

Helping Your Child Manage Strong Feelings



Everyone has strong feelings sometimes. It's normal to feel very excited or scared or angry. To be happy and healthy, people need to manage strong feelings and think before acting. We have been talking about this important skill in class. Your child has learned how to use the ACT steps to handle strong feelings:

Acknowledge how you feel.

Calm down so you can think clearly.

Talk to the other person. Use an "I-message" to share these three things:

1. How you feel about the situation
2. What the person did that upset you
3. What you want him or her to do instead

We talked about how to tell when we're having strong feelings and how to name them. We also listed several ways to calm down:

- Talk with a trusted friend or adult about your feelings.
- Tell yourself, "I need to stop and think" or "I need to settle down."
- Take a timeout.
- Count to 10.
- Lay your head down.
- Do a quiet activity, such as reading or drawing.
- Shake your hands or shrug your shoulders.
- Ask permission to run around the house.
- Ask permission to sit away from the group or play alone.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5...

A simple way to use "I-messages" is to follow this pattern:



"I feel . . . that [or 'when']. . . Please. . ."

For example, "I feel angry that you haven't returned my toy yet. Please give it back to me."

When you notice your child practicing any of the ACT steps, please praise him or her. Positive words and actions from you, such as a hug or a privilege, will help your child learn to manage strong feelings in many situations.

Activity Idea:

Your child may enjoy creating a "Calm Down Kit." Provide a box to decorate or a special spot where he or she can put a list of the ACT steps and ways to calm down, plus items that help him or her feel better, such as a favorite book or toy, crayons, paper, pictures of friends and family, and so on. Encourage your child to get creative; he or she might even ask you to join in the fun!