



**BEING
A TRAUMA
INFORMED
COMMUNITY**

PACE: A BRAIN-BASED PARENTING APPROACH

PACE is an attachment and brain-based parenting approach, developed as an effective way for caregivers to communicate with and care for children and young people who have experienced trauma. The PACE attitude enhances the child's sense of safety and increases their trust in the caregiver. There are four key elements:

PLAYFULNESS

Playfulness means creating an atmosphere of interest and fun using a light tone of voice, as in story telling. When effective, the child's brain will trigger chemicals engendering trust and enabling them to feel safe with the adult.

✔ **For example:** After a child drops a glass of milk and it breaks, to say 'Whoops, let's clean this up together...let's not cry over spilt milk!'.

ACCEPTANCE

Unconditional acceptance is at the core of the child's sense of safety to know that they are loved and accepted without judgment underneath any outward behaviour. Whatever the problem is at hand, it is important for the adult to ensure that the child knows that you will support them.

✔ **For example:** 'That did not go well, so let's try again and let's see if it goes better this time'.

CURIOSITY

The adult stays **curious** about the child's behaviour, interactions and relationships, conveying a wish to understand, often by wondering out loud about the meaning behind their behaviour (without expecting answers).

✔ **For example:** I wonder if you were wanting more noodles now because your brain remembers when there was no food in the house when you were younger and you might be hungry later on.

EMPATHY

In being **empathic**, the adult shows the child that they are doing their very best to understand how things are and have been, and helps the child make sense of and better manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviour.

✔ **For example:** Saying something that shows you understand when they are distressed such as "I know things are tough right now, but this is a problem we can share and solve together'.

Note: The terms 'child' and 'children' also refer to 'young person' and 'young people'.

Here to help! Come and talk to us if you'd like more practical ways you can be trauma informed.

Sources:

> This poster is based on *What is meant by PACE?*, Hughes DA and Baylin J (2012). *Brain-based parenting: The neuroscience of caregiving for healthy attachment*. New York, NY: Norton. Access more online at <https://ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace>



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