

PACE and reducing school suspensions and exclusions

Amber Tiplady – Assistant Educational Psychologist
Sophie Wynne – Trainee Educational Psychologist
Kazia Fulmyk – Senior Advisory Teacher

PACE approach by Dan Hughes (Clinical Psychologist)



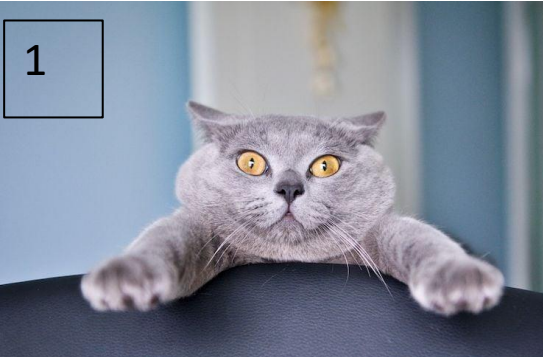
Welcome

By the end of the session, you will...

- ✓ Understand the principles of a trauma informed school.
- ✓ Understand the PACE approach.
- ✓ Understand why PACE is a trauma informed approach.
- ✓ Understand how PACE is a preventative approach to reduce school suspensions and exclusions.



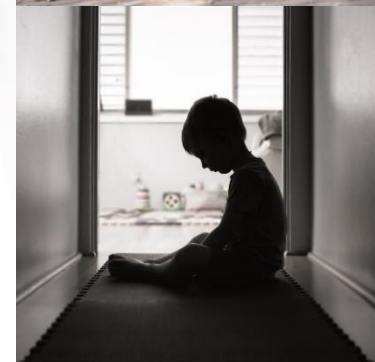
Which cat are you today?



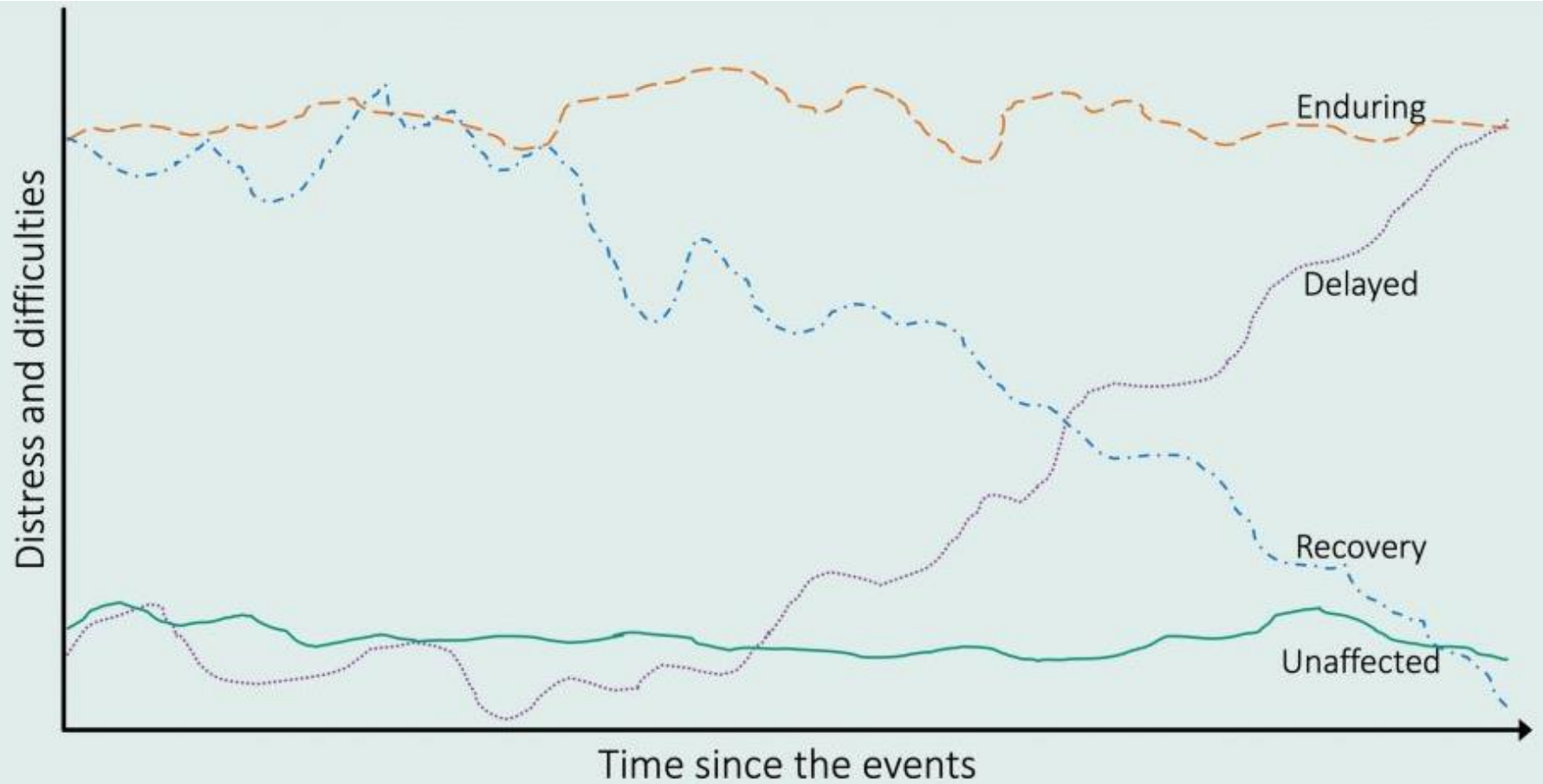
Trauma

What do you know about trauma?

- Children who have experienced trauma will tend to respond to you differently. This is partly because they have learned that the world is not safe place and that people cannot be trusted or can be over familiar
- When a child feels unsafe, it is not possible for them to learn
- Many children who have experienced trauma do not feel they deserve care, attention and feel ashamed or guilty



Research into trauma



What can trauma mean for children and young people?



DIFFICULTIES LEARNING IN SCHOOL,
IMPACTING ATTAINMENT



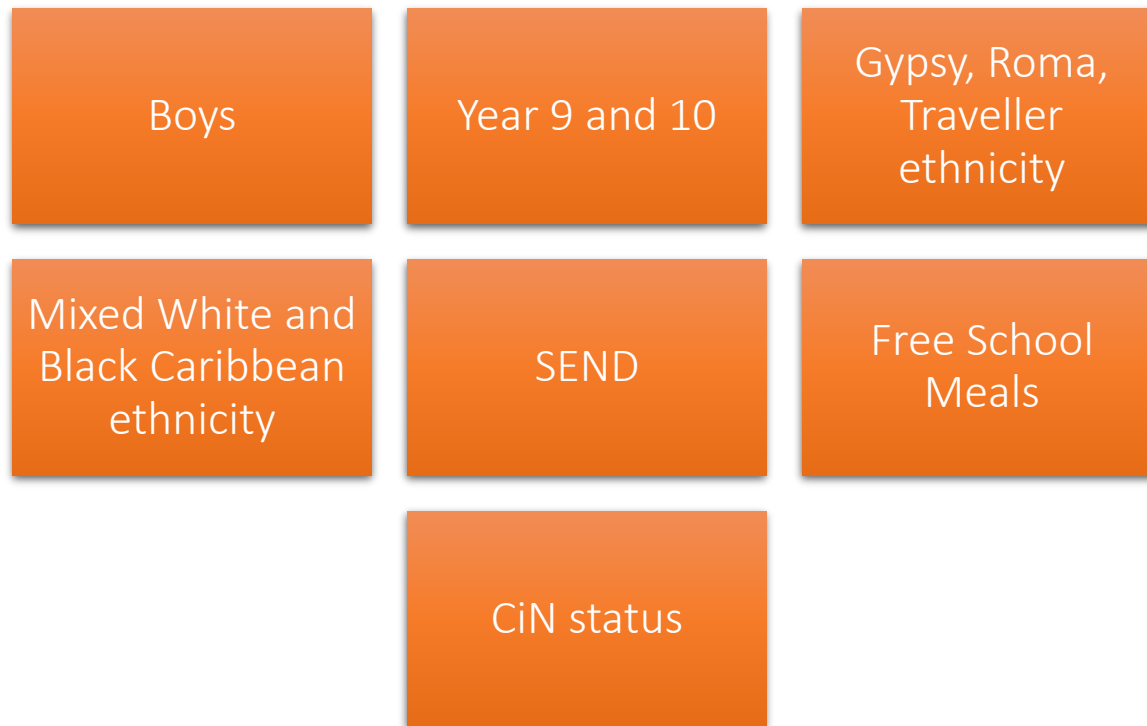
DIFFICULTIES ATTENDING SCHOOL,
POSSIBLY LEADING TO EBSNA



INCREASED DISTRESSED
BEHAVIOURS, RESULTING IN MORE
EXCLUSIONS AND SUSPENSIONS

School suspensions and exclusions: An overview

- Most recent data in England, published in July 2024, reviews 2022-23 academic year:
 - 786,961 suspensions, increased from 578,280
 - 9,376 permanent exclusions, increased from 6,495



Suspension/exclusion
process for children
with a social worker

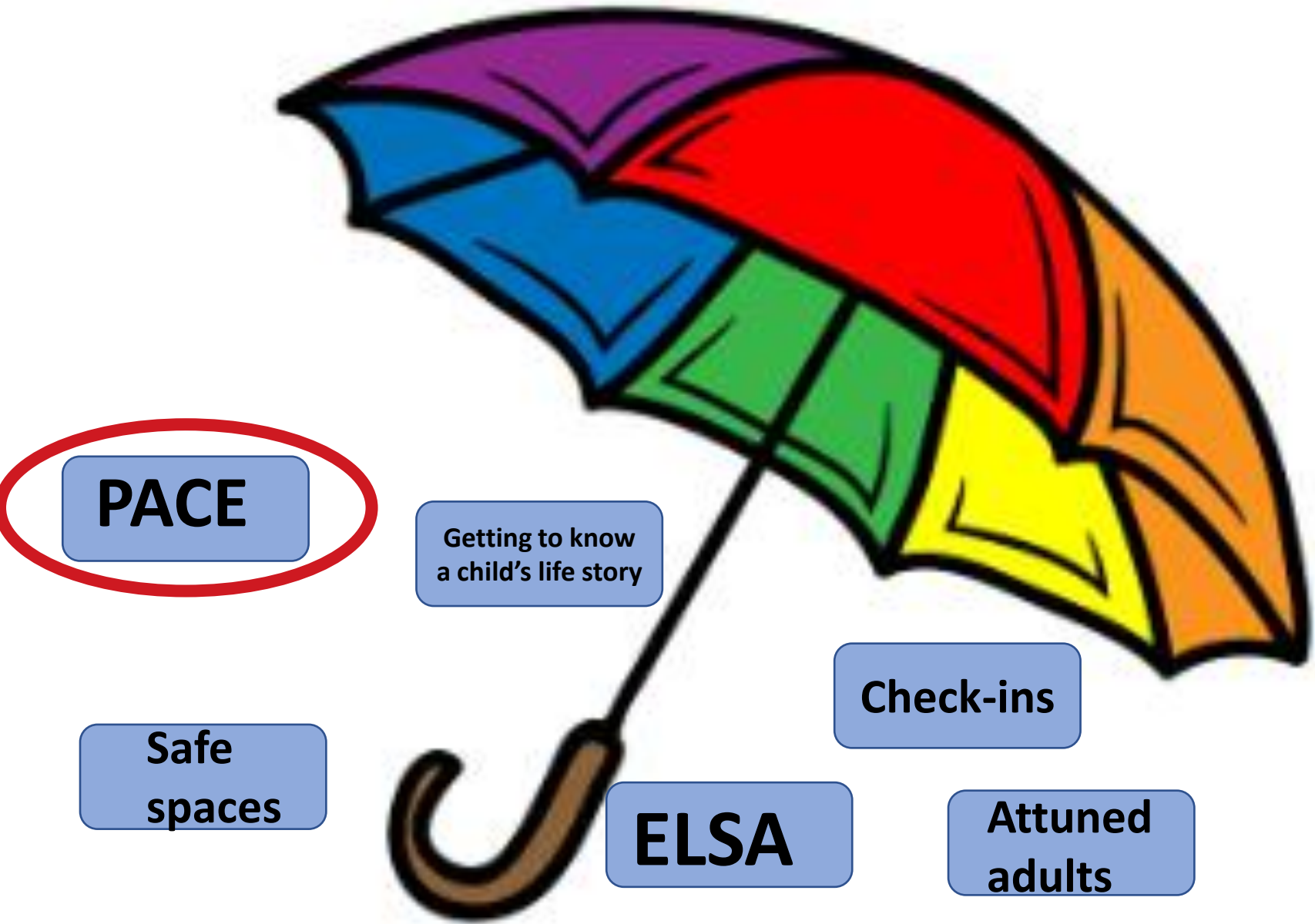
Looked after children: Where a LAC is at risk of being suspended or excluded, designated teacher and VSH should be contacted who will provide further guidance

- [Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance](#) (p24)

Previously LAC: Designated Teacher should be notified, and VS if you require further advice.

Schools are expected to inform the social worker allocated to *any* child (i.e. LAC/CiN/CP) as soon as possible re: suspension (and preferably prior to the issuing of the suspension).

What helps? – Trauma Informed Schools



Discussion

What does PACE stand for?

What is PACE?

Playfulness
Acceptance
Curiosity
Empathy



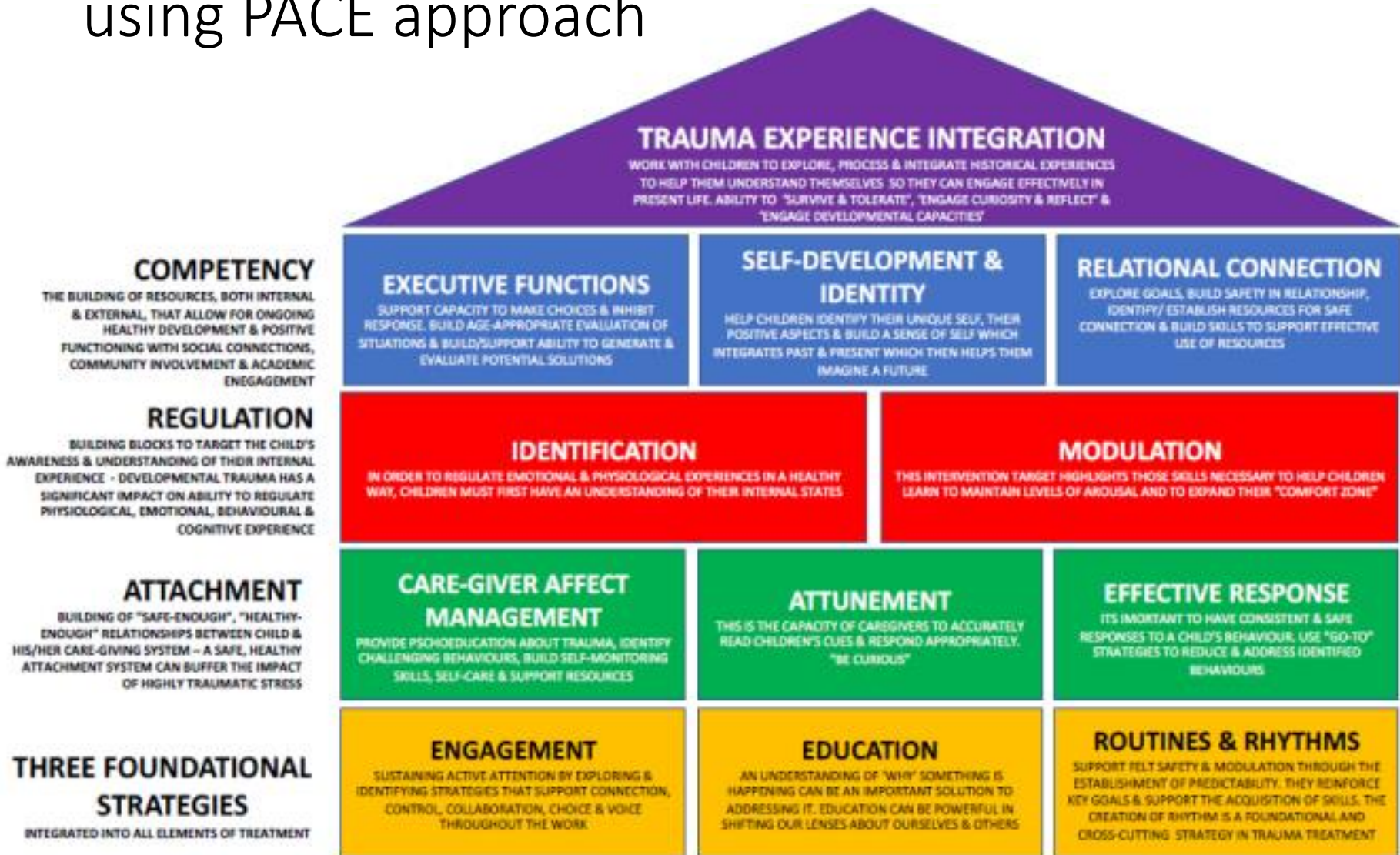
Attachment

Building of “safe enough”, “healthy-enough” relationships between the child and his/ her care giving system. A safe healthy attachment system can buffer the impact of highly traumatic stress

Care-giver affect management

Provide Psychoeducation about trauma, identify challenging behaviours, build self-monitoring skills, self-care and support resources

Trauma informed Practice using PACE approach



THE ARC FRAMEWORK – A COMPONENTS BASED MODEL

Attunement

This is the capacity of caregivers to accurately read children's cues and respond appropriately. "Be curious"

Playfulness

- Children need to know that their relationship with you is safe, even if they have done something wrong. They need to be reminded that relationships do not have to be perfect all the time:
- Let them know that you care more about them than their behaviours
- Let them know that there is a person behind the policies
- Setting the mood with vocal tones- light hearted & reassuring
- Considering your body language.
- This reduces shame when things go wrong or mistakes are made



Playfulness

Attunement

This is the capacity of caregivers to accurately read children's cues and respond appropriately. "Be curious"

- Forming key attachments in school so that children feel safe
- Feeling safe in school --> positive experiences
- Children who experience positive experiences are less likely to be on high alert for danger as often



Effective Response

It's important to have consistent and safe responses to a child's behaviour. Use "go to" strategies to reduce and address identified behaviours

Acceptance

- Acceptance means making sure the child feels safe enough to express an emotion and knows they will still be valued.
- Accept the **emotion** not the behaviour.
- The child knows there is a safe space to share their feelings and lived experiences
- Emotional validation
- Children choose those they feel safe around to share their thoughts and feelings with

- Be mindful of your language and approach- try using "WIN" statements:
 - I wonder
 - I imagine
 - I notice
- Activities that encourage naming emotions
- Allow child to go through strong emotions.



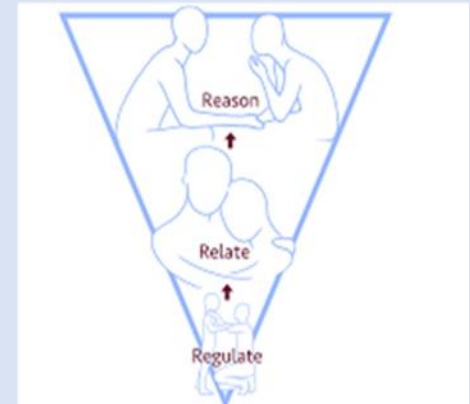
Acceptance

Acceptance can:

- Help build positive relations
- Ensure that children feel safe and valued
- Develop children's emotional literacy (emotion coaching approaches)
- Remain within their window of tolerance:
<https://youtu.be/0ehq5-P5OSs>
- When children feel seen and understood, they are less likely to try and communicate this through distressed behaviours
- These are children who have experienced a lot of rejection. They may not have feelings of safety at home; these behaviours may come out in school
- Breaking the cycle of rejection through acceptance + containment

Highly distressed children need to first:

- 1) Regulate
- 2) Relate
- 3) Reason
- 4) Repair



Curiosity



Curiosity

Regulation

Building blocks to target the child's awareness and understanding of their internal experience- developmental trauma has a significant impact on ability to regulate physiological, emotional, behavioural and cognitive experience

Identification

In order to regulate emotional and physiological experiences in a healthy way, children must first have an understanding of their internal states

Behaviour is communication – begin to wonder what children are trying to communicate through their behaviour

Keeping the child in mind and letting them know it.

Be mindful of children's language skills. Think about Blank's levels of questioning.

Understanding their behaviour in the context of their specific experience



Curiosity

Can help:

- Children feel understood and listened to.
- Children develop trust.
- Hearing or noticing the child's perspective.
- Restorative justice – cannot have this conversation without being curious as to why. Helps develop appropriate sanction – turn sanction into learning opportunity.



ABC Chart can help with curiosity



ARC Framework Trauma Informed ABC (Antecedent, Behaviour and Consequence).

We recognise that challenging behaviour is often a front for unmet needs or an attempt to avoid real or imagined danger (and feel safe again). We know that our young people make sense and we seek to “get in front” of the behaviour and meet unmet needs or address the need for safety. Without fully understanding how this behaviour makes sense we cannot respond effectively and recognise that the young person may not “know” why they have done something. If we can collect data and share information around what we saw and heard we can develop responses to address unmet needs, increase feelings of safety and teach skills that may be missing

Where? <i>Date, time, location and others present.</i>	What did you see in the child/ young person just before? <i>Eye contact, body language, energy levels, movements, words used etc.</i>	What do you think was the “trigger”? Do you see a pattern?	What were the behaviours of the child/ <u>yp</u> when dysregulated?	What need might have got met by this behaviour?	What real or imagined <i>danger</i> might the child/ adolescent have perceived?	What <i>skills</i> may this young person not have to regulate themselves?	What did the adult do? What was the adult’s energy level? Did anything appear to help with regulation?	What happened <u>as a consequence</u> of the child dysregulating?

Empathy

- Being able to see the world from the child's experiences
- Being present when the child is experiencing an emotion so they do not feel alone
- Clear consistent boundaries on expression

Modulation

This intervention target highlights those skills necessary to help children learn to maintain levels of arousal and to expand their "comfort zone"

Attunement

This is the capacity of caregivers to accurately read children's cues and respond appropriately. "Be curious"



Empathy

Can help:

- Reduce conflict stress & withdrawal
- Showing empathy lets the child know that you want to be by their side as they go through their difficulty
- Emotional containment
 - Empathy development- modelling

Be mindful of compassion fatigue; look after yourself

Discussion

How can PACE be used to reduce school suspensions and exclusions?

How can PACE help to reduce school suspensions and exclusions?

Positive, trusting relationships

Developing children's sense of self

Accepting the child --> increased sense of belonging

Emotional literacy helps regulation --> less distressed behaviours

References:

Burton, Gibson and Donkin (2024)

How can PACE help to reduce school suspensions and exclusions?

More aware of signs of escalation (preventative and proactive) - can help children notice signs early, support regulation and reflection

Recognise behaviours as requests for help

Focus on growth mindset – mistakes and errors are how we learn

Recognise that self control is a work in progress

References:

Anne Emerson (2022)

Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A Whole-School, Multi Level, Prevention and Intervention Program for Creating Trauma-Informed, Safe and Supportive Schools. San Francisco



After a year of the program found

- 32% decrease in behavioural incidents that would lead to a young person spending time away from learning
- 43% decrease of incidents involving physical aggression

- Dorado, J., Martinez, M., McArthur, L., & Leibovitz, T. (2016). Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A whole-school, multi-level, prevention and intervention program for creating trauma-informed, safe and supportive schools. *School Mental Health*, 8, 163-176

iTips

- 2017/2018 reduction in exclusions in iTIPS primary school
- Between 2015 and 2016 fixed term exclusions had doubled in Islington schools and Between 2017 and 2018 it halved in iTIPS Schools



Islington Trauma
Informed Practices
in Schools



Take aways

- Don't single out
- Allow child to find safe space in the room/ person
- Be patient and give gentle reminders
- Try to be aware of the possible triggers
- Allow time
- Prepare as much as possible
- Show attention
- Check in with me
- Putting children first and not taking their actions personal. Noticing your own triggers & boundaries
- Avoid adding to their battle
- De-escalating
- Making space for their needs
- It helps them process and learn about their internal emotions

References & further reading

- PACE Oxfordshire- the attachment team
- Bmindfulpsychology.co.uk
- Ddpnetwork.org
- Beacon house
- Orienting in a defensive world: Mammalian modifications of our evolutionary heritage. A Polyvagal Theory: (Porges, 1995)
- 5 essential elements or immediate and mid term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. (Hobfoll et al., 2007)
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954)
- <https://www.wildpeace.org/preventing-compassion-fatigue>
- Classroom discourse: a key to literacy. (Blank's levels of questioning by Marion Blank 2002)
- Effects of profound early institutional deprivation: An overview of findings from a UK longitudinal study of Romanian adoptees. (Rutter et al, 2007)

Books:

- The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Proven Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind by Dr Tina Payne Bryson and Dr Daniel Siegel
- Live within your window of tolerance

- Behaviour as a language

Thank you for your time!

Please leave us your feedback

