

# PLAYFULNESS

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## The P in PACE

### A Care-giving Formula by Dan Hughes

#### What is PACE?

An open and engaged approach for children who have experienced trauma, which is designed to promote safety, develop trust and enhance understanding and regulation of emotions.

#### What is Playfulness?

A playful approach focuses on eliciting positive emotions and moments of shared joy, during interactions between an adult and child.

We can help the child to keep difficult thoughts and feelings in perspective, through words, gestures and actions which are light-hearted and spontaneous.

#### Why is Playfulness important?

It shows that you really like the child - something which may not be easily understood or trusted. It can also reduce the authority of an adult's role and convey a sense of connection and optimism.

It has physiological benefits - the release of dopamine and oxytocin hormones help children (and adults!) to feel pleasure, suppress pain and reduce the experience of stress and shame.

#### Ideas for developing a Playful Approach

- Warm and personalised classroom greetings - high five; fist bump; waving; quoting their favourite TV show or film.
- Show - with your eyes, eyebrows, smile and tone of voice - that you are interested in and delighted by what the child is doing.
- Find moments for silliness - use a sing-song voice; wear a funny hat; talk to a teddy bear or puppet; be forgetful; make mistakes.
- Play games which build to a finish - peek-a-boo; hide-and-seek; ready-steady-go with bubbles; pop-up pirate; Jenga; dominoes.
- Incorporate rhythmic actions into teaching - clapping; jumping; tapping; dancing; passing a balloon or beanbag; musical chairs.
- Defuse stressful demands - make a game out of getting organised; practise socialising using fun role-play; use humour to divert from conflict; give the child a job during a busy transition.