

Dan Hughes' PACE Model

PACE is an approach of four personal qualities which allowing adults to support a child's develop their own self-awareness, emotional intelligence and resilience. Over time, and with practice, a child will gain strong tools to better understand and regulate their emotions.

Key to this approach is a deep respect for the child's own experiences and their inner life. When an adult engages in this work we provide a supported space within which children hone and develop their own thinking skills. We help children to reflect upon, understand and then manage their emotions more skilfully. ``

PACE stands for **PLAYFULNESS, ACCEPTANCE, CURIOSITY, EMPATHY.**

Playfulness – an open, ready, calm, relaxed and engaged attitude.

'When children laugh and giggle, they become less defensive and more reflective. Playfulness can help keep it all in perspective... It can also diffuse a difficult or tense situation when the parent has a touch of playfulness in his or her discipline.'

Acceptance – unconditionally accepting a child makes them feel secure, safe and loved

'Actively communicating to the child that you accept the wishes, feelings, thoughts, urges, motives and perceptions that are underneath the outward behavior. It is about accepting, without judgment or evaluation, her inner life. The child's inner life simply is; it is not right or wrong. The parent may be very firm in limiting behavior while at the same time accepting the motives for the behavior.'

Curiosity – without judgement children become aware of their inner life

'Curiosity involves a quiet, accepting tone that conveys a simple desire to understand the child: "What do you think was going on? What do you think that was about?"'

Empathy – a sense of compassion for the child and her feelings

'The adult will stay with the child emotionally, providing comfort and support... The adult is also communicating strength, love and commitment, with confidence that sharing the child's distress will not be too much. Together they will get through it.'

More information can be found at <https://ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace/>

Pace can be used by any adult to validate, explore and understand children's feelings. It is an approach which limits shame, promotes compassion and brings a sense of mutual support, strength and resilience. When an adult spends time and demonstrates an interest in a child's inner life the adult contains and regulates the child's emotions, eventually the child will learn to do this themselves.