



P.A.C.E Parenting

An attachment-focused approach developed by Dr Dan Hughes that aims to promote attunement and connection in your interactions with children who have experienced developmental trauma.

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“A” is for
Acceptance!



Reminder: What is P.A.C.E?

Fostering Connection, Attunement and Relational Safety through Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy.



P.A.C.E is a trauma-informed approach that was developed by clinical psychologist Dr Dan Hughes. It is an evidence-based way of thinking, feeling, and communicating that helps carers to build safety, security, and trust in the adult-child relationship.

Refer back to booklet **1** for a more detailed overview of the PACE approach!



A is for acceptance!

Acceptance means embracing and valuing children and young people for who they are, and without judgement. Implementing the principle of “acceptance” in P.A.C.E therapeutic parenting involves the use of key communication skills which seek to validate the young person’s emotions and foster a non-judgmental and supportive parent/carer-child relationship.

By showing acceptance, you are showing that you accept the young person’s thoughts, feelings and perceptions without judgement. It communicates that our positive regard for the child is unconditional, despite what they did in the past or what they are doing in the present.



When we use acceptance, we are showing the young person that it is ok to feel the way they do. We do this by communicating to the child (verbally and non-verbally) that we accept what is underneath (or driving) the behaviour. For example, “I can see that when X happened... it made you feel... It is ok to feel that way”.



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Acceptance is...



Understanding that the thoughts and feelings underneath a behaviour are not right or wrong.



Using verbal and non-verbal ways of communicating that a young person’s thoughts and feelings are ok.



Being mindful of the young person’s early experiences, and how these might be impacting upon the behaviour we see today.



A way of building relational safety, where a child feels able to explore what is going on for them ‘beneath the iceberg’.

Acceptance is NOT...



Being lenient or tolerant of inappropriate behaviour.



Having no boundaries or limits.



Trying to “fix” or solve things.



Responding to or punishing the behaviour.





Ways to communicate Acceptance

Matching Affect Expression

Adapting our presentation based on that of the child's to show that we are connected to their inner experience. E.g., If they speak in a quiet voice, we can keep our own voice quiet. Or, if they are angry, we can speak in a more animated/ expressive way (without being angry) in response.

Validation

Acknowledging and embracing emotions rather than judging or correcting behaviour can help the child feel heard and seen. Even if a thought or feeling seems like a minor issue to us, we are truly connecting with the child by showing that we know it is a big deal for them.

Keep Going Back

It is important that we keep showing up with positive regard for the young person, even after they have said or done something hurtful. This helps us to communicate that they are still worthy of care and respect and, importantly, that we are not going to abandon them when things get tough.

Acceptance might sound like...

"You really feel like I don't care about you. That must be a really horrible feeling"

"I can see how you feel this is really unfair. It can be really tough when we want to play longer"

"I can hear that you are saying that you hate me. You sound really angry. I'll be here for you until this feeling passes"

Finding this difficult?

Showing acceptance in the moment can be tough. It goes against what we often naturally want to do; which is to evaluate and try to change the behaviour. Lots of us are also very used to using traditional behaviour management techniques.



Remember...

- *A child who has experienced trauma has likely lacked the experience repeated co-regulation. This is where we learn how to effectively regulate our emotions. Our job is to 'plug the gaps'.*
- *Children who have experienced trauma are often hyperalert to threat. Evaluating their behaviour is likely to activate their defence system and trigger feelings of shame, rather than guilt.*



Need More Support?

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