

ACT - Guiding children's behaviour

A – Acknowledge the child's feelings, wishes or wants

This is an important step because it recognizes that a child does have feelings and that these feelings are acceptable. Verbalizing an empathetic understanding of the feeling often helps to diffuse its intensity. For example, "You are really mad because you don't want to come to circle time."

C – Communicate the limit

Limits should be stated simply and specifically. It should be clear to the child as to what is appropriate/inappropriate or acceptable/unacceptable. For example, "We run in the gym. In the classroom we use walking feet."

T – Target acceptable alternatives

The child may not know other ways to express their feelings at that moment. The adult provides alternatives to the child. For example, "If you are mad we can take some big breaths or we can go for a walk. We can sit together too."

Other examples using ACT:

- A "You are really mad because Joe took your Lego."
- C "It is not OK to hit when we are mad."
- T "When we are mad we can use our words to say we are mad or we can stomp our feet."

- A "You are really mad because play time is over."
- C "It is not ok to kick me when you are mad."
- T "When we are mad we can take some deep breaths or ask for help."

- A "You are sad because it is time to put the toys away."
- C "It is not ok to throw toys when we are really sad."
- T "When we are sad we can take some big breaths or we can ask for a hug."

