



The Ultimate Guide to Using Dan Hughes' PACE with Children

PUBLISHED BY:

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The Ultimate Guide to Using Dan Hughes' PACE with Children

Part of the +ProActive Approaches Series

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Welcome to the ultimate guide on using Dan Hughes' PACE with children. Parenting is a complex journey, and it can sometimes be challenging to navigate through the ups and downs of raising children. However, with the PACE model developed by renowned psychologist Dan Hughes, parents have access to a powerful tool that can transform their relationship with their children.

In this guide, we will delve into the basics of the PACE model and explain how it can be implemented in your parenting journey. We will explore the four fundamental elements of PACE - **Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy** - and discuss their importance in fostering healthy child development.

Understanding PACE and its significance is just the first step. We will provide you with a step-by-step guide on how to implement each element of PACE in your daily interactions with your children. From incorporating playfulness into your routines to cultivating acceptance and curiosity, you will learn practical strategies to strengthen your bond and create a nurturing environment for your child.

Difficult situations are part of parenting, and PACE can be a valuable tool in these moments. We will explore how to apply PACE during emotional outbursts, conflicts between siblings, and handling rejection. By applying PACE in these challenging situations, you can help your child regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts, and build resilience.

While the benefits of using PACE are immeasurable, it's important to acknowledge the challenges parents may face when implementing this model. We will discuss these challenges and provide you with tips to overcome them, empowering you to make the most of your PACE journey.

To illustrate the transformative power of PACE, we will share real-life case studies showcasing the success stories of parents who have used PACE with their children. These stories will highlight how PACE has improved emotional regulation, enhanced the parent-child bond, and facilitated conflict resolution and improved communication.

In conclusion, this ultimate guide will recap the importance and benefits of using Dan Hughes' PACE with children. By embracing the principles of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy, you can create a nurturing and supportive environment that promotes your child's emotional well-being, resilience, and overall development.

Join us on this journey as we explore the world of Dan Hughes' PACE and discover how it can revolutionise your parenting experience. Get ready to transform your relationship with your child and unlock the full potential of their growth and development. Let's dive in!

Understanding the Basics: Introduction to Dan Hughes' PACE Model

Dan Hughes' PACE model is a therapeutic approach that focuses on building secure and healthy relationships between parents or caregivers and children. PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy, which are the core elements of this model. By incorporating these elements into their interactions with children, parents can create a safe and nurturing environment that supports emotional regulation, attachment, and overall development.

What Does PACE Stand For?

PACE is an acronym that represents the four fundamental elements of Dan Hughes' model:

1. **Playfulness:** Playfulness involves incorporating fun, humour, and joy into interactions with children. It encourages spontaneity, laughter, and shared enjoyment, creating a positive and engaging environment.
2. **Acceptance:** Acceptance means embracing and valuing children for who they are without judgment or criticism. It involves acknowledging and validating their emotions, thoughts, and experiences, fostering a sense of self-worth and acceptance.
3. **Curiosity:** Curiosity involves being genuinely interested in understanding a child's perspective, thoughts, and motivations. It encourages open-mindedness, exploration, and a desire to learn more about the child's unique experiences and inner world.
4. **Empathy:** Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves recognising and validating a child's emotions, demonstrating understanding and care, and providing support and comfort.

Importance of PACE in Child Development

Dan Hughes' PACE model is rooted in attachment theory and recognises the critical role of secure attachment in a child's development. When parents or caregivers consistently incorporate PACE elements into their interactions, it promotes emotional regulation, cognitive development, and the formation of secure attachment bonds.

By being playful, parents create a sense of safety and enjoyment that allows children to explore, learn, and develop their social and emotional skills. Acceptance helps children develop a positive sense of self-worth and fosters healthy self-esteem. Curiosity encourages children to express themselves, share their thoughts and feelings, and develop a sense of autonomy. Empathy builds trust, strengthens the parent-child bond, and helps children feel understood and supported.

The PACE model also emphasises the importance of repairing ruptures in the parent-child relationship. When conflicts or misunderstandings occur, repairing and

reconnecting using the elements of PACE can restore trust and strengthen the attachment bond.

Here is a recap on why we need to adopt a new way of connecting and communicating with children:

- What we are asking of the child is emotionally stressful.
- PACE engages the child intersubjectively, while lectures do not.
- By maintaining an attitude characterised by PACE, we ensure that the child is not alone while entering that painful experience.
- The child has developed significant symptoms and defences against the pain of their past and what it means to them, often because he or she was alone in facing it.
- When we help the child to carry and contain the pain within them, when we co-regulate the affect with them, we are providing them with the safety needed to explore, resolve, and integrate the experience.
- We do not facilitate safety when we support a child's avoidance of the pain, but rather when we remain emotionally present when he is addressing and experiencing the pain.

How to Implement the 'P' in PACE: Playfulness

Playfulness is a powerful tool for connecting with children and promoting their well-being. Incorporating playfulness into everyday interactions can enhance engagement, communication, and cooperation. Parents can use humour, silliness, and playfulness to create a positive and enjoyable atmosphere that encourages participation and minimises stress.

In the next section, we will explore practical strategies for implementing playfulness in your parenting, including the use of games, imaginative play, and finding opportunities for shared laughter and joy.

How to Implement the 'A' in PACE: Acceptance

Acceptance is the foundation of a healthy parent-child relationship. It involves embracing children for who they are, including their strengths, weaknesses, and unique qualities. Acceptance means providing unconditional love and support, even when children make mistakes or face challenges. It requires parents to set aside judgment and criticism and focus on understanding and validating their child's emotions and experiences.

In the following section, we will discuss strategies for cultivating acceptance in your parenting, including active listening, validating emotions, and fostering a non-judgmental and supportive environment.

How to Implement the 'C' in PACE: Curiosity

Curiosity is a key element in understanding and connecting with children on a deeper level. By demonstrating genuine interest and curiosity about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, parents can create an environment where children feel valued and understood. Curiosity encourages open communication, active listening, and a willingness to learn from the child's perspective.

In the subsequent section, we will explore practical ways to implement curiosity in your interactions with children, including asking open-ended questions, active listening techniques, and fostering an environment of exploration and learning.

How to Implement the 'E' in PACE: Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves recognising and validating a child's emotions, demonstrating understanding and care, and providing support and comfort. Empathy plays a crucial role in building trust, promoting emotional regulation, and developing a secure attachment bond between parents and children.

Implementing PACE in Your Parenting: Step-by-Step Guide

In the final section of this part, we will discuss strategies for implementing empathy in your parenting, including active listening, perspective-taking, and validating a child's emotions. We will also explore ways to provide comfort and support during challenging situations.

By understanding the basics of Dan Hughes' PACE model and the significance of each element, you are ready to embark on a journey of implementing PACE in your parenting. In the subsequent sections, we will provide a step-by-step guide on how to incorporate playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy into your daily interactions with children, empowering you to create a nurturing and supportive environment for their growth and development.

As with anything, being PACE-ful in your responses to a child takes practice. It can sometimes feel like a counterintuitive way of responding and we won't get it right all the time. Keep practicing, and with time you will see the benefits of this approach!

Step 1: Setting the Stage

Creating a nurturing environment is essential for implementing PACE in your parenting. Start by setting aside dedicated time for meaningful interactions with your children, free from distractions. This could be during mealtimes, bedtime routines, or designated playtime. Ensure that both you and your child are in a calm and relaxed state before engaging in PACE interactions.

Step 2: Playfulness

Playfulness is a powerful tool for building connection and fostering positive emotions. Incorporate playfulness into your interactions. What we mean is to initiate interactions where the child can learn that connection is about simply enjoying the company of another. These moments have no rules or agenda but is an important part of human connection. It offers a child the opportunity to experience a positive feeling and feeds into their internal sense of self (their Internal Working Model – see Part 2). It supports the brain to read the message that they are loved unconditionally and therefore loveable and these are vital ingredients for forming a secure internal working model.

This can be achieved by:

- **Engaging in imaginative play:** Encourage your child's creativity by participating in pretend play scenarios, role-playing, or using props and costumes.
- **Using humour and silliness:** Incorporate jokes, funny voices, or playful teasing to create moments of shared laughter and enjoyment.
- **Introducing games and activities:** Play board games, card games, or outdoor activities that promote cooperation, problem-solving, and fun.
- **Tone of voice, body language & actions:** These can have an element of 'play' about them. This doesn't mean constantly cracking jokes. It CERTAINLY doesn't involve any use of sarcasm – most children, from adverse backgrounds or not – do NOT understand this form of humour and usually feel 'laughed at'. This is unlikely to bring about calm to any situation!

Importantly, for children who struggle to regulate their feelings, learning to regulate positive feelings that may be alien to them, can also be difficult. Positive feelings come from the release of certain chemicals which the child is not used to experiencing and this in itself can be anxiety-inducing.

Remember, the goal of playfulness is to create a joyful and engaging atmosphere that encourages participation and strengthens the parent-child bond.

Step 3: Acceptance

Acceptance involves embracing your child for who they are and creating a safe space for them to express themselves. Here are some strategies to implement acceptance:

- **Active listening:** Give your child your full attention when they are speaking, show interest in what they are saying, and validate their thoughts and feelings.
- **Validating emotions:** Acknowledge and validate your child's emotions, even if you don't agree with their perspective. Let them know that their feelings are valid and important.
- **Avoiding judgment and criticism:** Refrain from criticising or belittling your child's actions or ideas. Instead, focus on understanding their perspective and finding constructive ways to address any concerns.

Practising acceptance helps build trust, self-esteem, and a healthy sense of self-worth in your child.

Step 4: Curiosity

Curiosity involves demonstrating a genuine interest in your child's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Cultivate curiosity by:

- **Asking open-ended questions:** Encourage your child to share their thoughts and ideas by asking questions that require more than a simple "yes" or "no" answer.
- **Active listening:** Be fully present and engaged when your child is speaking. Maintain eye contact, nod, and respond attentively to show that you value their input.
- **Exploring their interests:** Take an interest in your child's hobbies, activities, and passions. Learn alongside them and ask them to teach you about their interests.

By being curious, you can develop a deeper understanding of your child's world and strengthen your connection with them.

Step 5: Empathy

Empathy is crucial for building a secure attachment bond and supporting your child's emotional well-being. Implement empathy by:

- **Validating emotions:** Acknowledge and validate your child's feelings, even if you don't fully understand or agree with them. Let them know that you understand how they feel.
- **Perspective-taking:** Try to see things from your child's point of view. Empathise with their struggles, challenges, and successes.
- **Providing comfort and support:** Offer physical affection, soothing words, or a listening ear when your child is upset or going through a difficult time.

By demonstrating empathy, you create a safe and supportive environment where your child feels understood and cared for.

Step 6: Consistency and Practice

Implementing PACE in your parenting requires consistency and practice. Make a conscious effort to incorporate playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy into your daily interactions with your children. Over time, these elements will become natural and intuitive parts of your parenting style.

Remember, every child is unique, and it may take time to find the best approach that resonates with your child's individual needs and personality. Be patient with yourself and your child as you navigate this journey together.

By following this step-by-step guide and incorporating the elements of PACE into your parenting, you can create a nurturing and supportive environment that fosters your child's emotional well-being, growth, and development. In the next sections, we will explore how to use PACE in difficult situations and address the benefits and challenges of implementing this model.

"I Wonder" Statements

Using "I wonder" statements from PACE can be a **powerful tool for building connections** and promoting healing in relationships, particularly with children who have experienced trauma or attachment difficulties. This technique incorporates a gentle and curious approach to engage with individuals and facilitate emotional growth. One of our key roles is to support the child with attachment difficulties to regulate their arousal levels and work on a child's self-awareness. They need clues about what might be going on in their bodies and how they are feeling. These children will need to know what to do to calm down and tools to support them to take control of their feelings.

In this section of the guide, we will explore the concept of "I wonder" statements, their purpose, and practical ways to implement them in therapeutic settings.

"I wonder" statements are non-threatening and gentle ways to express curiosity about a person's thoughts, feelings, or experiences. These statements allow the individual to explore their inner world, share their perspective, and feel heard without judgment. By using "I wonder" statements, therapists, parents, or caregivers can create a space for open dialogue and reflection, leading to increased self-awareness and emotional growth.

The primary purpose of "I wonder" statements is to promote attunement, which refers to the ability to understand and respond to another person's emotional needs accurately. When we use "I wonder" statements, we demonstrate our interest in understanding the other person's thoughts and feelings, which helps them feel seen and validated. This attunement facilitates the development of trust and a secure attachment, particularly in cases where the individual has experienced trauma, neglect, or disrupted attachments.

Let's explore some practical ways to implement "I wonder" statements in therapeutic settings:

1. **Creating a safe and non-judgmental space:** Before using "I wonder" statements, it is crucial to establish a safe and accepting environment. Ensure that the individual feels comfortable expressing themselves without fear of judgment or rejection.
2. **Active listening:** Practice active listening by giving your full attention to the person speaking. This includes maintaining eye contact, nodding, and using non-verbal cues to communicate understanding and empathy.
3. **Reflective statements:** Begin by reflecting the individual's verbal or non-verbal cues. For example, if a child appears sad, you might say, "I notice you seem a bit quiet today. I wonder if something happened that made you feel sad?"
4. **Open-ended questions:** Ask open-ended questions that invite exploration and introspection. For instance, "I wonder what it was like for you when that happened?" or "I wonder what you think about this situation?"
5. **Validation and empathy:** Incorporate empathy and validation into your "I wonder" statements. Acknowledge the person's feelings and experiences without judgment. For example, "I wonder if it feels overwhelming for you when that happens. It makes sense to feel that way."
6. **Gentle curiosity:** Maintain a curious and non-confrontational tone. Show genuine interest in the person's perspective and experiences. Avoid assumptions or imposing your own interpretations.
7. **Reflecting on patterns:** Use "I wonder" statements to help individuals explore patterns in their thoughts, feelings, or behaviours. For example, "I wonder if you notice any similarities between how you felt in this situation and previous experiences?"
8. **Encouraging self-reflection:** "I wonder" statements can be used to prompt individuals to reflect on their own thoughts and behaviours. For instance, "I wonder what you think might have contributed to this situation?" or "I wonder if you have any ideas about how to handle this differently next time?"
9. **Flexibility and adaptability:** Remember that every individual is unique, and their needs may vary. Be flexible and adapt your approach based on the person's responses and comfort level. Respect their boundaries and readiness to explore certain topics.

Helpful Examples

"You seem so happy..."

"You look really sad..."

"I think you might be angry with me because I had to take your ball away..."

“It’s scary for you trusting adults...”

“I can tell by your face that you are proud of that piece of work...”

“It seems to be really hard for you to...”

“That must feel awful.”

“You seem really angry.”

“You seem really frustrated.”

“What a difficult situation you’re in.”

Using observations, the adult thinks about what the child might be feeling. (NOTE: this is not advisable in the height of conflict). The adult needs to be tentative as they cannot read the young person’s mind. It is important to commentate, giving the young person a narrative (meaning) using the full spectrum of feelings, not just emotions that we class as negative.

Example: *“I noticed you looking around at the others who are working on their projects. I think you might be feeling worried right now about whether your work will be okay.”*

Example: *“I noticed that you asked to go to the toilet as soon as teacher had given out that exercise to do independently. I think you may be feeling a bit anxious about it.”*

When wondering aloud, check out your interpretations.

Example: *“I think you might be feeling anxious right now. There was a loud noise outside and I think it made you feel a bit jumpy. **Have I got that right?**”*

The adult watches and listens carefully to the child’s response and accepts whatever these feelings seem to be. However, if the child is raging but says he is not feeling angry, it is not helpful to argue with them. Just say ‘ok’ and change tact by describing, in a calm manner what you can see physically. i.e. *‘I can see your brows are furrowed and you are kicking the wall and you are expressing a lot of energy.’*

Now let’s look at some scenarios and how we may respond. Remember, what we say is often in the ears of the receiver! So another person may well interpret what you are saying differently to what you intended. This will depend on what the child is seeking from the interaction (or you!), your facial expressions, tone of voice and body language. It will also be impacted by their learned experiences.

Example Scenario 1

Emily asks Mum if she can play on the swings. Mum says she can’t as they need to be home soon. Emily gets very upset and angry and starts yelling “that’s so unfair, I hate you. You’re horrible, and you obviously hate me!!!!”

Typical responses:

“Emily, don’t be so rude!”

“Life’s unfair!”

“I am not horrible and you don’t hate me.”

PACE-ful responses:

“OH WOW [in an animated voice], you’re feeling REALLY ANGRY [with a concerned expression]...you think I’m being mean by not letting you go on the swings when you really want to go...I’m saying no and you really want to go and that feels rubbish...it’s so frustrating when someone says we can’t do something that we want to do!”

“I’m really sorry you feel that I hate you Emily that must feel awful - no wonder you’re so angry and upset if you think I hate you! I’d want to scream and shout too...”

“It’s rubbish that we can’t do the things we enjoy right now...I’m missing the swings too...maybe we could all have a think about what other games we could on our way home...”

Example Scenario 2

Dad picks up Tom from school in the car. When Tom gets in the car, he asks him about his day. Tom has a really angry look on his face, swears at his dad, kicks the back of the seat and says “Shut up!”

Typical responses:

Ignore Tom, and don’t ask any more questions

“Right that’s it, you’re not going to the park later!”

“Don’t you dare speak to me like that!”

“Only naughty boys swear”

PACE-ful responses:

“Oh my goodness, I can see you’re feeling really angry. I’m wondering if something happened in school that made you feel angry, or maybe you’re annoyed at me for picking you up... Can you help me tounderstand what’s going on?”

“Oh wow, it sounds like you’re really angry, I wonder if you’d like some quiet for a while or would you like to share what’s going on for you?”

“WOW, I think you’re trying to tell me that you’re really cross. It can be really hard to feel that angry and not know how to let it out. I wonder if we could sing REALLY LOUDLY or run around the park to let out that anger?”

“Aww Tom, I’m wondering if you’re feeling frustrated that I picked you up in the car, rather than walking home like I said we would this morning? It can be really upsetting when someone says they’re going to do something and then they don’t or can’t do it. I wonder if we could go for a walk when we get home...”

In conclusion, "I wonder" statements from PACE can be a valuable tool in therapeutic settings to build connections, promote healing, and facilitate emotional growth. By incorporating curiosity, empathy, and acceptance, these statements create a safe space for individuals to explore their inner world and share their experiences. When implemented with care and attunement, "I wonder" statements can foster secure attachments, promote self-reflection, and contribute to the overall well-being of individuals who have experienced trauma or attachment difficulties.

How to Use PACE in Difficult Situations

Difficult situations are an inevitable part of parenting, and knowing how to use the PACE model can be incredibly helpful in navigating through these challenging moments. In this section, we will explore how to apply PACE during emotional outbursts, conflicts between siblings, and handling rejection.

Applying PACE During Emotional Outbursts

Emotional outbursts can be overwhelming for both children and parents. However, by using the principles of PACE, you can support your child in regulating their emotions and maintaining a strong connection. Here's how:

1. **Playfulness:** During emotional outbursts, try to introduce moments of playfulness to diffuse tension. Use humour, silly faces, or engage in a playful activity to redirect your child's attention and help them shift out of the intense emotional state.
2. **Acceptance:** Rather than trying to suppress or dismiss your child's emotions, accept and acknowledge them. Validate their feelings by saying things like, "I understand that you're feeling upset right now. It's okay to feel that way."
3. **Curiosity:** Show genuine curiosity about what your child is experiencing. Ask open-ended questions to understand the underlying reasons behind their emotions. This can help them feel heard and encourage self-reflection.
4. **Empathy:** Offer empathy and reassurance during emotional outbursts. Let your child know that you understand how they feel and that you're there to support them. Provide comfort through physical touch or comforting words.

By applying PACE during emotional outbursts, you can help your child regulate their emotions and strengthen your bond.

Using PACE to Resolve Conflicts between Siblings

Conflicts between siblings are common, and PACE can be a valuable tool in resolving these disputes and fostering healthy sibling relationships. Here's how you can use PACE in such situations:

1. **Playfulness:** Introduce playfulness to defuse tension and create a positive atmosphere. Encourage siblings to engage in cooperative games or activities that promote teamwork and shared enjoyment.
2. **Acceptance:** Accept both siblings' perspectives and emotions without taking sides. Validate their feelings and let them know that it's natural to have disagreements.
3. **Curiosity:** Be curious about each sibling's point of view. Encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings while actively listening to both sides. This can help in finding common ground and understanding each other's needs.
4. **Empathy:** Foster empathy between siblings by helping them understand each other's feelings. Encourage them to imagine how the other sibling may be experiencing the situation and prompt them to find ways to support and comfort each other.

By using PACE, you can facilitate conflict resolution, teach problem-solving skills, and promote empathy and understanding between siblings.

Handling Rejection with PACE

Rejection is a challenging experience for children, and PACE can provide the support they need to navigate through these emotions. Here's how to handle rejection using PACE:

1. **Playfulness:** Introduce playfulness to create a sense of safety and comfort. Engage in activities or games that help your child divert their attention and build positive experiences.
2. **Acceptance:** Validate your child's feelings of rejection and let them know that it's normal to feel hurt. Assure them that their emotions are valid and that you are there to support them.
3. **Curiosity:** Encourage your child to express their thoughts and feelings about the rejection. Ask open-ended questions to understand their perspective and help them process their emotions.
4. **Empathy:** Show empathy and understanding towards your child's feelings. Let them know that you understand how rejection can be painful and that you are there to provide comfort, support, and guidance.

By using PACE, you can help your child navigate through the difficult emotions associated with rejection, build resilience, and maintain a strong sense of self-worth.

Incorporating PACE into difficult situations empowers parents to support their children's emotional well-being, promote healthy relationships, and navigate challenging moments with compassion and understanding. In the following section, we will explore the benefits of using PACE and address the challenges parents may face when implementing this model.

Benefits and Challenges of Using PACE

Using the PACE model in your parenting journey offers numerous benefits for both you and your child. However, it's important to acknowledge that implementing PACE may come with its own set of challenges. In this section, we will explore the positive impact of PACE on child development, discuss the challenges parents may face when using this model, and provide tips to overcome these challenges.

The Positive Impact of PACE on Child Development

1. **Secure Attachment:** By incorporating playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy, PACE helps foster a secure attachment bond between parents and children. This secure attachment provides a foundation for healthy emotional development, self-regulation, and positive relationships throughout a child's life.
2. **Emotional Regulation:** PACE supports children in developing emotional regulation skills. Through playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy, parents can help their children identify and express their emotions, understand the causes behind their feelings, and learn healthy ways to manage and cope with them.
3. **Self-Esteem and Self-Worth:** When parents practice acceptance and empathy, children develop a positive sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Feeling accepted and understood by their parents allows children to develop a healthy self-concept and confidence in their abilities.
4. **Healthy Communication:** PACE encourages open communication between parents and children. By being playful, accepting, curious, and empathetic, parents create an environment where children feel safe to express themselves, share their thoughts, and communicate their needs effectively.
5. **Conflict Resolution Skills:** Implementing PACE helps children develop essential conflict resolution skills. Through playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy, parents can model and teach their children how to express their needs, listen to others, find common ground, and resolve conflicts in a respectful and constructive manner.

Challenges Parents May Face when Implementing PACE

1. **Consistency:** Consistently incorporating playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy can be challenging, especially during busy or stressful times. It requires conscious effort and mindfulness to practice PACE consistently in everyday interactions with your child.
2. **Personal Triggers:** Parents may have their own triggers and emotional reactions that can hinder their ability to implement PACE effectively. Recognising and managing these triggers is essential to maintain a calm and supportive environment for your child.
3. **Time Constraints:** Parenting can be demanding, leaving little time for focused interactions. Finding dedicated time for meaningful PACE interactions amidst daily responsibilities may require careful planning and prioritisation.

4. **Age-Related Challenges:** The application of PACE may differ depending on your child's age and developmental stage. Adjusting your approach to meet the changing needs of your child as they grow can present its own set of challenges.

Tips to Overcome these Challenges

1. **Self-Care:** Taking care of your own emotional well-being is crucial in implementing PACE effectively. Prioritise self-care, seek support when needed, and practice self-compassion.
2. **Parenting Support:** Seek out parenting resources, workshops, or support groups that can provide guidance and encouragement in implementing PACE. Connecting with other parents who are also using the PACE model can be particularly helpful.
3. **Consistent Practice:** Engage in regular practice of PACE, even in small moments throughout the day. Consistency is key in making PACE a natural part of your parenting style.
4. **Reflection and Growth:** Reflect on your interactions with your child, identify areas for improvement, and be open to growth. Recognise that implementing PACE is a learning process for both you and your child.

By understanding the challenges and implementing these tips, you can overcome the obstacles that may arise when using PACE in your parenting journey. The benefits of nurturing secure attachment, supporting emotional regulation, promoting healthy communication, and developing conflict resolution skills make the effort well worth it.

In the next section, we will delve into real-life case studies to illustrate the transformative power of using PACE with children.

Applying PACE to the 4 R's of Responding

We have been talking about Perry's 3 R's until now, but now we are going to add a fourth R for the practical purpose of this. We are adding Repair. Remember back to the Shame module when we spoke of the importance of Interactive Repair which must be adult led? Well, in these examples it makes sense to give examples of PACE-y ways to do that.

Regulate

1. **Notice the Environment:** Do I need to step in? Do I need to take any immediate steps to ensure everyone's safety?
2. **Notice the impact on you:** Am I regulated, can I stay open and engaged? Am I becoming irritated, angry defensive? Do I feel useless?
3. **Do I need a break:** Can I get back to being open and engaged? Can I be compassionate to myself?
4. **Notice the impact on the child:** What can I do to help calm them first?

Relate

Once they are regulated, try and create meaning of their behaviour together. Have a real interest through curiosity and exploration, such as “I wonder what’s going on...? How come...? No wonder you... if...” Explore thoughts, desires, urges, motives underlying the behaviour.

How can you help them experience that you’re trying to get it? Try and get your body-language to match an approach of empathy and kindness.

Reason

Once you understand the reasoning behind their behaviour, you can respond to the behaviour. Do I need to do anything further, such as increase structure and supervision? Should I provide a consequence (that is logical), or has a natural consequence occurred?

Repair

Do I need to repair the relationship so that my child knows what has happened has not affected our relationship? Do I need to help my child repair a relationship with others?

PACE and the 4 R’s in Practice

Example: You are in your local shop with your son Josh, and bump into a friend. As you’re talking with your friend you notice that Josh is starting to become frustrated. He knocks over a jar from the shelf, which smashes onto the floor.

Regulate

Notice the environment – as there is smashed glass on the floor, you likely need to address this first.

Notice the impact on you - You might be feeling embarrassed that this has happened in front of your friend! Remind yourself that you’re doing the best that you can, and that you’re a good parent. Remind yourself that your friend is likely only hoping that you and your child are okay.

Notice the impact on the child – Josh might be feeling embarrassed, shocked or scared. Try your best to remember that he might be feeling this way, and stay calm with him.

In a light tone, you could say “Oh WOW, that was a loud smash! Let’s see if we can all take 3 big steps back so that we don’t stand on the smashed glass and hurt our feet...Look how far it’s gone! Do you want to hold my hand Josh?...I’m going to let out a BIG sigh because my body is all shaky after that loud noise..”

Relate

Once you are at home, or in a calm and safe place, you can start to wonder about why Josh acted the way he did. It can help to think about this before you talk with Josh. Maybe he didn't know how to tell you he wanted to leave? Maybe he felt unsafe or didn't like the friend and wanted them to go away? Maybe he didn't like that you weren't paying attention to him?

Whatever the reason, try and accept this rather than rationalise or reason with him. Try to have empathy for how he might have been feeling in that moment. Use your curiosity sentence starters to explore these ideas with him.

Reason

When you have an idea of why Josh acted the way he did, you can respond to the behaviour of him smashing the jar. A logical consequence to breaking something is either having to clean it up, apologise to the person whose item you broke, or pay for it to be replaced. As the jar was made of glass, it could be dangerous for Josh to clean this up. Therefore, you could say: "Thank you for telling me that you didn't like me talking with my friend, it's really good for me to understand how you are feeling. It is really tough feeling that way and I'm sad that you felt so upset."

Depending on where you are on your journey with the child, you MAY be in a place to talk about consequences, but if the relationship is still fragile, they may not yet be ready and forcing an apology or action may well push the child further into shame.

However, maybe if you have done that work with the child, you may be able to explore possible ways to make amends.

Example: "I know if someone broke something of yours, you'd probably want them to make up for it. Can you think about what you could do in this instance? You could write a letter to the shopkeeper saying that you're sorry, or you could use the money that you would have spent on sweets to pay for it. Which are you going to choose to do?"

Remember that, no matter how stable your relationship may be with them, they might be annoyed or upset at the consequence (feelings of shame, embarrassment), and that is okay. Don't get caught up on the 'hook' of their response and feel tempted to put in another consequence for how they have responded to the setting of a consequence. It will drive further disconnection.

Repair

You want to show Josh that you still care for him, love him and want to be with him. If he likes physical contact, you could ask for a hug or high-five. Or, you could ask if he wants to do something you both enjoy together? Maybe put on their favourite song and demonstrate warmth with a smile and a thumbs up. Try to use your words, body-language and actions in combination to express that you still care about him.

Case Studies: Success Stories of Using PACE with Children

In this section, we will explore real-life case studies that highlight the success stories of parents who have implemented the PACE model with their children. These stories demonstrate the transformative power of using playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy in nurturing healthy parent-child relationships and promoting positive child development.

Case Study 1: Improved Emotional Regulation with PACE

In this case, a parent named Sarah had a 6-year-old son named Alex, who struggled with emotional regulation. Alex would often have intense tantrums and difficulty expressing his emotions in a healthy way. Sarah decided to incorporate PACE into her parenting approach.

By using playfulness, Sarah introduced playful activities and games to help Alex release his pent-up emotions. She would engage in pillow fights, silly dances, and creative play, providing an outlet for his emotions in a safe and enjoyable manner.

Through acceptance, Sarah validated Alex's emotions, letting him know that it was okay to feel angry or frustrated. She created a non-judgmental space where he could express himself freely.

Curiosity played a significant role as Sarah asked open-ended questions to understand the underlying reasons behind Alex's emotional outbursts. This allowed her to address any underlying issues or triggers that were contributing to his emotional dysregulation.

With empathy, Sarah provided comfort and support during Alex's tantrums. She would sit with him, hold his hand, and offer soothing words, letting him know that she understood how he felt.

Over time, Sarah noticed a remarkable improvement in Alex's emotional regulation. He became better at expressing his emotions and finding healthier ways to cope with them. The implementation of PACE had a profound impact on their parent-child relationship, fostering trust, understanding, and emotional growth.

Case Study 2: Enhanced Parent-Child Bond with PACE

In this case, a parent named Mark had two teenage daughters, Emily and Lily, who were experiencing difficulties in their relationship. They often argued and struggled to find common ground. Mark decided to introduce PACE into their interactions.

With playfulness, Mark initiated family game nights, where they would engage in fun and cooperative board games. This created a positive and enjoyable atmosphere that encouraged laughter and shared experiences.

Through acceptance, Mark acknowledged and validated both Emily's and Lily's perspectives, ensuring that they felt heard and understood. He created a space where they could express their thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment.

Curiosity played a crucial role as Mark sought to understand each daughter's unique interests, hobbies, and aspirations. He engaged in conversations that allowed them to share their passions and dreams, fostering a sense of connection and mutual understanding.

With empathy, Mark offered support and comfort when conflicts arose. He actively listened to both Emily and Lily, recognising their emotions and helping them find common ground.

As a result of implementing PACE, Mark noticed a significant improvement in the parent-child bond. Emily and Lily developed a deeper understanding and empathy for each other, and their conflicts became less frequent and more easily resolved.

Case Study 3: Conflict Resolution and Improved Communication with PACE

In this case, a parent named Jessica had a 10-year-old son named Ethan, who frequently struggled with conflicts at school and had difficulty communicating his needs effectively. Jessica decided to incorporate PACE into their daily interactions.

With playfulness, Jessica introduced playful activities and games that encouraged cooperation and problem-solving. This helped Ethan develop his conflict resolution skills and learn to approach conflicts with a positive and open mindset.

Through acceptance, Jessica created a safe space for Ethan to express his thoughts and emotions without fear of judgment. She actively listened to him and validated his feelings, helping him develop a sense of self-worth and confidence in his own voice.

Curiosity played a vital role as Jessica asked open-ended questions to understand Ethan's perspective on conflicts. This allowed her to guide him in finding constructive solutions and alternatives.

With empathy, Jessica provided comfort and support during difficult moments. She demonstrated understanding and care, helping Ethan feel heard and supported.

As a result of implementing PACE, Jessica noticed a significant improvement in Ethan's conflict resolution skills and communication. He became more confident in expressing his needs, addressing conflicts with empathy and understanding, and finding mutually beneficial resolutions.

These case studies demonstrate the transformative power of using PACE in parenting. Through playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy, parents can create nurturing

environments that foster emotional regulation, strengthen parent-child bonds, and promote healthy communication and conflict-resolution skills.

In the next section, we will conclude this ultimate guide by summarising the importance and benefits of using Dan Hughes' PACE with children.

Conclusion: Recap on the Importance and Benefits of Using Dan Hughes' PACE with Children

In this comprehensive guide, we have explored the importance and benefits of using Dan Hughes' PACE model in your parenting journey. PACE, which stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy, offers a powerful framework for building secure and healthy relationships with your children. By incorporating these elements into your interactions, you can create a nurturing environment that supports emotional regulation, attachment, and overall child development.

We began by understanding the basics of the PACE model, learning what each element represents and its significance in fostering healthy parent-child relationships. We then provided a step-by-step guide on how to implement PACE in your parenting, encouraging playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy in your daily interactions with your children.

Furthermore, we explored how to use PACE in difficult situations, such as emotional outbursts, conflicts between siblings, and handling rejection. By applying the principles of PACE in these challenging moments, you can support your child's emotional well-being, promote conflict resolution, and strengthen your bond.

We discussed the positive impact of PACE on child development, including the development of secure attachment, emotional regulation, self-esteem, healthy communication, and conflict-resolution skills. These benefits highlight the transformative power of incorporating PACE into your parenting approach.

However, we also acknowledged the challenges that may arise when implementing PACE, such as consistency, personal triggers, time constraints, and age-related challenges. To overcome these challenges, we provided tips for self-care, seeking parenting support, practising consistency, and embracing reflection and growth.

Finally, we explored real-life case studies that illustrated the success stories of using PACE with children. These stories showcased the positive outcomes of implementing playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy in nurturing healthy parent-child relationships and promoting positive child development.

PACE focuses on the whole child, not simply the behaviour. It helps children be more secure with the adults and reflect upon themselves, their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, building the skills that are so necessary for maintaining a successful and satisfying life. The child discovers that they are doing the best that they can, and are not bad or lazy or selfish. Problems diminish as the need for them reduces.

Through PACE and feeling safer, children discover that they can now do better. They learn to rely on adults, particularly their parents, and trust them to truly know them. They learn that their parents can look after them in a way that they could never do on their own.

When children experience the adults doing the best they can to understand them and trying to work out together more effective ways for the child to understand, make sense of and manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviour they start to believe that the adults really will keep on trying until things get better for all of them.

For adults, using PACE most of the time, they can reduce the level of conflict, defensiveness and withdrawal that tends to be ever present in the lives of children who have experienced adversity.

As you embark on your PACE journey, continue to learn, grow, and adapt to the evolving needs of your child. Embrace the elements of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, and empathy, allowing them to guide your interactions and strengthen your bond with your children.

Congratulations on taking this important step towards becoming a PACE-informed parent. Embrace the power of PACE, and watch as it transforms your relationship with your children, creating a lifetime of love, understanding, and connection.

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