

Using the PACE model

The PACE model was developed by Dr Dan Hughes an American psychologist working with children who have experienced trauma. PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. Following these principles promotes the experience of safety in your interactions with children and young people. When children feel you have connected with the emotional part of their brain they can start to engage with their own thinking and problem-solving functions.

It is based around the idea that before we redirect, we need to first connect which helps the child return to a more regulated state.

Playfulness

Be playful: enjoy being together in an unconditional way, this shows the child that its ok if things go wrong, because the relationship is strong. Using a playful and light-hearted tone when talking about difficult topics can reduce the child's feelings of shame and help them engage more with the message.

Curiosity

Be curious about the child's thoughts and feelings, showing them you are interested in how they experience things can be very powerful for them.

It is important to connect with their emotions before having a discussion.

Acceptance

Be unconditionally accepting of the child's emotions, ensuring connection without judgment. All their feelings are normal and have happened for a reason. Show them you see beyond the behaviour, although this does not mean you accept their unwanted behaviours.

Empathy

Using empathy shows a child because their feelings are important to you and that you are trying to understand them.

e.g. *"That must have been really hard for you, I am sad that that was your experience"*