

Introduction to Limit Setting

ACT

Acknowledge the Feeling

"Looks like you (feel/want/wish), "

Communicate the Limit

"but (object) is not for (action)-ing,"

Target the Alternatives

"(2nd object) is. You can..."

Sample:

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"Looks like you want to draw, but the wall is not for drawing on, (point) the paper is. You can draw there."

1. Acknowledge the child's feelings to diffuse child's emotions
 - Support child's intent even if you can't support child's behavior
 - Reflect feelings, intention, want/wish first with phrases like:
"Looks like..." "I know you'd really like to..." "I can tell you're feeling..." etc.
2. Communicate the *limit* clearly
 - Use no fault, common sense statements
 - Use "but" to emphasize the limit
3. Target appropriate *alternative*
 - Direct action away from original object by looking, pointing & stating alternative choice
 - Understanding child's intentions helps in choosing alternatives
 - Be creative in offering alternatives
After saying: "(2nd object) is," you can add phrases like:
"You can..." "You can choose to...if you'd like." "You can pretend..." etc.
4. Avoid use of "OK?"
5. Examples of limit setting sequence:
 - "I can see you feel frustrated! The doll clothes are not for tearing. (Point) The cardboard is."
 - "Jim, I know you feel like shooting me, but I'm not for shooting! (Point) The bop bag is. You can pretend the bop bag is me and shoot it."