PACE: VITAL Map for Change in Mental Health

Play

P

A playful, warm and spontaneous way of interacting with the child to support them to feel safe with you and to promote trust. When children are connected with in this way, they are freer to open up, reflect, laugh, play, share their true feelings with you. Use of a warm light tone of voice is key (storytelling voice).

Acceptance

A

At all times accepting the child's intentions, thoughts, feelings and inner life, without any judgment or criticism. As a result, the child builds trust that you will never be shaming or critical.

Accepting and acknowledging the feelings fuelling the child's presenting behaviour. (You can be firm on behaviour while at the same time truly accepting the feelings that triggered the behaviour).

Curiosity

C

Active interest, totally non-judgemental, in how the child is experiencing an emotionally charged event (past or present). 'Will you help me understand...?' 'I wonder if...?'

Curiosity lets the child know that you really want to understand their meaning of an important life event and then help them with their understanding.

Curiosity the child to become aware of their inner life, start to reflect and come to understand themselves.

Empathy

E

Feeling into the emotional pain of the child (without getting lost in it) not just experiencing their pain cognitively or defending against it in other ways. Finding the words to convey your empathy.

Having understanding of and compassion for your own traumatised inner child, so that you can be with the child's pain in a profoundly connecting way, resulting in the child truly 'feeling felt by you' (Dan Siegel). Empathy conveys to the child that s/he is no longer alone with her painful feelings and stories of distress.

PACE was originated by Dr Dan Hughes. Full explanation can be found in his books and on website https://ddpnetwork.org