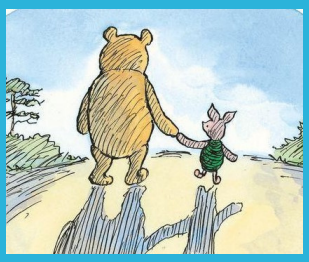


PACE



Playfulness - Acceptance - Curiosity - Empathy

Children who have had a difficult start to life have often learned that the world is not a safe place, and people can't be trusted to help them to stay safe. PACE is a way of interacting with children to build trust, and to bring them closer.

Using PACE helps adults to slow down their reactions, stay calm and tune into what the child is experiencing . It helps to get a better understanding of what the child is feeling. When things are tricky, PACE helps us stay emotionally regulated and support the child through their emotions, thoughts and behaviours.

PACE is not about getting compliance. It is about maintaining connection and safety.

Playfulness

Playfulness is used to diffuse conflict, reduce tension, and promote connection. A light, warm, friendly tone of voice is used, similar to when you read a story aloud. Playfulness reduces the shame a child might feel when something goes wrong. It is about seeking joy in the relationship, and the child seeing that joy. If you looked at the interaction between adult and child you would see a sparkle, grins, wide open mouths, animation, giggling, laughing. It's about engaging with children in a light hearted, relaxed way to reduce withdrawal.







Helpful phrases

"It looks like you are finding things a bit tricky"

"Those pencils/balls flew well!" (if thrown)

"Ooh we've got ourselves into a bit of a pickle here."

"Oh my goodness, look at that worksheet Tom, it looks like a little mouse has nibbled right through it. I hope he's not going to eat my secret sweetie stash too. Are you ok Tom? You look really sad and upset. Why don't you come over to the comfy corner and we'll see what we can do - we're a good team when we work together."

Acceptance

Acceptance is accepting the child's feelings, needs and emotions and understand that these things are driving the behaviours seen. You may not agree with their interpretation, but you accept their feelings about it. It is their experience. Show them it's ok to feel the way they do. A child may tell you "I know you hate me", you could respond: "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'm sorry it feels that way to you".



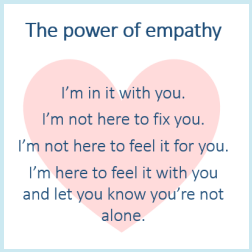


"I can see why you are upset"

"I get why you would feel that way"

"You are allowed to be angry/upset

"Oh Tia, you're right, work can sometimes be really difficult and it's so rubbish when we feel like we can't do something. It's horrible when you feel rubbish at something. Sometimes I feel rubbish at things too and when I can't do something I get angry with everything and I just want to scream. It's a really awful feeling."

Curiosity	Wonder what is behind the behaviour, what has happened. With curiosity we are trying to show we simply wish to understand why. Be curious, not furious.	 	"I'm wondering what happened just before this?" "Help me understand what is going on for you" "Did something feel unfair?" "You usually really enjoy your Maths work. I wonder what's different about today?" "I know that your grandpa hasn't been well. Are you feeling upset or worried about other things as well as the Maths?"
Empathy	Connect with how the child is feeling and show compassion. Stand in their shoes, feel the feelings and emotions that they are feeling. How would you feel if you were going through what they are going through? What would help you? Could that help the child? Empathy helps the child feel seen, heard, and understood.	 	"That sounds really hard" "Ooh, that must feel awful/ devastating" "I can see how much that hurts" "I'm right here with you/ we can get through this together"

