**PACE**

A trauma-informed approach to supporting children and young people, who are living or have lived with the consequences or after-effects of toxic stress and trauma. This approach was developed by Dan Hughes, a clinical psychologist who specialises in working with children and young people with attachment needs.

PACE principles are as follow:

**Playfulness –** joy in relationship

A happy- go-lucky, calm and playful attitude. Helps the child feel connected within their relationship. Other benefits are that it allows the child experience fun and love.

**Acceptance –** of internal experiences

Accepting the child for who they are and not what they have accomplished is essential. It is imperative that the child is aware that their behaviour is unacceptable and not them as an individual. The child needs to feel liked and accepted for who they are.

**Curiosity –** learn about the child’s world

* Figuring out what is going on. Recognising the meaning behind the behaviour.
* Wonder about the child
* Wondering with the child

**Empathy –** communicate in a thoughtful and a compassionate way towards the child.

* Is one of the most essential aspects of the PACE approach.
* In order to see from their perspective you have to be able to ‘step into their shoes’.
* Empathy allows the child to feel their feelings and recognise that their feelings are valid and have been heard. You don’t have to agree with their feelings and thoughts, nonetheless by listening you are helping them to not suppress their feelings, which is essential to positive mental health.

If you just think for a moment about yourself and how you feel when you have been heard and understood. This feels good doesn’t it?

**PACE** works well because it focuses on the whole child, not simply the behaviour. It helps **children** be more secure with the parent or adult and reflect upon themselves, their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, building the skills that are so necessary for maintaining a successful and satisfying life.

Below are some useful phrases to help support you when communicating with your child:

“It seems……. “I wonder if………. “You might be………..

Rather than

“You must be……… “I bet you are ………..

Avoid direct questions

Don’t’ ask- “are you feeling angry?”

Avoid saying

“Imagine how your mum feels”

“Imagine how your sister or brother or friend or Grandparents feel”

Try to keep them in the ‘here and now’

Use – “right now” “today” “at this moment”

Avoid the temptation to add BUT!

**Acceptance**

Child says, **‘I know you hate me’.** It is tempting to respond with, **‘that’s not true’** or **‘don’t say that’** but this may leave the child feeling that you don’t really understand what it is like for them.

Respond with**’ I’m sorry you think I hate you, that must feel awful, no wonder you’re angry with me’**

Or **‘I didn’t realise that you feel like that, I am sorry it feels like that, I’m sorry it feels that way to you’.**

**Curiosity**

Rather than: **“Why did you do that?”**

Wonder about it! **“I wonder what happened just then. Let’s figure it out together.”**

**May I ask, I‘m just a bit curious about ………..**

**It sounded like ………., have I got that right……….is that how you feel………..**

**Empathy**

For example, **‘that must be so hard for you, I’m sorry today is so difficult for you, what can we do the help?’**

Sometimes empathy might be demonstrated by holding the space with the child and keeping them safe, as they can’t accept soothing.

**Supportive statements can sound like:**

(Sara Kuburic;@millennial.therapist)

* **“I am happy to listen if you want to talk’**
* **“That sounds really difficult”**
* **“What is the best way I can support you right now?”**
* **“I am sorry you are going through this”**
* **“I believe you”**
* **“What I admire about you in this moment is…”**
* **“You have the right to be upset”**
* **“It’s not your fault”**
* **“I agree”**
* **“Thank you for trusting me with this. It must be hard to talk about it”**
* **“I am proud of you”**
* **“I know you feel like you made a mistake, but I want you to know it doesn’t change my opinion of you”**

**“Safety is not the absence of threat….it is the presence of connection.”**

**Gabor Mate**

So let’s connect with compassion.

Elaine Lord-Waugh