

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 his 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, we can stomp our feet and take some big breaths or ask for help.*”

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 use our words to say we are mad, we can stomp our feet and 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, we can say we are sad, we can ask for a hug or we can ask for help.*”

Adapted from *Play Therapy: the Art of the Relationship* (Garry Landreth, 2002)

