Natalie loves to create art with her little brother, Alphonse. When she catches him eating her book, however, Natalie is mad and channels her anger into her art, drawing beasts and a tornado chasing Alphonse! Drawing and scribbling allows children to tell stories and express their feelings before they learn how to write words and sentences.

Activity Ideas for Alphonse, That Is Not OK to Do:

• In the book, Natalie felt badly when her Mom did not understand her picture. When children create art, ask them to tell you about what they’ve made. That scribble could have an amazing story behind it! When you take time to listen to children, you show them that what they have to say is important and valuable. In addition, practicing telling stories helps children build comprehension skills.

• Alphonse and Natalie experience many emotions in the course of this story. Music is a useful tool to evoke emotions, and also to help express them. Listen to a variety of songs with children. Ask them questions: What do you notice about this music? How do you feel when you hear this song? Give them a variety of words for different emotions: when you feel good, you might be happy, or you might be excited, or joyful, or thankful. When children have a large vocabulary to express their feelings, it helps them deal with their emotions and navigate life more successfully. They’ll also be able to recognize more words when they are reading.

• A child’s early scribbles might not look like writing, but when children scribble they are practicing the skills and knowledge needed to form shapes and letters. Writing and reading skills develop together. Children are often most excited to learn the first letter of their names. Use masking tape to make a letter shape on white paper. Allow the child to color and scribble all over the paper and the tape with crayons. When you gently remove the masking tape, the letter is revealed like magic!