

ACT Limit-Setting

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mindfulness involves being in the present moment. When communicating mindfully, being present for others means setting aside all other activities and focusing on the relationship. It also means understanding and validating the other person's experience in the present moment, using mindful communication skills.

The ACT Limit-Setting Tool is an effective way of mindfully communicating with others. 'ACT' stands for 'Acknowledge the child's feelings/Communicate the limit/Target an alternative behavior.'

Acknowledge the other person's feelings. If they appear to be angry, you might say something like, "It looks like you're upset. Can we talk about it?" The goal here is to allow the other person to feel heard and understood. There is no such thing as a 'wrong' feeling. What may be 'wrong,' or less productive, is the behavior that follows the feeling. By acknowledging the feeling, you are giving the other person the opportunity to talk it out and choose productive behaviors. When acknowledging feelings, it is important that you don't assume what the other person is feeling. Don't tell them how they feel. Let them tell you.

Communicate the limit. This means that you inform the other person of what sorts of behaviors are acceptable. For example, "It looks like you are upset, but yelling at me isn't the way to get what you want."

Target an alternative behavior. This means telling the other person what sorts of behavior are acceptable and what sorts are not. For example, "It looks like you are upset, but yelling at me isn't the way to get what you want. If you're upset, we can talk about it instead."

ACT Limit-Setting from a concept by Garry Landreth, PhD