

An introduction to Dan Hughes Pace model

A teacher (and parent/carers)
guide on how to support
children and young people.

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What we will discuss today

- ▶ We will explore theories of emotions/ the emotional response process.
- ▶ We will discuss the importance of emotional regulation and how this effects children's behaviours (ALL or us really!)
- ▶ We will talk a little about the Dan Hughes PACE model and the theory behind this.
- ▶ We will think about what types of behaviours may show up at school and how we can respond using the PACE model.
- ▶ Reminder; sometimes it helps us to understand WHAT children mean by what they say and often they are communicating high levels of distress and expressing their unmet needs.

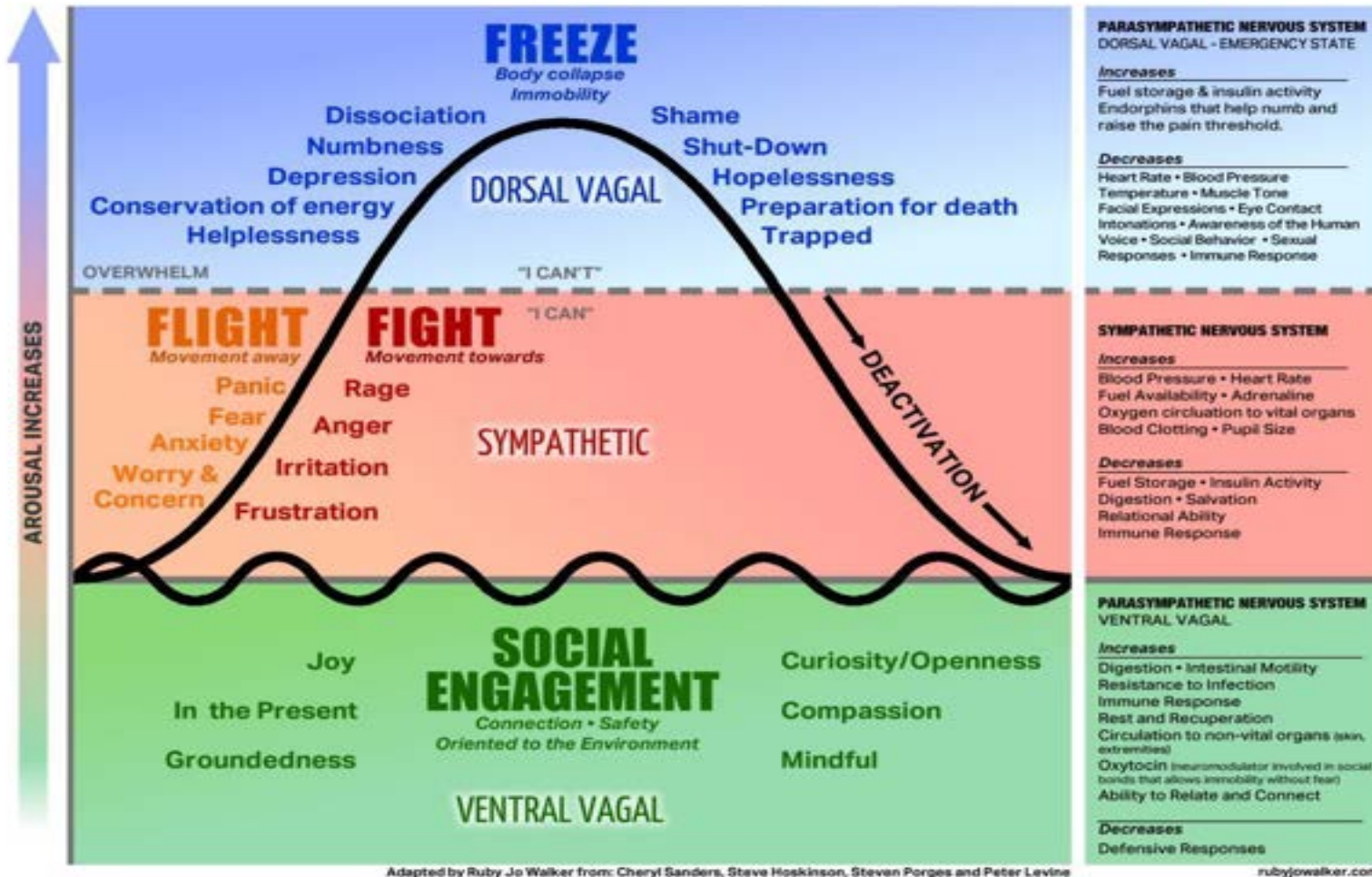
What is it like working with children and young people???

What is it that they do that you just don't understand??



Theory of emotion and behaviour

PART ONE: Understanding how feelings direct actions.



Stephen Porges and the Polyvagal theory.

People respond in different ways to fright as described in the chart. Many children have experienced trauma and this impacts on resilience and their nervous system response. This is involuntary, but in able to help Children to learn adults both at home and school need to respond to them in a helpful way.

PART TWO: The emotional response process.

1. An EVENT occurs, e.g. Coming into contact with an angry person, OR having a distressing memory/thought. RESULTING in an emotion, e.g. anger or fear.

2. The THOUGHT triggers a PHYSICAL response in the body, e.g. an increase in heart rate, or butterflies in your stomach.

3. This process then triggers a BEHAVIOUR, e.g. shouting, or running away/avoidance.



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PACE theory

- ▶ PACE is an approach developed by Dr Dan Hughes, an American psychologist who works with traumatised children. PACE stands for Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy.
- ▶ These principles help to promote the experience of safety in your interactions with young people.
- ▶ Children need to feel that you have connected with the emotional part of their brain before they can engage the thoughtful, articulate, problem solving areas.
- ▶ *Connect and redirect: When a child is upset, connect first emotionally, right-brain to right-brain. Then, once the child is more in control and receptive, bring in the left-brain lessons and discipline.*

(The Whole Brain Child, Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson.)

- ▶ Once a child feels that you have connected with their level of emotion, they can stop showing you. Children show you how they feel through their behaviour, often in ways that are very unhelpful to you and also to themselves.

Why use this model?

The PACE model is particularly relevant in trauma-informed education because it:

- ▶ **Builds trust and safety** so students can learn and process information.
- ▶ **Fosters Emotional Regulation:** this is important as children cannot learn when they are dysregulated and it provides educators with tools to support with emotional regulation.
- ▶ **Promotes Connection and Attachment:** It is important to build nurturing and trusting relationships with students so that they develop healthy attachments.
- ▶ **Supports Resilience and Growth:** Helps the children to develop resilience and thrive academically.
- ▶ **It provides a valuable framework for staff** who work with students who have experienced trauma/ have unmet attachment needs. By understanding PACE staff can support the healing and growth of children and young people in the classroom

Acceptance and empathy are your Emotional A&E. They are at the heart of the child starting to feel safe at school, which reduces conflict, stress and withdrawal.

What does it look like???

- **Playfulness** (friendly, positive, hopeful) E.g. create atmosphere of lightness, use soft tone, can express fun
- **Acceptance** (unconditional positive regard, everything child says is accepted) E.g. Validating experience; *that makes complete sense, that sounds very hard and must have been very difficult for you,*
- **Curiosity** (None judgemental, interest in child's experiences) E.g. *information gathering, What do you think was going on? or "I wonder if...?"*
- **Empathy** (Can sense what child is experiencing). *The adult communicates strength, security and commitment, with confidence that sharing the child's distress will not be too much. Together they will get through it. I have a skill that you can help. (then pick a skill)*

How does this translate in schools ?

- ▶ Our own defences are likely to kick in (typical habits/ways of how WE manage difficulties) when a child is challenging or threatening to us, when we feel deskilled or we experience feelings of frustration/judgement towards the child.
- ▶ At this point it is very difficult for US to be in a calm, open and engaged state. This means we respond in unhelpful ways or we do not notice/pay attention to important cues, e.g. the child's body language or the language they are using.
- ▶ For this reason many teachers are more likely to revert to more traditional behaviour management styles which, unfortunately, do not work with children who have experienced trauma. For example, punishment, or ignoring the negative behaviour/rewarding the positive (when a child needs to be heard.)
- ▶ As a result this can lead to a breakdown in communication between you and the child and the situation escalates.

Live example of how to use PACE.

When children make negative statements about themselves or you, for example:

“You’re angry and you don’t want me in your classroom”.

It is tempting to reply with a practical response, which may or may not be true such as:

“I’m not angry and of course I want you to be here”.

The PACE alternative would go something like this:

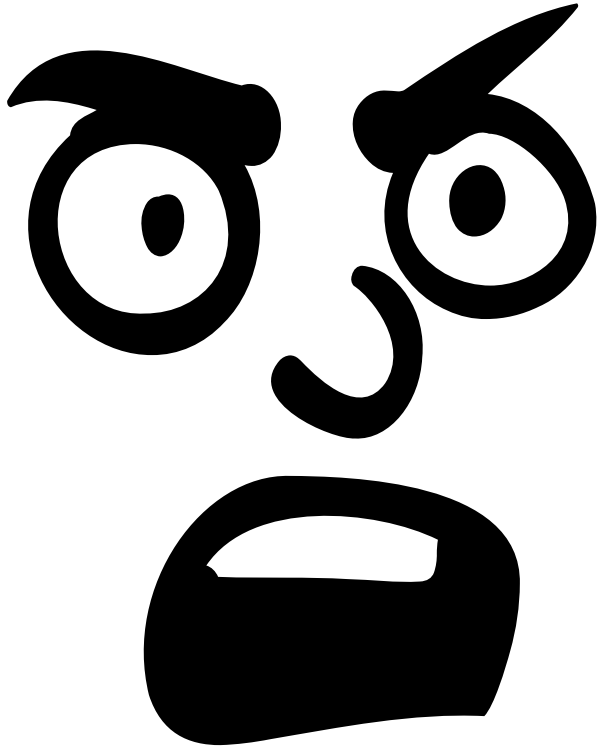
“I can see that it feels like I am really cross with you, that is a really difficult feeling to have. I wonder if that is really scary and that you feel you would be better off outside the classroom. Although it doesn’t feel like it, I do really want you in my classroom”.

If this is too much to say to a child who is at that moment very distressed, use the Emotional A&E response: *It is really hard to feel that I am cross with you, that is such a scary feeling.*

Unhelpful responses

It can be hard to see children and young people struggling to manage their emotions and when they are clearly distressed.

However, we also need to be aware that how we respond is very powerful and it is important to validate children and young people and help them to open up without feeling judged.



This is what to not do;

- Tell children that they “you are difficult/naughty/hard work”. We address and label the behaviour NOT label the child.
- Showing obvious shock, distress or anger when speaking with the child (we need to regulate our own emotions)
- Do not shout or blame back, be mindful of language and tone and volume of voice.
- Minimising/dismissing their experiences/feelings
- Do not demand answers
- Do not think of their behaviour as attention seeking /manipulative
- Be kind to yourself. Remember we all have feelings and we all make mistakes, that’s how we learn!!!.

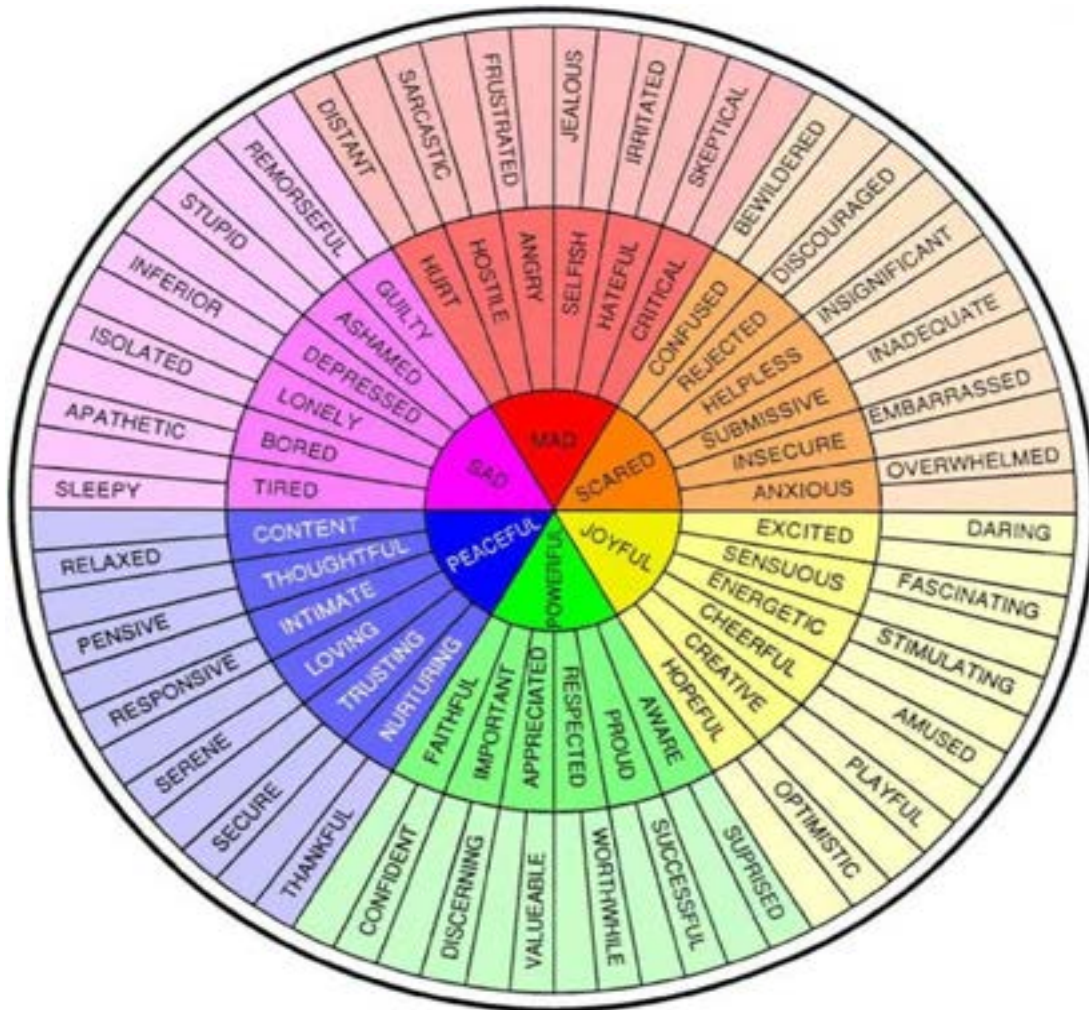
Other things to consider...

1. **ASK;** word questions carefully and give examples if they are not sure what you are asking
2. **TIMING** is crucial; Ask what they want/need from you now/in this moment.. But you both may request time to process your feelings first.
3. **SUPPORT** them in identifying any potential TRIGGERS.
4. **HELP** them to identify some STRATEGIES that may help regulate their emotions or act as distractions.
5. **SHARE** your concerns with family and any other professionals involved
6. **ENCOURAGE** them to communicate via text/emojis/notes etc. if they struggle to talk about their thoughts and feelings.



Skills for emotional resilience

Emotions wheel



- ▶ Improving emotional literacy is key to improving emotional resilience.
- ▶ Support the child/young person to identify and name their emotions.
- ▶ This can be done by supporting them to focus on and feel their body, i.e. a body scan, and noticing what comes up. For example, tightness in the chest, butterflies, temperature, increased heart rate, tense shoulders, etc.
- ▶ This will allow them to connect the trigger, feelings and behaviours together and give them a grounding to better regulate their emotions.

The PLEASE skill



- We know that people can be more vulnerable to their emotions and make impulsive decisions when they don't practice basic self-care.
- It is important to understand where some of these vulnerabilities lie, to make sure that you're doing what is needed to protect yourself from overly emotional decision-making which can result in impulsive behaviours and increased risk taking
- Teenagers need to get plenty of sleep; younger children need more sleep than teenagers.
- Drink plenty of water approx. 3-4 litres per day. Have a water bottle.
- Eat regular meals
- Some form of regular exercise, e.g. walking the dog, stretching, attending PE classes, dancing, riding a bike, trampolining spending time on bike.
- Fresh air is important
- Routine mealtimes, sit down and don't rush!!

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- At times emotions can be so intense it takes away our ability to use coping skills. In these types of cases the use of cold water can be helpful (see the TIPP skill handout.)
- TIPP stands for reduce Temperature, use Intensive exercise,
- The use of cold water works by triggering the mammalian dive reflex. This helps to regulate the parasympathetic nervous system.
- Pace your breathing and practice Progressive muscle relaxation.



Self soothing.

- There are many things that can upset us to the point that you feel emotionally overwhelmed and even out of control.
- When you feel this way, the emotional part of your brain (called the limbic system) takes over and the rational or thinking part of your brain takes a back seat.
- Calming your emotions is an important life-long skill everyone should learn.
- When you perform any of the activities below your brain will be producing serotonin, a biochemical that gives you a sense of calm.

Relaxation

Breathing exercises

- Hand breathing,
- Bubble breathing,
- Belly breathing, etc (depending on the child's preference they may also want to use a guided app exercise.)

Grounding exercises

- ▶ The 5 senses technique- See, Hear, Touch, Smell and Taste
- ▶ The Roots technique - Imagine you are a tree & rooted in the ground.
- ▶ A self hug/ weighted blanket/the use of a sensory object.



Other exercises

There are other factors that can make a particular activity more soothing including familiarity, sensory, and repetitive motion

1. **Familiarity:** for example, happy childhood memories such as a family holiday or positive friendships, or supportive family member. **These can be associated with photos, smells or music.**
2. **Sensory:** Our emotional brain responds best when activities are multi-sensory and involve sound, sight, taste, touch, and smell. **For example, the sound of rain when we are indoors, walking in the woods, relaxing music.**
3. **Repetitive Motion,** for example, chewing gum, and colouring, stroking your arms, may produce serotonin in the brain. Our bodies are naturally inclined towards repetitive motion, like pacing, when we are agitated.

Finally take care of you....

- ▶ Teaching is a tough job!!!!
- ▶ However, if you're not feeling your best this can impact on your emotional wellbeing.....
- ▶ It is an important reminder that the more time you spend taking care of yourself the more positive energy (and resilience) you have to give to your job and the children you work with.
- ▶ It's about finding a balance!!!!
- ▶ Sometimes without even knowing it we communicate our own anxiety in a number of ways, what examples can we think of????
- ▶ **This is why self-care for adults and professionals is so important!**

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Self care tips for adults



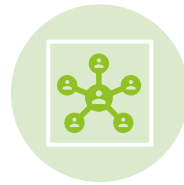
Develop healthy physical habits and get enough sleep.



Take time for yourself each day and practice self compassion.



Exercise regularly, practice mindful eating and be aware of your body.



Build a social support network and tap into social connections and community.



And finally, seek help.

Helpful PACE resources

If you would like to learn more about this approach, these are useful books to read:

- The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Proven Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind. **Dr Tina Payne Bryson and Dr Daniel Siegel.**
- Creating Loving Attachments: Parenting with PACE to Nurture Confidence and Security in the Troubled Child. **Kim S. Golding and Daniel A. Hughes.**
- The Cardiff and Vale university health board website on The PACE model at; <https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/files/resilience-project/resilience-project-logo-adjustments/pace-pdf/>



Questions????