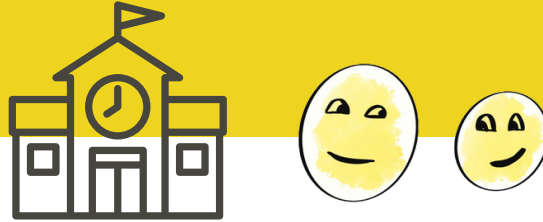


COMMUNICATING AND CONNECTING DURING THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

Using a PACE-ful approach for school staff



Here are our tips and advice for using a PACE-ful approach when communicating with children and young people during the return to school. The examples have been aimed towards both primary and secondary school staff.

What is PACE?

Playfulness
Acceptance
Curiosity
Empathy

Developed by Dr Dan Hughes

PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the child feel safe. It is communicating using these elements together flexibly, not as a step by step process. PACE focuses on the whole child, not just the behaviour.

"So it's a small 'p' and a capital 'A' 'C' 'E' because I always am accepting, curious and empathic. Sometimes I'm not able to be playful. If I can be playful great, but if I can't I throw it away."

- Dr Dan Hughes

For more information visit the [DDP Network website](https://ddpnetwork.org/) (https://ddpnetwork.org/) and search for PACE

PLAYFULNESS

is **NOT** about being funny or making jokes all the time but having fun and being playful when it feels right. **It is** about expressing...

Pleasure

JOY

← hope →

FUN

By using a light tone in your voice like you would when reading a story to a child



*Be careful with sarcasm, some children and young people may not understand when something is intended to be a joke and when something isn't.

And setting time aside for playfulness

• Providing opportunities for relational activities or games - for example, start the lesson off with a fun quiz, storytelling or high energy game



• Adding an element of fun to a lesson or interaction - social distancing 'hand shakes' e.g. air high fives if they get a question right



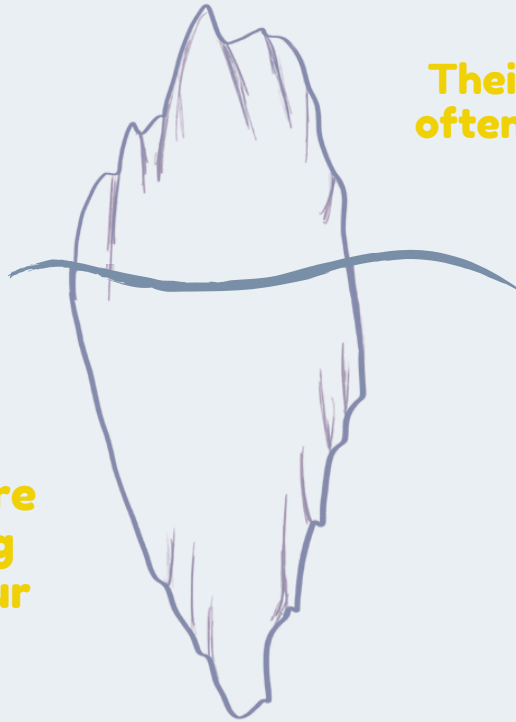
• Talking about shared interests that bring you both joy - 'Did you see Britain's Got Talent on the weekend? I know you love that programme. It's been AGES since the auditions!'

For more ideas, you can download the Resilience Project '**Relational and Regulating Activities**' resource for free from the Mentally Healthy Schools Website.

ACCEPTANCE

is **NOT** about accepting harmful behaviour, boundaries around behaviour are still very important and safety should always be prioritised. **It is** about accepting the child or teen's inner experience. Including their; thoughts, wishes, needs, feelings and motivations.

Their behaviours are often what you see on the surface



Their thoughts, feelings, wishes, motivations, needs are often the underlying reasons for behaviour



"I just want to go home"



"I bet it's really difficult when you have to come to school even though you're feeling so sad"

"It's not fair, I don't get why I can't sit next to my friend"

**It's so unfair not being able to sit by your friends like you used to. I know how frustrating you must find it"...
"But we have to follow the rules to keep each other safe"**

(Acceptance of their feelings, but a boundary around the behaviour)

CURIOSITY

Is wondering about the reasons behind the behaviour, in a non-judgemental way and often without anticipating a response. Being curious avoids directly asking "why did you....?" It often leads to a better understanding



Ask yourself...

"What was that behaviour communicating?"
"What might be going on for them?"

Are they...

Out of routine?

Bored?

Anxious and confused about the new rules

Frightened about coming back to school and leaving parents?

Do they ...

Want to hug their friends?

Need a break or some space?

Need some time to play and burn off energy?

Miss being at home?

Once you have a best guess as to what lies beneath the surface for the child or young person, wonder aloud...

"Can I ring my mum?"

"I guess it feels strange being in back school, when you've been home with your mum for such a long time. What's it like for you when you come here?"

"I'm so bored of this work, I've already learnt about it in lockdown!"

"Aww I can imagine it's annoying that I'm going over this again! How come this is so boring?"

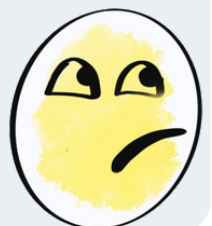
"I don't want to come back to school"

"I wonder if you're feeling a bit scared or worried about what's going to happen when you get here. I bet it feels like there are so many new rules. What's it like with all these weird new rules?"



And if we get it wrong, that's okay too

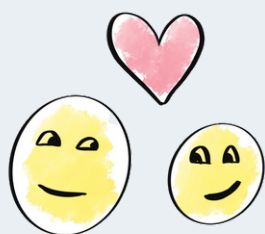
"I think I got it wrong earlier. Would you help me to understand what's going on for you?"



EMPATHY

is about actively showing that you understand and have compassion for the child or young person's experience. It is standing in their shoes and staying with them throughout their emotional experience.

Empathy drives connection



"I really miss my old teacher"

"It's so hard when things change. I know how much you liked Mr Jones'. You didn't get to spend as much time in his class as you wanted."

"I don't understand why I can't go to the play area"

"It's so confusing. You feel like you can't have fun anymore. That must be really rubbish."

"I guess I just feel a bit anxious some days"

"Thank you for telling me how you're feeling. I know it can be hard to talk about our emotions sometimes. Everything seems so uncertain."



It is also important to have empathy and compassion towards yourself in this busy, unprecedented time of transitioning back to school. You may need to take more time than usual, to set aside time for self-care.

"WE CANNOT POUR FROM AN EMPTY JUG!"

Keep an eye out for our upcoming animation for teachers on 'Keeping ourselves and our class well: Quick Tips'. Or find us on YouTube as '[Cardiff and Vale Resilience Project](#)', for other helpful videos.



For more on empathy check out '[Brené Brown on Empathy](#)' on Youtube



TOP TIPS !

Playfulness

Use a light tone of voice

Acceptance

Accept the child or young person's feelings or emotions, but not harmful behaviour

Curiosity

Wonder about what's beneath the behaviour

Empathy

Show the child or young person that their experience is important to you and that they are not alone



FOR ANY OF OUR OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES ON TOPICS SUCH AS:

- Staff Self-Care at Home and at School
- Transition for Pupils, Parents/Carers and Staff
- Mental Health Top Tips for School Staff

Email resilienceproject.CAV@wales.nhs.uk or find our animations and training videos on our YouTube channel '[Cardiff and Vale Resilience Project](#)'.



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Child Psychology, Resilience Project

This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg