

Using A.C.T. to Help Set Limits With Young Children

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SUMMARY

The ACT method focuses on acknowledging a child's intent, calming their emotions, and providing them with two positive choices to empower them during challenging moments. This approach helps children feel understood while guiding them toward appropriate behaviors.

- *Acknowledge Intent***: Recognize the child's desires using phrases like "You wanted" or "You were hoping" to validate their feelings.
- *Calm the Moment***: Use deep belly breathing to reduce emotional intensity, helping both the adult and child to regulate their states.
- *Offer Choices***: Present two appropriate and safe alternatives related to the child's initial desire to give them a sense of control.
- *Empowerment***: Providing choices helps children feel empowered, especially when they are seeking autonomy.
- *Examples***: Use specific scenarios, such as cleaning up toys or transitioning from playtime, to illustrate how to implement the ACT method effectively.
- *Visual Cues***: Show the choices visually to enhance understanding and engagement from the child.
- *Co-Regulation***: The adult's emotional state influences the child's state, making it crucial for the adult to remain calm.

known as the ACT which represents acknowledge the child's intent calm by breathing and targeting two Positive Choices the very first step of the ACT is to acknowledge the child's deepest desire and their intent we will be accessing language such as you wanted or you were hoping we focus on positive intent with this phrasing so for example we might say to a child who wanted to stay on the pl ground just a little bit

longer you wanted to stay on the playground or you were hoping for more time on the slide today just because we acknowledge the child's intent certainly does not mean that we give in it simply understands what the child really truly wanted at that given moment the next step is about calming and cutting down the intensity of a very very difficult moment so just by slowing

your breathing down you help to calm the child and really to download your state it gives us an opportunity to calm our state and it also helps us guide them in that particular moment remember that your state is going to dictate their state focus on your deep belly breathing to slow everything down and remember that you are their co-regulator the last step in the ACT is to Target

Two alternative choices here we're going to be offering two choices of things that they can do things that would be appropriate or safe choices we like to relate these back to the particular behavior that you wanted them to comply with in the beginning so for example if the desire was that the child wanted to play just a little bit longer however the task is that it's clean up time we want to make sure that the two choices that we offer the child

at that particular moment really has to do with how they're going to be successful in cleaning up so for example it would be oh would you be willing to clean up the Red Blocks or the blue blocks which to you choose or it could be oh you can clean up the tractors or you can clean up the bus sometimes it might be that the child is in a moment of upset because their family just left or their parent left

that might be a moment to offer them two alternative choices which could be you can blow Mommy a kiss or you can wave goodbye to mommy this really helps Empower children and especially our tots who are just searching for power at a given moment the two alternative choices are really going to put the power back into their hands so that they can choose here are some examples for a child who's maybe refusing to leave the playground

the phrasing would be as follows you wanted to stay on the playground calm yourself and you're going to breathe in that moment to cut the intensity down the adult is focusing on their breathing which will impact the child's breathing the last step is going to be to Target those two positive choices you can hold my hand or I can pick you up which do you choose how about for a child who's running away at

the park which is unsafe once we go to them go down at their eye level we're going to focus on what they wanted you wanted to run or it could be you wanted to run you wanted to play remember for the adult to calm you can hold my right hand or my left hand which do you choose offer them those two choices and show them visually

which ones how about for a child who's not wanting to take a bath we want to start off with positive intent you wanted to keep on playing that was so hard you wanted to keep on playing remember adult calming you have a choice you can turn on the water or you can pour the bubbles which do you choose and offer those choices visually so the child can see