your questions and to give you practical advice.

Also I recommend “Drugs A (acid) -Z( oot) A Parent’s Guide” by Judy Mackie published by Need2Know.

If your teen doesn’t feel relaxed or at ease talking to you encourage them to talk to an aunt or a friend of yours but make sure they know where to go for information, help, advice and support.

Remember although people can offer advice and support a young person may not accept it – but recent research is encouraging as it has shown that when teenagers feel they do need help they **do** go to the person who offered to help them.

If you think your teenager is using drugs it is really shocking and upsetting so take some time out to think things through and to decide the best way forward through this traumatic time.

Ask yourself:

* What are the facts?
* Why has this happened?
* When did this change start to happen?
* Where is it happening? With whom?
* How can I best sort this out?
* What does my teenager want and need from me?
* How can I best give this to them?
* Where can I get support, help and advice for myself too to help me cope with this situation?
* How can I stay centred, grounded and non-judgemental to more everyone forward positively?

## track 14 Drinking

Some families only use alcohol socially like at New Year or Christenings. Others enjoy moderate drinking at meal times or event and parties, and others abstain completely while some have issues with drink due to their family history.

The way you handle or view your teenagers drinking will be based on your own values, upbringing and your family experiences as a youngster.

Drinking is very common under 18 and the media and the government are very keen to do something about it, particularly when you read research that points out that 84% of 12 yr olds have drunk alcohol and by the age of 16 it has risen to 94% - or that 10% of underage drinkers have been too hung over to go to school the next morning, or that 40% of 13-14 yr olds were either drunk or “stoned” when they first had sex.

One of the most important things to your teenagers is their peer group – their mates and friends so if your teenager is mixing with kids who are working hard at school and are well-behaved then you can relax a little but what do you do if your 16 yr old is going up the pub and mixing with peers who are older or don’t have parents with the same values as yourself?

The message you need to get clear about is *your* attitude to drinking.

* What is your attitude to drinking? Take some time now to write down your views and to ask yourself what is a sensible and responsible level of drinking?
* How much alcohol is TOO much?
* What ways minimise over excess – (i.e. eating a meal etc)
* What kinds of pubs and clubs are permissible to you?
* How do you know where your teenage kids go?
* How do they get home?
* What time do you expect them to be home?
* Who are your teenager’s friends?
* How do you role model the behaviour you want to see?
* In what ways do you drink – how much do you think is acceptable?
* What do your children see when you drink at home/with friends/ at parties?
* Do you know what are the recommender units of alcohol for a woman (14) / for a man (21) – what is a unit equal to?
* How can you guide your children over alcohol – (teach them that drinking games and competitions are not a good idea, being aware of spiked drinks, not drinking and driving, or drinking alone)
* How can you ask your teenager for their reasons for having a drink? ( Is it to keep in with their friends, overcoming shyness or other reasons?) If you notice some of these signs it may be that their social drinking is becoming more dangerous.
* Are relationships are being damaged through alcohol?
* Are dare-devil excesses and risks are becoming a normal way of life?
* Are they getting into lots of alcohol fuelled fights?
* Are they are involved in embarrassing public behaviour?
* Are they get into trouble with the police?
* Have they got physical signs of bloating and a red face?
* Are they becoming dependency on drink to overcome shyness?

If you are concerned about your teenagers drinking go to [**www.al-anonuk.org.uk**](http://www.al-anonuk.org.uk) or [**www.alcoholconcern.co.uk**](http://www.alcoholconcern.co.uk) for more in-depth advice.

## track 15 Smoking

Often parents “come across” their kid’s cigarettes in their bedrooms or start to notice their bad breath, persistent cough or stale smelling clothes.

* What ways can you open-up the discussion about smoking?
* What ways can you open up the discussion to find out their reasons for smoking? Is it to keep in with the crowd, lose weight, hide their shyness etc?
* How can you make your teenager aware of the cost smoking?
* How can you make your teenager aware of the health risks?

Look at how you feel about smoking and ways you can pass on your worries, concerns or fears in a non threatening and confrontational way. Start to visualise yourself talking and discussing this issue with your teenager calmly and in a friendly manner - see what you see, hear what you say and feel how good it feels when it’s all going just the way you’d like it too as you have their best interest at heart and then imagine it not going according to plan and you staying grounded, centred and in control - using your One Point Technique to keep the dialogue and communication open for another time. Steer away from nagging, scolding or shouting and I’ve heard bribery works!!!

## track 16 Sex and Relationships

Coming to terms with your teenager’s or young adult’s love life and sexual identity is one of life’s BIGGIES! And some common emotions for parents are discomfort and embarrassment talking about their growing child’s new experiences, fear about whether they are mature emotionally and physically, or are at risk, or have chosen the right person, and the sense of rejection as a parent as you are not the most important person in their life anymore.

Also a bit of envy creeps in too as your child is experiencing all the excitement and intoxicating romance that perhaps has gone out your life.

Also if their partner is of the same sex you may find yourself experiencing mixed emotions of worry and anxiety – a useful website for advices is [**www.fflag.org.uk**](http://www.fflag.org.uk) which is especially for Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

Just as your kids usually find the idea of their parents being romantic and sexually active distasteful you probably don’t need to get involved in the up close and personal details of your teenager’s love life either.

It’s also true that you probably have friends whose partners you can’t get on with or stand so it is the same with your child’s choice – and it’s true when they say that “love is blind” and this is where you need to be mature and take the longer term view.

My Dad didn’t tell me he couldn’t stand one of my boyfriends until years later. He figured if he made a fuss it would drive me away from my close relationship I had with him and more towards the boyfriend. So he was non-judgemental and the relationship did fizzle out in time.

But it is worth getting to know your teenager’s boyfriend or girlfriend by making them feel welcomed but not overwhelmed.

* In what ways can you be naturally involved in supporting your teenager in their love-life that feels appropriate and nurturing?
* How can you discuss the issues that are worrying you?
* When is a good time to chat these through?
* How do you teach them about what makes a loving relationship?
* How can you make them aware of the dangers of drinking and sexual encounters?
* How can you make them aware of all the sexually transmitted diseases?
* How can you protect them from abusive or overtly controlling relationships?
* How can you come to terms with this new development in your parent-child relationship?
* How can you keep the lines of communication open?
* Who can you talk to about your worries, concerns or emotions?
* What does your partner feel about all these changes and how can you handle them together?

Your teenager is still the same person you have always loved, nurtured and guided and although their sexual identity is an important change in your relationship, it is only a small part of who they are – their personality, character, humour, and need for your love and reassurance is still the same – they still need your acceptance, guidance and love so keep talking and sharing and “being there” for them. See this opportunity for natural growth and maturity and embrace the situation and learn to relax – bringing up kids from toddler to teen is all about handling change and this phase is no exception.

## track 17 Friendships

When your kids were little, life seemed easier as you knew their friends and had control over who they played with – but suddenly they are treating the place like a hotel and are never in and you aren’t quite sure if you’ve heard of “Matt” before, let alone letting your child stay at his house for the weekend. It’s perfectly normal to feel rejected, left out and excluded from your teenager suddenly as being with their friends becomes the most important thing in a teenager’s life.

So how do you work out what is and isn’t acceptable socially for your kids, regardless or what everyone else is saying.

I remember my son was put up a year at school, so all his friend’s were a year older than him, and I remember being mortified when Chris’ mother let them go swimming while she popped into Sainsbury’s, as it wasn’t something I would have let Will do at the time.

So take a few moments here to think about what is acceptable to you – which places are OK for you, what are the picking up arrangements, supervision and safety issues.

There are no hard and fast rules as they all depend on the maturity and “street savvy-ness” of your individual child – but just spend some time asking yourself is it OK for your 14 year old son to be hanging around the shopping centre late at night and then getting on public transport on his own? Just get clear about your rules and boundaries so you can pass them on clearly to your kids.

This way misunderstandings and arguments can be avoided.

Here are some useful questions you need to ask yourself:

* What level of maturity do I feel my child is at?
* How responsible do I think they are?
* How would they react in a crisis?
* How street-wise are they?
* How confident are they?
* Are they able to say “no” to things confidently?
* What age do they look physically? How does that affect what is expected of them?
* How does where you live affect your rules and boundaries and allowing them out unsupervised?
* Who are their friends? What influence do they have on my child?
* Where do you think is acceptable to go? (cinema, sports centre, shopping centre, friend’s house, bars, clubs etc)
* What time do you expect them home?
* What means of transport do they use?
* How do you want them to contact you if they are late or in trouble?
* What will you do if your rules are constantly ignored?

By planning ahead and getting clear on these issues appropriate to the age and maturing of your teenager you get clarity and confidence from letting your teen experience step by step ways towards independence gently.

Friendships are always a tough one for parents as some parents worry about their kids having no friends, the wrong friends, much older friends, falling out with friends, but the one rule of thumb my parents used to have with my friends was to be relaxed, open and friendly with them, and they had an “open-house” mentality with – where I could always bring my friends home.

It’s often a good idea to have another room where you can watch the telly and let your teenagers have a coffee and a chat in a room of their own – preferably not upstairs in their bedroom – so you are available to keep a friendly eye on them but they feel independent.

One phase that I think might be helpful is based on my own kids. My kids like to spend time in their rooms reading, playing music and being “on their own” away from the family, but it doesn’t mean they are insecure or haven’t any friends but they are a bit young to be going out alone but they feel increasingly independent of the family. This is quite normal during mid-teens and this also changes over time.

The important thing for teenagers is to have hobbies and interests that keep them engaged and not just “hanging out on street corners” so encourage them to get involved in extra-curricular activities from judo to football or from swimming to drama club. It’s all about getting involved, having fun and building their confidence helping them to make friends with like minded people.

## track 18 Encouraging Good Behaviour

Teenagers as well as adults have emotional needs and here is how you as their parent can meet those needs easily for them.

#### Attention

By taking an interest in their lives and their world – the things they like and dislike, their worries, their favourite films, their favourite musical artist, their computer games, and things that make them laugh.

#### Acceptance

Showing your teenager that you love them is so important even if you don’t like their behaviour. By not expecting them to be perfect and accepting them as they are you build their self-esteem and confidence and giving them “space” to be themselves you allow them to flourish.

#### Respect

Showing your teenager that you respect their opinions and views keeps the key energy of a family working well. Ask you teenager for their thoughts, their ideas or their solutions and let them hold different views to you without getting stressed out – they aren’t a clone of you!

#### Appreciation

We all like to feel valued and appreciated so by catching your teenager doing something right is actually no different from catching your toddler. So be aware of thanking them for putting their dirty cups in the dishwasher or bringing down their washing or getting their homework done – notice the small things and catch them doing something good and watch your relationships really improve.

#### Encouragement

Just believe in them and tell them that you do! Be positive, praise, encourage and be their cheerleader and be proud of them. This will keep them going in difficult times when they feel lost, fed up or discouraged.

#### Show Affection

Although they may not need constant hugs and kisses, a friendly hug, an arm around their shoulders or a playful squeeze keeps everyone’s emotional tank topped up.

#### Approval

We all need to feel the approval and love of someone and teenagers are certainly not exceptions. In fact they need your approval even more as they are learning the ropes of growing up. So let them know when you approve of their choices or for owning up or being honest.

#### Support

Helping them with their homework may well be a thing of the past but helping them decide their GCSE’s or to fill out a form or a job interview all show support, guidance and care and is a need that a young person really values.

#### Comfort

Noticing when your teenager is fed up, low, disappointed or upset and showing empathy and not judgement is a vital way of showing you care. By getting in a take-away or watching a DVD together helps them through tough times naturally.

#### Security

Your kids need to know you are there for them no matter what. Although it’s hard to find time for “quality time” with your kids it’s the best investment you can make in your teenager’s future – a focused activity together ideally once a week that is negotiated really builds bonds where you chat, have fun and do something together. Here are some ideas:

### A sport or physical activity Go on a trip or shopping somewhere





### 

### Teach or learn a new computer game or skill



Cook: prepare a Watch a family film, comedy show

meal together that’s fun and chat afterwards about it





Go out for a meal—or

even breakfast!



Help them with a project, hobby, Ride a bike or go for a walk

or school work







Have a girlie-day or a make-over

#### How did it go?

It’s also a good idea just to be aware of how it all went from everyone’s point of view not just your own !

* What did you do?
* How did you decide together?
* What did you most enjoy about the activity?
* What did you enjoy the least?
* If you had a disagreement how did you sort it out and resolve it?
* What new thing did you learn about yourself or your teenager?
* Is there anything you’d like to change about yourself or improve on for next time?

This focused time together is brilliant for staying connected, building bridges and showing interest in your teenager and you’ll both build the memories that last a lifetime.

Experience has shown me some classic ways to switch off your teenager so here they are to help you from making the same mistakes as hundreds of parents I’ve coached!

**Asking too many questions**

“*W*hy did you say that?” “What did you say?”

**Being bossy**

“Do your homework right now and don’t argue”

**Lecturing**

“You should know better at your age”

**Criticising/Shaming**

“How could you be so stupid?”

**Pitying**

“I’m so sorry for you, you poor thing”

**Rescuing – doing it for them**

“Alright, I’ll do your homework for you so you don’t get into trouble”

**Jumping to conclusions**

“Late again! I suppose you’ve been up to no good getting back at this hour!”

**Threatening and shouting**

“If you don’t shape up you’re grounded for a week”

**Always knowing best**

“I told you that would happen, didn’t I!”

Most of us find ourselves lecturing, ordering and jumping to conclusions or even threatening our teenagers but if we **always** presume the worst and speak to our kids like this we block communication.

And, effective communication is the oil that lubricates a good family and builds a lasting relationship between you.

Here are my Positive Parent Confident Kids Tips for good communication:

* Remain silent most of the time!
* Be aware and sensitive to your child’s body language, e.g. whether they look disappointed, worried, angry, excited, pleased etc…..
* Show you are really listening by saying “I see, uh-huh and mmm” occasionally, and looking into their eyes without just staring to maintain good eye contact
* Reflect back the gist of what they have said to you to check you have understood them clearly
* Avoid giving advice or offering suggestions (Tough, I know, but believe me this one REALLY works)
* Show your teenager by the tone of your voice and body language that you really respect and care and are genuinely trying to understand where they are coming from.

It’s worth remembering that most teenagers don’t like face to face chats. So it’s easier if you are doing something else at the time like emptying the dishwasher, driving them to a football practise or peeling the potatoes.

Often they like to talk when you’ve just settled down with a cup of coffee to watch your favourite TV programme or just climbed into bed exhausted or just run a lovely hot bath, but these can be the “Golden Moments” – the deep and meaningful chats – the ones that connect you to your kids and help bridge the gap of empathy.

So, go with the flow and keep remembering the bigger picture to your parenting – bringing up the happy, confident, well-balanced teenager; tomorrow’s adult – tomorrow’s parent.

Now let’s take a look at your parenting style.

## track 19 Your Parenting Style

The secret to parenting a teenager is to have clear rules, not too many of them and be consistent in applying them and then to be flexible and sensible in applying them, adapting them as your teen matures.

The more you feel unsure, unbalanced and anxious the more you may go into an authorisation style to try and retain in control. So then you have set up a conflicting way of communicating.

If you say “no” to everything you will only increase your teenager’s rebelliousness.

So it’s knowing when to choose your battles, presenting a united front, negotiating and spotting the reason behind the challenging behaviour and discussing things together openly.

So let’s look at your parenting style first:

* Are you a “Bull in a China Shop” slightly aggressive going in with all guns blazing, not listening to the other person’s point of view, and always feeling you are right and must have the last word! And do you tend to go “over the top” with the sanctions you set – like grounding your son for a month as he came in late last Thursday? This style is confrontational and often you’ll find the conflicts and rows get worse.
* Are you “Anything for a Quiet Life” passive type who hopes it will all go away by itself and who hates confrontation and hassle. Do you sometimes let unacceptable or risky behaviour go unchallenged? Do you sometimes let your kids do what they want and find they don’t have much respect for you – do you often feel like a bit of a doormat and hold onto resentments and act like a victim in the whole teenage zone scenario?
* Or are you “The Silent Seether” passive yet silently angry type who “pretends” you don’t mind about something when it’s obvious that you really do! Do you often reply “Nothing’s wrong” when asked what’s the matter but create a tense atmosphere while sighing a lot? Do your kids enjoy winding you up but are they losing respect for you?
* Perhaps you’re the “Do what you want but don’t get into trouble” type parent who was over-controlled as a child and hates confrontation and saying “no” and is slightly frightened of this powerful teenager with exploding hormones?
* Are you a “I don’t want to let you go” over-protective parent? Frightened of letting your teenager grow up and have let your own life slip by by putting all your energy into your child’s life with no life of your own?
* Are you a “Hard to Please” parent who expects a great deal from yourself as well as your teenager – and does your teen feel nothing they do is ever good enough so they’ve stopped trying?
* Or are you “The Assertive and Confident Parent” who gives your teenagers some freedom to make mistakes but are willing to speak up clearly and calmly about your concerns, values and expectations? Are you willing to be temporarily unpopular but mature enough to take the long term view to make sure your kids are safe? Do you try to understand your teenager’s point of view and are willing to negotiate with them? Do you teach your kids that all of their actions have consequences and you have to choose the battles and stand offs you go in for? Do you present a UNITED FRONT with your partner? (At least in public!)
* Which parenting style do you most relate to?
* How different are you to your parents?
* What changes could you make to your parenting style?
* What would be some of the benefits to your family life if you made some small changes?

Whatever your style you have the best interest of your teenager at heart but it’s helpful to be clear about your style so you can modify, change or adapt your style to handle the changes happening during the teenage zone.

Giving your teenager choices encourages co-operation as they feel they have a say in their lives and they feel they have some control over their lives.

So…

How responsible is your teenager at the moment? Take a moment to go through this checklist.

* Do they help with any household chores?
* Can they make their own packed lunch?
* Do they clear up after themselves in the kitchen?
* Do they tell you where they are going?
* Do they tell you if they’re going to be late back?
* Can they use the washing machine?
* Can they iron their own clothes?
* Can they cook a simple meal?
* Do they pack for themselves when they go away?
* Are they generally responsible with money?
* Do they usually get their homework done on time?
* Do they ask before borrowing something?
* How can you encourage, expect and create more independence in your teenager?
* What can you say, how can you say it, and what body language can you use?

Using the “Family Talk Time” how can you set clear house rules where everyone shares responsibility for running a smooth ship?

* How can you remember that when conflict and arguments occur remember there really are two sides!
* How can you see the issue and how does your teen see the issue. Take time to see it from both sides. So you start to change you attitude and mindset to NEGOTIATION.

So how do you negotiate with your teenager?

### How to Negotiate

1. Stick to the main issue at hand and don’t get side-tracked. Focus on the behaviour not your teenager’s character.
2. Say how you feel about the issue and what **you would like to see happen**
3. Find out and really listen to how they see the issue and **what they would like to happen**
4. Discuss the option and try to “win-win” for everyone – with some compromising.

Use the “When you….. I feel…… because…… I would like ……” Strategy.

#### How to Negotiate

I’m concerned you don’t seem to have started your geography project yet.

**Stick to the MAIN issue.**

**Focus on the *behaviour*-**

**not the person.**

I realise you’ve got lots of homework this week. Is there a particular problem with geography?

Try to understand the issue from

your TEENAGER’S point of view

I’m worried there’ll be a rush at the last minute. I’d like you to make a start this weekend.

**Say how YOU feel about the issue**

**and what you would like to happen**

I’ve got loads of other things to do! I’ll do it after I’ve tidied my bedroom

**Find out what your TEENAGER feels**

**and what they would like to happen**

Could you do some next week maybe on Tuesday night?

**Discuss the OPTIONS.**

**Agree to a plan of action together and be prepared for both of you to concede and compromise a little.**

#### Monitor your plan later on

Is it working? Sometimes you just need to take control and be in the driving seat so:

1. Use your one point technique
2. Face the problem
3. Say how you feel
4. Say what you’d like to happen
5. And stick to your guns calmly and firmly

When conflict happens, it’s easy to feel threatened. You may feel “How Dare You Treat Me like this”, but conflict only gets worse if you react from your own threatened and out of control feelings.

If you’re both all emotional no-one can think straight or find a helpful solution.

There are always HIDDEN GOALS behind behaviour – so I think it’s helpful to spot the goal and be like a police detective curious to find out what’s really going on underneath.

### Goals behind Behaviour

Kids are great experts in hooking you in to their agenda – their behaviour is the BAIT or HOOK to reeling you in!

If you can see behind the behaviour, and are clear about what they are really “fishing for” you can respond for more effectively to their challenging behaviour.

Try and spot the goal behind the challenging behaviour as it helps you feel back in control, calm and strong.

There’s POWER AND CONTROL - to find out who’s the strongest

REVENGE -to get “back at you” for something or for some reason

SEEKING ATTENTION - to keep you busy with them and to get your attention, as any attention is better than none.

PITY - so you “rescue” them

APPROVAL - which is very typical of teenagers and kids of any age

EXCITEMENT AND THRILL - things like taking drugs, going to wild parties and joyriding

So let’s look at some of the hooks I’ve come across.

#### HOOK: MAKING HURTFUL REMARKS

Sophie often mutters under her breath that her mum is a ‘silly cow’. Her mum feels hurt and threatens “Don’t you talk to me like that or you’re grounded!”

**What do you think Sophie’s hidden goal might be?**

For some reason Sophie wants to be hurtful. Maybe her mum is too bossy and controlling and Sophie is trying to get revenge and her own back?

**How else could her mum react? What would you do differently?**

What could she do instead of fighting back and threatening? What could she do to work on the relationship between herself and Sophie? Does she need to change her style of parenting? Is there something Sophie needs to talk about, e.g. her feelings about her dad having left home?

#### HOOK: REFUSING TO CO-OPERATE

Jack, aged 14, refuses point-blank when he’s asked to help with chores in the home. If he’s forced to do a job, he messes about or does it badly. His parents feel very angry. There are lots of arguments in the home.

**What might Jack’s hidden goal be?**

Does this sound like an issue of power and control? Is Jack just trying to exert his independence? What other emotion could it be about - feeling over-controlled?

**How else could his parents have reacted? What would you do differently?**

Not try to win the power struggles and negotiate instead a win-win solution through brainstorming and discussing ideas together? Should Jack be expected to help in the home but given a choice of which job or when he does it?

#### HOOK: SQUABBLING AND BICKERING WITH SIBLINGS

Tom deliberately winds up and irritates his younger brother and sister while his mum is within hearing distance. Mum tries to sort it out but the behaviour just keeps happening. In the end she loses the plot and gives him a good telling off and ends up feeling guilty afterwards as she goes too far.

**What might Tom’s hidden goal be?**

Does this sound as if it’s about attention seeking and keeping Mum busy with him? Does he enjoy making her mad?

**How else could his Mum have reacted? What would you do differently?**

Could she try using her One Point and giving him the positive attention he clearly would like on a one to one basis regularly? If she doesn’t rise to the bait will he get bored and do something else? If she spent some quality time chatting, laughing and listening to him properly do you think the behaviour would improve?

#### HOOK: ACTING HELPLESS

Whenever Holly has homework to do she keeps sighing, getting up from her chair and asking questions and saying she can’t do it. Her Mum’s partner always takes pity on her and does it for her more or less as he is keen for her to do well at school and get along with him

**What might Holly’s hidden goal be?**

Does this sound as if she has him round her little finger? Is she lazy, insecure or genuinely unable to do the work? Does she enjoy the attention?

**How else could her Mum’s partner have reacted? What would you do differently?**

Could he try talking to her about her schoolwork, show her ways to structure her time or her work and then let her get on with it herself but still taking an interest in it after she has finished? How else could he encourage her to become more independent - talk to her teacher, get her to ask more questions at school? How else could he show an interest in her - through doing a sport together or going for a walk where they could talk?

For this week just start to notice your “hooks or bait” that reel you in and start to notice what your kids do to hook you in to their agenda and look at the underlying reason to the behaviour - it will surprise you then you can get back into the driving seat of the relationship and look at new ways to handle it all

Conflict is perfectly normal in family life and it happens – boundaries, rules, mistakes will all be broken and made – it’s all about give and take and talking things through.

### Playing Detective

Detective sheets can help you discover reasons for your teenager’s challenging behaviour. For instance, are they seeking to get your attention, take revenge, be in control or get you to pity or rescue them?

Challenging behaviour may be reduced or even stopped if you change the way **you** react andrespond – i.e. by not taking the ‘bait’ and looking below the surface.

So ask yourself :

What did my teenager do? (e.g. kept on irritating younger sister etc)

How did you respond? (e.g. got annoyed and told him off)

What might the GOAL of the behaviour be? (e.g. attention seeking)

How else could you respond? (e.g. So long as it’s not too dangerous, could you ignore the behaviour but give more positive attention later. Could you discuss it at a “better” time and remember to bring it up - striking when the iron is cold is a very useful strategy!

## track 20 Whose Problem Is This?

A lot of the parents I work with are pulling their hair out over untidy bedrooms, messy bathrooms, weird clothes, kids who stay out late, or are always borrowing money or are not pulling their weight at home.

But some simple questions I ask them to think about are:

1. Whose problem is this? Is it mine or my teenager’s?
2. Who is upset? Me or them?
3. Because the person who is upset is the only one with the energy to tackle the issue!
4. Is this bringing me closer to or further away from the relationship I really want with my son or daughter?
5. What will I think about this incident when they have flown the nest?

This helps you step out from the mundane into the bigger picture to your parenting. Then you can negotiate or use sanctions to move the incident forward positively.

It’s helpful to remember that teenagers are either **motivated towards** something like more pocket-money, more time out with a friend, or an extra treat like going to the cinema while some are **motivated away** from something like the loss of a privilege such as being grounded, doing extra chores, no lifts for a couple of days, loss of computer time or docked pocket-money.

Find out which way they are motivated and you’ve cracked it!

To sum up responding to challenging behaviour:

* Refuse to get drawn in and say clearly what you want to see happen;
* Don’t take things personally;
* Give your teenager quality attention time and praise the behaviour you want to see more of.
* Don’t rescue them all the time, teach them to be independent and responsible for their actions and negotiate, compromise and talk it through.
* “Ask” rather then “tell”;
* Ignore provocative behaviour sometimes as it may be attention seeking;
* Motivate, don’t nag;
* Use positive, upbeat language and take deep breaths!
* Remember your sense of humour - a smile is a curve that puts a lot of things straight!

## track 21 The Empty Nest Syndrome

Recently I’ve been working with a lot of parents whose children have either gone to university or left home and it’s a time of real loss and change.

I remember my own Mum feeling lonely, isolated and a bit lost as I went off to College. It’s about changing your perspective of what’s happening, and changing it from one of loss to one of achievement, a new opportunity for you to try new things, learn new skills or find a new hobby, to travel, to read the books you always meant to read and to learn to salsa dance!

It’s a beginning, not an end. Your children always need you, love you and will be in your life, and it’s about celebrating all your successes, and achievements as a family, patting yourselves on the back and looking to a new pattern and phase of your life – it’s about recognising the changes, getting support and talking with friends and your partner and moving forward gently.

It’s about thinking of your future and getting some new and different directions into it, getting back in touch with who you are now, building up your own confidence and creating an exciting new future for yourself.

## track 22 Looking Back from Your Rocking Chair

I want you to imagine you’re well into your 90’s, your children have grown up and had families of their own. Picture this very clearly in your mind.

You’re surrounded by your wonderful family.

* How does that feel?
* What would your son or daughter say is the best thing about having you as a Mum or Dad?
* What do they love most about you?
* How do they describe you to their children?
* How do you want them to describe you to their children?
* How would that make you feel?
* What steps can you take to make sure that happens?
* If you could ask your future self just one question about how you made this happen what would it be?
* What would be the answer?
* What have been the highlights in your family relationships?

#### What will your children tell their own kids

* What kind of parent do you want them to be?
* What values do you want them to demonstrate?
* When they look back at their teenage years, what do you want them to remember?
* What memories have you built in them that will last forever?
* What wonderful stories about their childhood and teenage years will they share with their own children?
* What steps can you take from now on to make sure that happens?

Parenting is not an exact science – it’s about nurturing, caring, guiding, teaching, policing and learning from your mistakes.

If you think parenting in the teenage zone is difficult… it will be: - if you relax, get clear and develop your flexibility and confidence it won’t be.

We all need some new ideas and support from time to time, so I hope this TOOLKIT and toolkit has improved your confidence, given you hope and some practical techniques help you to believe in yourself and enjoy these interesting times and years with your teenager.

Keep learning, but most of all keep laughing

### For Parenting Teens Toolkit



### and

### STAND ALONE TOOLKIT FOR TEENAGERS

### to go with their Confident Kids Toolkit

## track 1 Living the Dream - Ways to Live Magically

Hello,

I want to help you create the best sort of life that you will really love, get really excited by and really enjoy.

An incredibly positive - well lived life - full of wonderful opportunities and great memories. A fantastic life that you can create easily and effortlessly just through relaxing regularly, listening to this TOOLKIT often and letting your imagination transform your life into enormous opportunities - great experiences and magical moments - the life you truly deserve and one you’ve always dreamt of.

I’ve studied with and learnt from some of the most successful people in the world from Paul McKenna to Tony Robbins and I’ve read hundreds of books from “The Secret” to “Awaken The Giant Within” about being the best you can be - and the one thing that shines through all of the books, courses and people I’ve met is that the power of your imagination is more powerful than the background you come from, the school you went to or the colour of your skin.

So find a quiet place to relax where you won’t be disturbed by your mobile phone or have any disruptions.

**Visualisation**

Close your eyes as you sink further into this lovely relaxing daydream - and I want you to breathe deeply and slowly that’s right - as you’re going down really enjoy feeling deeply relaxed and calm - where your worries and fears just melt away - more relaxed than you can ever remember- where your muscles all relax and feel heavy and your spine just unwinds - let go of all your tension - and as you continue to relax and float deeply down into this lovely state of deep relaxation - imagine breathing in pure, crystal clear air - full of confidence- self assurance - and true self belief - and breath out feelings of fear, anxiety and tension and regret. That’s right really enjoy this time of unwinding and being deeply relaxed and your true self.

Let your mind become very still and calm as you float down in to this deep state of being relaxed physically and mentally - enjoy the feelings of being centred and grounded and in control of your life - let the calm and peaceful feelings gently move through your body giving you a wonderful feeling - and give this wonderful feeling a beautiful colour that moves gently throughout your body and radiates out from you - let every cell in your body enjoy filling up with this positive and confident energy now - that’s right - feeling safe and secure - letting yourself go as you relax into this lovely daydream and where you begin to imagine yourself strolling through a beautiful meadow on a warm Summer’s day where the sun is shining brightly and the blue sky is full of fluffy white clouds floating gently above you - as you continue to relax and breath deeply and slowly - enjoying the pure clean crystal clear air filling you up with confidence - happiness and positive thoughts of being your best and most true genuine self

And as you feel the gentle warmth of the sun on your back - you feel the gentle breeze making you feel that life is good - that life is an adventure - that life’s a journey to be enjoyed - cherished and explored - a roller coaster ride of ups and downs - of laughter - of fun - of great friendships - and filled up with love and abundance - a place to learn to laugh and to pick yourself up quickly and lightly when you make mistakes - a place to have a go and try new things - and to learn from your mistakes and not stay down and let life defeat you - a place to be like a toddler learning to walk - falling over sometimes but getting back up with a smile on your face to have another go - a place to dwell on possibility - and to feel the fear and do it anyway - a place where you look for rainbows when it rains and when its dark you look for stars - letting your life be like a wild flower- growing freely in the beauty and joy of each day -

As you gently stroll along in the meadow with every step you connect with the earth beneath your feet and feel connected to your own feelings of inner peace and calm - feeling inspired and motivated now

And as you continue on your way you soon reach a beautiful secluded spot and find yourself standing on the top of a beautiful hill looking down at a beautiful old building with Tudor beams and rambling roses - with the beautiful smell of jasmine and honeysuckle floating in the air - and you find yourself surrounded by a beautiful old oak tree with deep roots going deeply down into the earth - this feels like a sanctuary that is your special place - where you can come any time you need to get centred- grounded or focused - and to get a clear idea of where you are going -and who you really are - free from anyone else’s judgement or opinion

It’s a place of safety - where you can receive true guidance - and where you feel creative and inspired - and as you walk gently and slowly down the hill towards the house you feel a sense of coming home and a connection with the whole world - and as you enter the lovely old building you see an stunning crystal ball placed on a beautiful wooden table covered with a tablecloth in many colours in front of you - and there is a very old mahogany chair rather like a throne encrusted with the most beautiful jewels just in front of you - and as you sit down - your eyes are drawn to look into the crystal ball - there seems to be a special positive energy resonating from the crystal ball - full of hope - of inspiration - and of excitement - and as you gaze into the crystal ball you feel safe and secure and relaxed and strangely uplifted- and you gradually become aware that there is movement inside the crystal ball - and as you lean forward to have a better look you become aware that the person in the crystal ball is you - and you become fascinated to discover that you are looking into your future

The picture becomes clearer and sharper and more focused and brighter and you can see yourself in the future looking healthy - radiant - happy and content - you are looking confident - self assured - independent and in control of your life - you become aware of the sounds around you in this picture - sounds of laughter - joy and happiness - sounds of your own voice speaking to you in a positive and up lifting way - cheering you on - encouraging you and leading you forward - and you become aware of the great feelings of peace - contentment - security and pride in yourself - and the feelings of self respect - confidence - love - and self belief.

You start to feel yourself floating up and stepping into this picture like stepping into a film that you are starring in - and you can see everything around you in great detail - and great bright colours - you can hear all the lovely sounds associated with these lovely feelings of being so happy and content - and you can see all the choices you made in your life that led up to these great feelings of confidence and success.

You can see yourself content and happy in your work - in your relationships - in your health - and you can feel all the wonderful feelings of being in control of your destiny - not being swayed by others along a more destructive path - and proud of your ability to be your real self doing the things you really want to do - and choosing all the things that feel right for you - regardless of what other people want you to do - or what they say to you - you can see yourself studying or learning new things easily - making wise decisions - having lots of laughter and fun in your life and being surrounded by like -minded positive and up beat people following their dreams - enjoying the adventure of life to the full -

And you can see yourself expressing yourself in new and more positive ways - being creative and enthusiastic - and having great relationships with all sorts of people in your life - as you are polite - thoughtful and caring - and you can see yourself surrounded by love and harmony with everyone around you - you experience so much love in your life because you give out such positive energy and enthusiasm and feel so at ease with yourself and proud of the decisions you made along the way - and your life flows easily and harmoniously and you feel grateful and abundant

You sense a wonderful feeling of freedom as you know you are living your life to the full - expressing your true potential in so many ways - enjoying every second of each day

Breathe in these wonderful pictures, sounds and lovely feelings - and enjoy creating the life you truly deserve as you start to truly believe in yourself - taking control of your actions - and taking responsibility for the consequences of your decisions - visualising wonderful opportunities - people - circumstances - and turning whatever life throws at you into the best you can make it – easily.

As you gaze at yourself in the crystal ball say to yourself I see many opportunities in my life opening up before me - I see myself grabbing these opportunities when they come along - with confidence and self belief - I see myself learning from my mistakes easily and effortlessly without embarrassment - bouncing back with constant enthusiasm - to embrace new challenges - seeing life as an adventure not to be missed - not sitting out on the sidelines - where it’s cold - I feel myself enjoying life as I have a positive mental attitude about my future and I enjoy creating the kind of life that I want and truly deserve

I trust my own decisions and I trust my own inner guidance and intuition -and I learn to listen to that inner voice - throughout my life like a compass guiding me safely

I feel excited about my life as I realise that life is full of opportunities - creativity- laughter - fun - and great loving relationships - as I steer myself away from negative experiences - damaging relationships and dangerous substances - I easily take control of my life and make wise and loving decisions for myself that lead me towards the life I have created and deserve to lead - living magically - with courage and self belief - free from fear - guilt - and regret

I take all the learning from this magical daydream and bring it back with me easily and clearly in to my present life - and I feel a deep knowing within me that my future is looking so exciting - and I trust life to give me all the support and help I need to make my dreams come true easily - and as I radiant this inner confidence and positive attitude to life people are naturally drawn to me like a magnet - as they like being around such good energy - as I emit charisma and relaxed and easy charm - and I enjoy being around other like minded positive people too as they up lift me and inspire me to be the best I can be.

So now start to begin to float up out of this deep revelry - and begin to become more aware of your body in the room - and your feet on the ground - and your breathing and the sense of reality that floating back up brings you - and perhaps you’d like to give yourself a little stretch or yawn as you wake up - and then as you open your eyes you feel glad to be alive - hopeful and excited about what this day will bring.

end visualization

## track 2 Time Travel

Would you get in a car and set off from London to Edinburgh without a map or without turning on a Sat Nav?

Probably not!!

So why it is most of us don’t ever think of where we are going or how we are going to get there or what we are trying to achieve with our lives?

I believe that successful people – even really successful people – are off track 90% of the time and I believe the key to leading a successful life is having a sense of direction and a clear vision of your destination.

I remember when I was on my first NLP Practitioner course in London with Richard Bandler and Paul McKenna and I got chatting to a really nice chap from Holland who was a pilot and he told me something that really surprised me -the majority of the time an airplane doesn’t travel on its specific flight course - it’s actually 90% off course most of it’s journey!!

So I wondered how planes reach their destination, when there are so many factors such as air currents and the weather constantly blowing them off course.

Obviously, the pilot’s navigation instruments, skill and expertise help to bring the airplane to its safe destination throughout the flight but it’s **the pilot** who is constantly guiding and adjusting the plane towards its intended flight path and really in control.

But the key thing for me was that the ultimate destination is always in the pilot’s mind all through the journey, and no matter how far away from its route the plane is flying, he is constantly steering the plane back towards the intended destination.

This made me think that designing your own life is not so dissimilar to piloting a plane and most of us don’t even have a flight plan!!

But effective and successful people have a flight plan. They know where they are going and what they want to achieve - they have a strategy, not necessarily a specific hard and fast map caste in stone, but an overall plan to guide them to their destination.

By designing and planning your life path in your mind, you too can keep yourself from straying too far off course, and it will really help you to reach your dreams and goals.

So the analogy of the airplane being 90% off course throughout most of its journey and yet still arriving safely at its destination is a very appealing one to me but hopefully thought provoking enough to make **you** think about where you are going in your life and where you want to end up!

Think of it as a bit like planning a holiday - something to look forward to and get excited about and the wonderful thing is that vision is greater than baggage so regardless of your family circumstances, background, past or present experiences you can take control of your life and move forward now.

So let’s help you to design your flight plan so you can have a safe and enjoyable trip and not just fly by the seat of your pants!!!

So remember you are **the pilot in your own life.**

Time is a strange thing - it’s like elastic - when you’re having a great time it seems to fly and when you are bored, fed up and a bit low it drags out and seems to last forever.

And for me time is a bit like having money - you don’t notice you haven’t got any until you’ve run out! But then it’s too late - and we’ve all met elderly people who seem to sit and stare into the fire full of regret - and that’s not going to be you!

Some people are stuck in their past - others gaze firmly into the future while others just seem stuck in the present - but all successful people take control of their time and visualise how they would like their lives to be in the future making it compelling - exciting and magical - they have a real expectation of this future reality and then as if by magic their unconscious starts to work on ways to make their dreams come true over time.

I want to help you create the best sort of life that you will really love, get really excited by and really enjoy.

An incredibly positive - well lived life - full of wonderful opportunities and great memories. A fantastic life that you can create easily and effortlessly just through relaxing regularly, listening to this TOOLKIT often and letting your imagination transform your life into enormous opportunities - great experiences and magical moments - the life you truly deserve and one you’ve always dreamt of.

This will mark you out as different from the rest of the crowd - this will give you the edge on others - this will make you move towards the life you truly imagine easily and effortlessly.

### So let’s begin

Find a quiet place to relax and feel at ease where you won’t be disturbed - and turn off your mobile phone - and just start to breathe deeply and slowly - really letting go of any tension in your body - let your legs relax and feel heavy and your arms -and quieten the chatter in your mind - let your thoughts gently flow in and out through your mind like the waves of the sea lapping in and out on the beach - and let them just flow in and out without any attention to them as you relax and go deeply down into this lovely relaxing state of peace and calm and quiet

Now just imagine something that happened to you last week and imagine where that would be for you - is it in front of you, behind you or to the side of you

Now imagine something you are looking forward to next month and imagine where that would be for you - is it in front of you - behind you or to the side of you ?

Now think of right now - the present - where that is for you?

This is how you distinguish time - there’s no right or wrong way to do this - just your way - this is your time line - and just imagine your timeline extending out into your future like a ribbon - a very wide and beautiful ribbon - perhaps you could give it a lovely colour that you really like and make it really dazzling to look at -and take in a deep refreshing breathe and relax - that’s right -

And as you relax and breathe deeply and slowly you start to imagine 3 months into the future - 6 months - 9 months and 1 year.

Intensify the colour of your timeline - make it brighter and more vibrant - add sparkles, make it wider or bigger. Add whatever you want to make it look and feel FANTASTIC.

And start to put flags or markers down at 3 months, 6 months, 9 months and 1 year - and perhaps you see the markers like rounders posts or corner flags marking out the important moments in your exciting future - and extend your future out in front of you a bit more.

That’s right just relax and look a little further ahead - to 2, 5, 10, 20 years into your life

And start to imagine what you really want to have achieved -and what you truly want to have in your life - your true desires, hopes and dreams for yourself - your family - and your own kids perhaps - what job are you doing - imagine working at a job you really enjoy and see yourself smiling and laughing and enjoying going to work - see what you see - hear what you hear and feel how good you feel knowing you have chosen the work you want to do –

**Visualisation**

Now just relax and imagine where you live - what sort of house do you live in - what sort of garden do you have - where are you living - who are you living with - what sort of car are you driving - what sort of friends do you have - where do you enjoy going together - what sort of people do you have around you

- imagine a future full of opportunities - laughter - fulfilling choices and excitement - a life with it’s ups and downs - and it challenges - it’s difficulties - but see yourself riding those challenges easily and confidently - bending not breaking on the roller coaster of life - able to handle whatever life throws at you easily and effortlessly as you know that you are always learning -always growing in experience - and always moving forward

Now imagine yourself walking confidently to where the first marker is on your timeline - and describe what you see - what you hear and what you feel - make the colours brighter, the sounds louder and make the feelings more intense - that’s right

Now take the picture and move it just a little further away from you - just out from your grasp a little - Now bring it closer to you where it feels more compelling - really up close and personal - really near to you in full colour with all the wonderful sounds and great feelings and step into that picture - really associate living it now and relax - imagine you have stepped into the moving film set of your life

Now look ahead to another marker on your timeline and imagine the next goal you’d like to achieve in your life and walk towards it confidently and easily - enjoying all the warm feelings of success and control and excitement that that brings for you - and do the same with the next goal and the next and the next - that’s right really enjoy moving towards the life you truly want - just relax and enjoy the fantasy of this magical place where everything can come true easily and effortlessly if you just relax and go with the flow of life - being the pilot of your own destiny and fine tuning your life along the way - not allowing others to blow you off course.

See yourself knocking down those flags or those rounders posts as you achieve each goal - really enjoying the satisfaction of knocking them down and hearing yourself saying “yeeeessssss” as you achieve another goal and another goal and another goal.

And just imagine floating up and above your present - way up into the clouds - way up into the stratosphere - where you can see yourself looking back on your present and your future - and smile - as you know you have just created a very compelling future for yourself that is flexible - and that can change and expand as you move gracefully and easily forward in your life - and notice all the steps you had to take to make this future come true - notice all the small things you did that slowly made the biggest differences - notice the small steps you took - the small decisions you made that didn’t overwhelm you but led you in the right direction to the sort of life you really wanted deep down - just hover there for as long as you want enjoying these warm feelings of success of achievement of pride in yourself

And then just imagine that you are 90 years old and you are looking **back** on your life and all the changes you made and all the decisions you took easily to achieve what you wanted and enjoy sitting by the fire looking back at a life well lived and fun filled and full of wonderful memories and lovely people and exciting adventures.

And when you feel ready start to bring back all these amazing pictures - sounds and feelings with you back into the present and as you start to come back into the present perhaps you’d like to stretch or yawn and open your eyes and smile

end visualization

I hope you enjoyed your flight - it’s a process that I hope you’ll do for the rest of your life as you travel along your timeline to a happier more fulfilled and true you.

## track 3 One Point

Living a great life is all about **your** attitude, mood or “state” of mind so it’s crucial that you get into a positive mindset every day and in every difficult or challenging situation because living magically begins with **your** confidence.

Because **your confidence** is contagious!

As your confidence grows and develops you will notice a real difference in yourself and the people around you will begin to see you in a different light and will react and treat you in new ways too.

But most of all your friends, parents, brothers and sisters and even teachers will respond to you in different and more positive ways as you exude this new more confident, energetic and assertive attitude.

Act like Will Smith - with attitude and real cool confidence!

The key thing to remember is what you practise you become so let’s look at some really practical ways to boost your confidence so your life gets easier and more rewarding.

Stand relaxed and think about feeling how tired and fed up you are - how tough life is - how miserable and frustrated you are and notice your body - shoulders - facial expression and strength. Notice how wobbly you are - how weak - how lethargic and see the Loser sign over your head

Right give yourself a good shake and smile !

Now stand with your legs firmly planted into the ground and imagine you are like the roots of a tree - with your feet going deeply and strongly down like the roots of a very old and solid oak tree deeply planted in to the soil - immoveable, unswayable, anchored to the ground and incredibly strong.

Imagine you are strong -like a bull and incredibly determined.

Notice the difference in your energy - your body language and your whole attitude - notice your incredible strength - see winner painted across your forehead

Now take your energy to just below the centre of your tummy to a place called your **one point** and imagine breathing and feeling centred from here.

Notice the difference - and how you feel strong and solid. Keep this strong stance and stay centred in your one point.

Your one point is a place of perfect balance where you can’t be knocked over, swayed or upset - it’s a place of total control- total confidence - and total self belief - it’s like being a huge anchor strong solid and deeply anchored to the sea bed - where life can be bobbing about on the surface but you are not influenced, bothered or affected by anything on the surface.

So let’s imagine a time when things have gone really well -

see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how you felt - really enjoy the lovely feelings of success, make the picture brighter and closer to you and the sounds really much louder and the feelings more intense.

Notice how you are standing, breathing and feeling and put that confidence and happiness into your one point.

Strong like a bull!

Now imagine a time when everything goes pear shaped and is a real challenge - see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how you feel - but this time take your energy to your centre of balance to your one point to your confident, unflappable and strong centre and see the situation from here - this place of unmovable confidence and strength

Now see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how you feel but this time from this new place of strength and control. How does that feel?

You can do this exercise at school, when your parents are having a go, in a night club, in the garden centre or at your grandma’s - it just grounds you and no-one need know what you are doing and remember to breath slowly and deeply at the same time

## track 4 The Circle of Confidence

This is a simple technique that I’ve used with loads of kids and one I find really useful myself when I’m feeling nervous or scared. It’s called the circle of confidence.

You can use it any time you feel anxious, worried, overwhelmed or scared - being expected to play your best shot in sport - or achieve a certain grade in your exams - you can use it when you feel you are being asked to come out of your comfort zone or are being asked to try new things or handle change - it will boost you confidence and give you that little “extra”

Think of a time when you were really confident - really in the zone and really on top of your feelings - in a great state - see what you saw - hear what you heard and feel how great you felt - really make the sounds louder - the picture brighter and the feelings more intense and really live it

You could be confident, in control, relaxed, resourceful, really at your best or just ready to have some fun. Choose your own state that means something to you.

Now imagine there is a circle is in front of you. Make the circle sparkly, or velvety or strong or whatever you’d like it to be to make it even better

Give it a colour that means true confidence to you and make it bright and big and inviting and step into the circle taking all these wonderful sounds, pictures and feelings with you Now really turn up the brightness of the picture, turn up the And as you step into the circle spin all the wonderful feelings up and down your body from the tips of your toes to the top of your head - go spin them faster and faster and faster and feel your body awash with the colour of confidence.

Spin the feelings up and down your body as many times as you like and squeeze your right hand into a fist and when you feel ready step out of the circle.

And relax and breath deeply

Now let’s do the same thing for another 2 states you’d like to remember - giving the circles different colours for each one.

So choose a different state you’d like to have - like true belief - total ball control - a great memory - a great loud speaking voice - whatever it is for you and remember a time when you felt it - see what you saw - hear what you heard and feel how good you felt when you really felt this emotion - or imagine your favourite actor displaying this characteristic and borrow it from them

Spin the sounds, pictures and feelings throughout your body as you step in to your circle and give it a different colour and squeeze your right hand into a fist and when you feel ready step out of the circle bringing back all those great sounds, pictures and feelings with you into the present

Now do this for a another state you’d like to have - choose another different state you’d like to have - cheerfulness - optimism - inspiration - anticipation - positivity whatever it is for you and remember a time when you felt it - see what you saw - hear what you heard and feel how good you felt when you really felt this emotion - or imagine your favourite actor displaying this characteristic and borrow it from them

Spin the sounds, pictures and feelings throughout your body as you step in to your circle and give it a different colour and squeeze your right hand into a fist and when you feel ready step out of the circle bringing back all those great sounds, pictures and feelings with you into the present

Finally step into a circle with all 3 states and all 3 colours all together spinning up and down your body - see what you see, hear what you hear and feel how great you feel and experience all the wonderful states cascading around, through and up and down your body and squeeze your right hand into a fist and when you feel ready step out of the circle bringing back all these wonderful resources with you into the present

Just by squeezing your right hand into a fist you can create this state of mindanytime you want to draw on your resources or to feel those positive, strong emotions.

How cool is that ?!!!

I hope you have found this TOOLKIT really helpful in creating a more confident, resilient and resourceful you and let me know how you get on as I just LOVE receiving e-mails and letters from young people and parents all over the world - be creative about making yourself stand out from the crowd and practice looking in the mirror practising the person you want to be - knowing you now have the tools and techniques that all successful people use to make your dreams come true - go and live the life the world needs and wants you to have!