



PACE – Sentence Starters

PLAYFULNESS (matching the child's affect)

- I'll take that as a...
- Was that you trying to say hello/goodnight/goodbye?
- That was some really colourful language you've used there! I know you know other words though!
- Every time you call me a.... I imagine you're saying....because...isn't a word I like!
- I much prefer it when you...!

ACCEPTANCE (meeting the child where they are at, no judgement)

- Thanks for telling me...
- If you think That must be really hard for you
- I feel sad that you experience...
- I'm glad you told me....
- I'm sorry you think that I....

CURIOSITY (openness – not making assumptions about the child's behaviour or intentions)

- I Wonder...
- I'm thinking you might be.... Is that right?
- Do you think it's because....?
- Why do you think....
- What was that like.....?
- Are there times when.....?
- What happens when.....?
- I'm wondering if you might be feeling....?

EMPATHY (Feeling with the child...)

- It must be so hard...
- You seem to really want to...
- I know it's really disappointing that you can't go/do...
- It's so difficult when you try really hard and....
- I'm worried you feel...
- I feel sad that you...
- It's really difficult to be told that you can't/have to....
- I'm so sorry that you've been feeling....



PACE

Daniel Hughes

The use of PACE is not aimed at “changing” the child; rather it is used to help the child feel connected. Through PACE the child feels understood, in turn building trust and security that is necessary for the development of a secure base.

Playful

- ♥ Playfulness is about having fun with children and assisting them to join in family times. Joy brings connection. Children need to feel that they are fun to be with.
- ♥ Playfulness is also used to defuse tension- acting silly, giving the child a response they did not expect, keeping things lively.

Acceptance

- ♥ Not judging but accepting the child.
- ♥ The carer accepts the feelings and needs of the child –not necessarily accepting the behaviour of the child.
- ♥ Acceptance shows understanding rather than condoning the behaviour.
- ♥ The use of acceptance often brings less defensiveness/opposition.

Curious

- ♥ Wondering with the child out loud about the meaning behind the behaviour and why they do the things they do.
- ♥ Curiosity sometimes means making best guesses about what is going on. The child and carer figuring it out together.
- ♥ Curiosity allows a child to feel heard and understood.

Empathy

- ♥ The quality of “feeling with” another person, feeling compassion for their struggles or suffering.
- ♥ Empathy eventually allows the child to acknowledge deeper feelings of fear, sadness, hurt, anger, without fearing judgement.
- ♥ Statements such as “I’m sorry that happened” or “that must have been really hard” convey empathy.
- ♥ Empathy can also be used to soften a child’s defences.
- ♥ When a child says “you don’t like me!” it is better to respond with “it makes me feel really sad to hear you say you think I don’t like you” rather than “yes I do!”
- ♥ Empathy can also relieve shame and is often more useful than praise, which can exacerbate shame.

THE IMPORTANCE OF P.A.C.E.

Being Playful, Accepting, Curious and Empathic

(Adapted from: Hughes, D. A. (2007). *Attachment focused family therapy*. New York: W. W. Norton)

BEING PLAYFUL:

- Is about having fun with and enjoying the child or young person by encouraging a connection with you.
- Being playful brings joy and joy brings connection.
- Children and young people need to know they are fun to be with.
- Remaining playful helps the child or young person remain in tune with you.
- By playing together, you can learn about what games, activities can best help you to remain in tune for longer.

Being playful could mean have fun with shared games or activities that involve you both (and others). It can also mean sharing smiles, laughs, hugs and closeness.

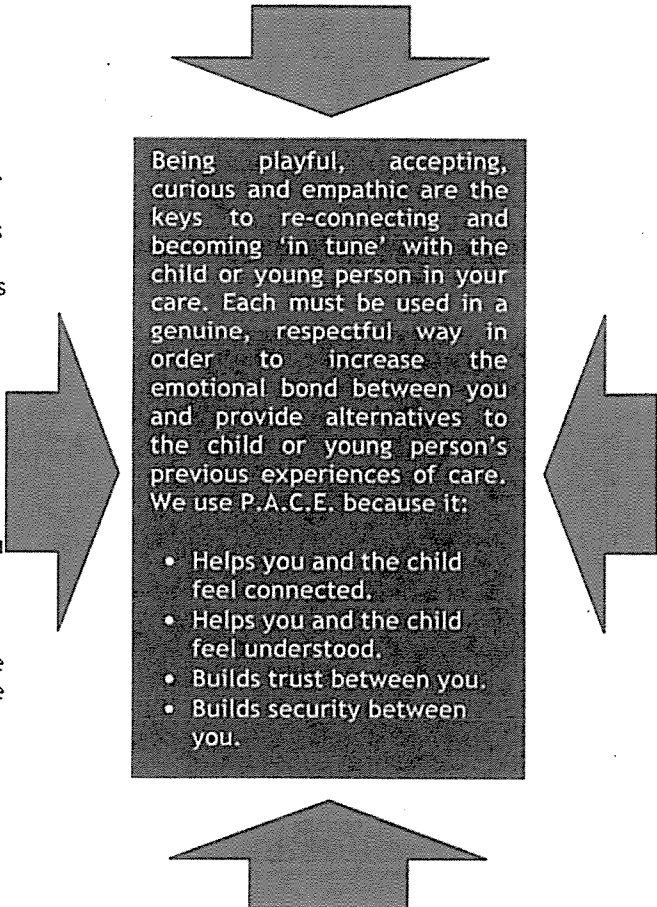
BEING CURIOUS:

Being curious means:

- Making best guesses about what's going on.
- You, with the child and others trying to figure it out.
- Curiosity leads to understanding that increases acceptance of the child's past experiences and reasons behind their behaviour. It also allows the child to be heard and understood.

Carers are asked to be curious about:

- Feelings associated with the child's or young person's statements (e.g. "I know you hate me!")
- Thoughts associated with their statements.
- Implications of these and the coping strategies used by the child or young person.
- Patterns in behaviour that you may both experience.
- How all this may relate to their past experiences of care.
- What's going on right now between the two of you.



Being playful, accepting, curious and empathic are the keys to re-connecting and becoming 'in tune' with the child or young person in your care. Each must be used in a genuine, respectful way in order to increase the emotional bond between you and provide alternatives to the child or young person's previous experiences of care. We use P.A.C.E. because it:

- Helps you and the child feel connected.
- Helps you and the child feel understood.
- Builds trust between you.
- Builds security between you.

BEING ACCEPTING:

Being accepting means:

- Not judging the child.
- Acceptance of the child's behavioural choices (although not necessarily accepting that they are good choices).
- Understanding what may lie behind inappropriate behaviour but not condoning the behaviour.
- Using appropriate consequences that do not shame or humiliate.
- Letting the child know that they are accepted, just as they are and that's ok.

BEING EMPATHIC:

Is about 'feeling' with another; feeling compassion for their hurts, struggles and suffering.

- Empathy eventually allows the child or young person to acknowledge deeper feelings of fear, sadness, hurt, anger etc without fearing judgement.
- Can be used to relieve shame as opposed to praise that can exacerbate shame.
- Genuine empathic responses must 'come from the heart':

"That makes me really sad to hear you say you think I don't love you."

"I'm so sorry that happened to you."

"That must have been very hard for you."

"I'm sad that there was so much in your life that you had to try and forget."

"I want you to see that I really understand what you went through."

The PACE Model of Attachment Parenting

Elizabeth Fisher, MA, LMFT, PhD Candidate

Parents often ask me what they can do to help their children form a secure attachment style. One way to do this is to practice attachment parenting techniques.

Attachment parenting is a style of parenting that fosters healthy attachment within infants and children. The basic idea behind attachment parenting is that the parent-child relationship should *feel* inherently safe to the child... physically, emotionally, and psychologically. The parent-child relationship provides a "safe haven" from distress of all kinds. The relationship also serves as a "secure base" from which the child will feel free to explore the world. Many writers have described about specific parenting techniques that will help develop secure attachment. One of my favourite attachment parenting experts is Daniel Hughes, who developed the PACE attachment-parenting model in his book, *Attachment-Focused Parenting*.*

In Daniel Hughes' model, PACE is an acronym that stands for:

Playfulness – The parent is engaged with the child in a way that invites spontaneity, curiosity, and exploration. The parent is able to engage with the child expressively, using facial expressions, voice and body to join in the affective and creative life of the child. A playful attitude implies that the strength of the relationship is larger than any minor irritations. Family members with a playful attitude don't take themselves too seriously and are able to laugh at their mistakes. The primary intent of a playful attitude is to invite the other into one's experience - to simply enjoy being together, with no spoken or unspoken goals.

Acceptance - Playfulness is fostered by an attitude of unconditional acceptance. The infant and/or older child's safety is enhanced when her inner self is never at risk for rejection, ridicule, or disappointment when her parents relate to him. Rather, only her behaviour is subject to their evaluations and guidance, judgments, or criticism. The child who feels accepted knows that *she* is not her behaviour. Acceptance, when felt completely and taken for granted, becomes a secure base upon which the child is much more likely to learn from her mistakes and to accept her parents' decisions regarding her behaviour. For true acceptance to take place, it is vital that the parent has a habit of perceiving the individual child beyond the behaviour's.

Curiosity – Ideally, parents are very curious to know who their children are from the time they are conceived. From birth, parents are continuously involved in acts of discovery with their child. When an infant senses the impact of his actions and expressions on his parents, he becomes more aware of these actions and more likely to engage in actions that have a positive impact on his parents. Curiosity is important for discipline to be effective. An attitude of curiosity is a "not-knowing" stance that requires that the parent inquire about the child's inner life that led to the behaviours under concern. When a parent holds this kind of attitude towards the child, the child is much more likely to feel accepted by the parent and subsequently more likely to follow any disciplinary action by the parent.

Empathy- Empathy is a natural response to being with another person. Our brains are wired to experience empathy for others. If we have experienced empathy from our attachment figures, it is easy to access empathy for those who see us as attachment figures. Likewise, it is hard for us to experience empathy for others if we have not experienced empathy from others in the past. Parents often think empathy will not be that helpful, so they try to fix the problem, give advice, or eliminate the problem by dealing with it themselves. *It is important that the parent be comfortable with the emotions the child is experiencing.* As the parent facilitates her own emotional development, she is also increasing her readiness to experience empathy for the child when he needs it.

To summarize, PACE represents the characteristics of a parental attitude that creates safety and emotional intimacy, openness and delight within the parent-child relationship. It provides a context in which any conflicts or behavioural problems can find an easier resolution. It provides a balance whereby affective and reflective abilities are primed to respond in enjoyable or stressful situations. Most importantly, it enables the parent perceive her child beyond any challenging or worrisome behaviour's, and to experience her child's permanent place in her mind and heart.*