

Acceptance: the 'A' in PACE

Helping adults build safe, trusting and meaningful relationships with children

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PACE is a way for adults to connect with children. It is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving to help a child feel safe. This sense of safety helps everyone to understand the child's behaviour better and for meaningful relationships to grow.

Let's have a closer look at 'A' for Acceptance – what it is and how to use it.

What does PACE stand for?

PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. It is more of an attitude and way of being, than a strategy.

What is acceptance?

Acceptance is about unconditionally accepting a child and their feelings. You do not need to agree with their behaviour, their choice of expression or even what they are saying, but accepting without question is accepting them and their experience.

Why is acceptance so important?

Acceptance allows a child to express their thoughts and feelings in a safe and non-judgemental environment. This helps them to feel safe, which leads them to build trust and comfort with those caring for them and encourages them to open up more.

Acceptance vs poor behaviour

Acceptance does not mean accepting poor behaviour. Instead, you can accept the feelings, thoughts and beliefs underlying their poor behaviour by accepting that the child's inner world is theirs and what they perceive or feel is valid.

It is important to steer away from disagreement and not to minimise or dismiss a child's feelings.

Instead, once you're both calm, be curious and try to understand why the child acted in that way and show them that you accept them, their thoughts and inner experiences no matter what. Being curious is another aspect of the PACE method.

What does acceptance look like?

There are many ways to start conversations that use acceptance. These can include:

- ✓ 'Thanks for telling me that.'
- ✓ 'I'm glad you told me ...'
- ✓ 'I feel sad that you experience ...'
- ✓ 'This doesn't change how much I care about you ...'
- ✓ 'I get that you would think/do ... if this is how you feel.'

Remember, you don't always have to agree with what the child is feeling, doing or saying. There is no need for a battle. Acceptance and acknowledging that you have heard them is what is key to building a safe and trusting relationship with them.

Remember acceptance is one part of **PACE**. Learn about the others on our website.



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Here to help! Come and talk to us if you'd like more practical ways you can be trauma informed. Go to Child and Youth Protection Services at www.communityservices.act.gov.au

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

Sources:

> PACE: A trauma-informed approach to supporting children and young people. Accessed from <https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/files/resilience-project/resilience-project-logo-adjustments/pace-pdf/>

