THE ALP APPROACH
SETTING LIMITS WITH EMPATHY
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Based on Now Say This: The Right Words to Solve Every Parenting Dilemma
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KNEE JERK REACTIONS

EXAMPLES: Some of the most common reactions parents have in difficult moments:

• I am quick to get angry.
• I use a harsh tone when my child’s not listening
• I lose control and spank or hit my child, then I feel bad
• I can’t stand it when my child has a tantrum
• I’m exhausted and overwhelmed, so I end up caving on a limit
• I feel anxious when my child gets upset
• I want my child to feel good or be happy all the time
• I doubt myself and my parenting
STEP 1: ATTUNE

DEFINITION: Let your child know you understand. Put yourself in her shoes.
HOW TO ATTUNE:

• Use feeling words: “I see that made you sad.”

• Describe what you see: “Wow, your body is moving all over and you have a lot of energy.”

• Get on eye level or put your hand on her shoulder.

• Gather information: “Tell me more about that.”

• Nod and say, “I see,” “I hear you,” or “I get it.”
STEP 1: ATTUNE
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A - I can see you’re sad.
A - You have big feelings about that.
A - I know, that’s disappointing.
A - Wow, you’re pretty mad, I can tell.

A - I see that tower is getting so tall! Wow.
A - I know, it’s hard to pause your game. You’re really into it.
STEP 2: LIMIT SET

- State the limit, family agreement, rule, or reality
- Stay calm, do not yell
- Give a brief reason
- Avoid simply saying “no”
- Hold reasonable limits consistently
- Tolerate unhappiness
- Hold the “win-win”
STEP 2: LIMIT SET

A - I can see you’re sad.
L - The balloon floated away and we can’t get it back. (Reality)

A - Wow, you’re pretty mad, I can tell.
L - You can’t play with my phone. It’s not a toy, it’s important for my work.

A - I see that tower is getting so tall! Wow.
L - We need to leave now because we have to pick your brother up from school. We can’t be late for that.

A - I know, it’s really hard to pause your game. You’re so into it.
L - It’s time for dinner, so we do have to come to the table. Remember we park our screens and toys while we eat.
STEP 3: PROBLEM SOLVE

• Help your child solve their dilemma and move forward in an acceptable way
• Think together, now what can you do?
• Collaborate
• Think creatively
• Give choices
• Scaffold your help
• Use humor
• Bumbling parent
STEP 3: PROBLEM SOLVE

A - I can see you’re sad.
L - The balloon floated away and we can’t get it back. (Reality)
P - When you’re ready, let’s see what else we have in the car to play with.

A - Wow, you’re pretty mad, I can tell.
L - You can’t play with my phone. It’s not a toy, it’s important for my work.
P - I’m going to put my phone away. Hey, show me that puzzle you’re working on.

A - I see that tower is getting so tall! Wow.
L - We need to leave now because we have to pick your brother up from school. We can’t be late for that.
P - I have an idea. Let’s put a sticky note on this that says “work in progress”. That way no one will touch it.
(Follow Through Step: It seems like it’s hard to stop building and leave. Do you want to run to the door and put shoes on, or do you want me to help you? Okay, looks like I’m going to need to help you!)

A - I know, it’s really hard to pause your game. You’re so into it.
L - It’s time for dinner, so we do have to come to the table. Remember we park our screens and toys while we eat.
P - (Follow Through Step) I can turn off the screens or you can, either way. And then can you pop in and help me serve the food, like we’re waiters in a restaurant?
PRE-A.L.P STEPS

Safety Step - Hitting, biting, running towards the street, sharp knife, hot water…any time there is safety involved.

Prep Step - For transitions, leaving the house, turning off screens, going to the store, getting into the bath, changing diaper, etc.
TOOLS

“Intra-A Step” - Pause, breathe, count to 10, say something empathic to yourself. The A-step is contagious! Have a pat phrase in your back pocket, like

“I know, I get it,”
“I understand.”
ICEBERG ANALOGY
Behaviors are the “tip of the iceberg"
TOOLS

Turn punishments into natural/logical consequences

Rewards and punishments…
- Stay at the tip of the iceberg
- Send kids the message we don’t trust them
- Do not engage their internal sense of right and wrong

Example: You get a call from school that your child stole something from another kids’ locker.

Punishment: You’re grounded!
Natural / logical consequence: ?

Example: Your child will not turn off her phone and is using it inappropriately

Threat/Punishment: I’m taking your phone away for a week.
Natural / logical consequence ?
TOOLS

REPAIR
When you repair, you put the pieces of the puzzle back into place.
TOOLS

Sportscaster
Say what you see, without judgement or solutions.
Sibling Conflicts: "Adam, you're holding the baseball cards and laughing. Sam, you're looking mad. Tell me more about what's happening."

Calm Down instead of Time Out
Time out is a punishment, Calm Down is helpful.

Say what you do want, not what you don’t want
Walk next to me and let’s hold hands.
Versus Stop running!
ALP PRACTICE: A STEP

Your child comes home and says her friends excluded her at school and said some mean things.
Knee-jerk reaction: No way, that's mean. Don't play with them anymore.
Attuned response: That sounds like it hurt your feelings. Tell me more...

Your baby starts crying
Knee-jerk reaction: Stop crying, You’re okay!
Attuned response: Oh, frustrating, huh. You didn’t like that.

Your child says “I hate you. You’re so mean I’m never talking to you again!”
Knee-jerk response: Hey, don’t talk to me that way. You need to watch your language!
Attuned response: You’re so mad at me, I can see that.
ALP PRACTICE: ALL 3 STEPS, USE AN EXAMPLE FROM YOUR OWN LIFE
ALP PRACTICE: USE AN EXAMPLE OF A DIFFICULT PARENTING MOMENT
ALP PRACTICE

Leaving somewhere fun
A - I get it. You don't want to leave the party. It's hard to leave when you're having fun!
L - We do have to leave because we're meeting mom in 15 minutes.
P - Who gets to pick out the music on the ride home?

Not listening to a family agreement/rule
A - You were angry, I can see that. You hit him because he wasn't listening?
L - We definitely do not hit each other, because it can hurt.
P - Let's check in with him and see if he needs anything.
How can you tell him that without hitting?
Use a strong clear voice to let him know your thoughts.
ALP PRACTICE

One sibling is playing too rough with the other
A - You're excited! I can tell because your body is moving all around. Your brother doesn't look happy though.
L - (Put your hand on his shoulder) Please give your brother some space. This game is too rough.
P - Seems like this is better for playing outside. Head on out!

Your child wants to buy a toy (and his friend has one too) but you’re not going to buy it.
A - I know you're dying to get that toy. Your best friend has it. I know how that feels!
L - We're not buying toys today. It's a looking day, not a buying day.
P - Could you write that down, here's a paper.
I think we should remember for when we're ready to buy a toy.
ALP PRACTICE

Your child wants a smart phone, but you’ve agreed no smartphones until high school.
A - I can totally see why you’d want a smartphone. I’m sure they look so alluring. I understand it because I feel myself wanting to look at my phone a lot!
L - Our family agreement is that we’re not considering smartphones for now. We want your mind to be free to work on and think about other things.
P - The options right now are a flip phone and a simple watch to make calls. Let’s look at the choices together.
ALP PRACTICE: TURN A PUNISHMENT INTO A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE/HELPFUL LEARNING MOMENT
SLEEP TIPS

• Children are built to sleep. Sleep is natural. No such thing as “sleep training"
• Handing over the role of self-soothing to your capable child
• Children need 11-12 hours of night time sleep through elementary school
• At 3-4 years old, it’s often better to eliminate nap and get all 12 hours at night
• Room environment: dark, cool, simple
• Routine: predictable, but also clear and ends with clean “hand off” of responsibility
• Reverse Sleep Wave
• Parent Wean
• Read about these techniques and more in The Happy Sleeper (Penguin 2014)
THANK YOU!