

Practicing in the Moment

Bringing PACE, Regulation and Behaviour Support together in educational environments

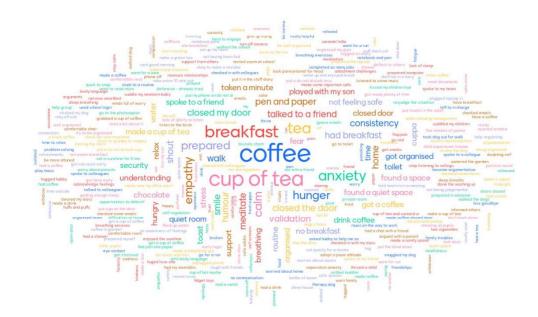
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What have you done today to help yourself feel safe so that you can engage with this webinar and explore and learn?



Overview



- Danger and the Nervous System
- Defence and Social Engagement
- The Adult Brain
- Dyadic Developmental Practice a framework for educators
- PACE
- 'Practicing in the Moment' illustrated with an example.

What things stop children from learning when they come to school?





Cues of Danger

- Our nervous system is built for survival.
- We are constantly on the hunt for signs of threat. Stephen Porges calls this process neuroception:
 - Physical Danger: Is there a bear at the door?
 - Emotional Danger: Will you be disappointed? Will you disapprove?
 - Interpersonal Danger: Will you abandon me? Will I be alone?



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Defence against Danger

- Our nervous systems have ancient ways of dealing with threats:
 - Fight
 - Flight
 - Shutdown
- These developed to defend against physical danger but are now used against emotional and interpersonal danger.



Defence or Social Engagement

- When our nervous system is in defensive states we are mobilised for actions which include fight and flight responses
- or we are immobilised for actions which lead to shutdown. These occur disconnected from others.
- When our nervous system is in a social engaged state we are 'mobilised' for actions which include connecting with others to share our curiosity, exploration, and excitement about our experiences.
- Or we are 'immobilised' in safety which includes being with others in a calm state. We can rest, relax, accept comfort and sleep.



Autonomic Ladder (Dana, 2018)



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Safe: Open and Engaged Mobilise for action via curiosity, exploration and learning Immobilise for rest and relaxation leading to health, growth and restoration

Danger: mobilised for action - Fight/Flight

Life threat: immobilised - shut down/collapse



Defence or Social Engagement

- We cannot be in both defence and social engagement at the same time.
- Children and adults need to be in a socially engaged state for education to be successful.
- Porges describes connection as a biological imperative.



Fight, flight and shutdown can take many forms some more subtle than others.

Eg Think about these when in a defensive state:

- Threats as a fight response. If you don't ... then
- Problem solving or reassurance as a flight response
 – if
 you do X then I move away from your discomfort.
- Not taking offered help as a shutdown response leave me alone I can manage this.

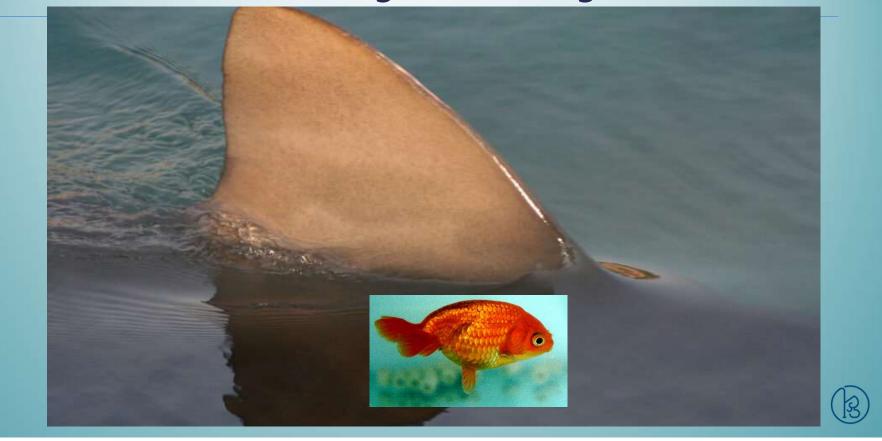


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What do the adults in school do when they are in fight, flight or shutdown states?

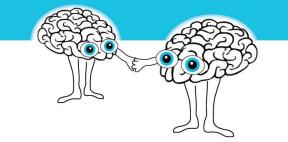


Perceived signals of danger



The Adult Brain

- Children's immature brains need to be connected to adult mature brains.
- Adults therefore need to be in a social engaged state to support children.



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What do you need to stay in a social engaged state to support children?



What are the most important things we can bring to school ^{Mentimeter} environments to help children settle to learn?



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Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP)

A model developed from Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (see Dan Hughes)



DDP a Framework for Educators

- Understand previous experience (including relational trauma) and its impact on pupils.
- Understand the impact on the adult of what the pupil brings and the importance of self care.
- Recognise the importance of meeting the child's relationship and regulation needs, even when relationship is resisted.
- To provide opportunities for learning, educators need to also build relationship, foster trust, develop emotional connections, provide regulation and support behaviour – 'Connection with Teaching'.

DDP a Framework for Education

- Stay emotionally engaged and available to pupils. Demonstrating unconditional acceptance alongside the safety of age appropriate boundaries and discipline.
- This recognises the emotional age of the child which can be younger than chronological age.
- Slow down in education to allow for this emotional and social support.
- Provide a playful, curious, accepting and empathic teaching environment (PACE).



PACE

Connecting with the pupil through the attitude of PACE, a way of being that offers safety and regulation through relationship.

- Playful: Joy in relationship. Spontaneous, fun and light.
- Accepting: Unconditional, directed at all the other's experience.
- Curious: Non-judgemental and active.
- Empathic: Felt sense of the other, actively experienced and communicated.

An Example

9-year-old Derek has been throwing stones at another pupil during break. He is sent back into his classroom. He enters the classroom yelling:

"This isn't fair! She started it and I'm the one who is getting punished!"

Traditional approach: Immediate focus on his behaviour and the impact on others.

PACE approach: Focus on Derek with acceptance and empathy for his current feelings and curiosity for his experience.

"Oh, Derek you are so upset! It sounds like you think something happened that was unfair, and you are very upset about that! Things should be fair! I'm sorry your break didn't go as planned. Tell me what happened." Derek tells the teacher that he was playing, and Jessica took the ball when it was his turn and she wouldn't give it back. He told her to give it back and she didn't listen.

PACE approach: Validate his experience through acceptance and empathy and then be curious about what happened next.

Teacher: "I can see how that would be upsetting and feel unfair when you believed it was your turn. How did it get to throwing stones?"

Derek looks down and goes quiet. Notice the non-verbal response from the child. He has moved into shame.

Traditional approach: Focus on what Derek did wrong and consequences for this. This is likely to increase his shame and is more likely to trigger a defensive response – anger, blaming, minimizing.

PACE approach: Continue to be curious about Derek's experience in a way that regulates the shame.

Teacher: "Maybe you now wish that you hadn't thrown rocks, hadn't lost your temper like that?"

Derek nods and teacher can now join with him in his experience of guilt. She does not have to lecture him about the dangers of throwing stones as he already knows this and this would trigger shame again. She can help him think about what he can do to make amends.

Teacher: "It feels crummy doesn't it when we wish we hadn't done something?"
Derek: "If she hadn't made me so mad, I wouldn't have lost my temper!"
This is said with sadness and without shame and so the teacher can now focus on
Derek's behaviour. Experiencing guilt and remorse Derek is more likely to be able to
listen and accept the teacher's suggestions.



Teacher: "I wonder how we can help you hold onto your temper when someone upsets you? I don't think you feel very good when you are angry and then when your anger goes away you certainly don't feel very good! Do you have any ideas what would help?

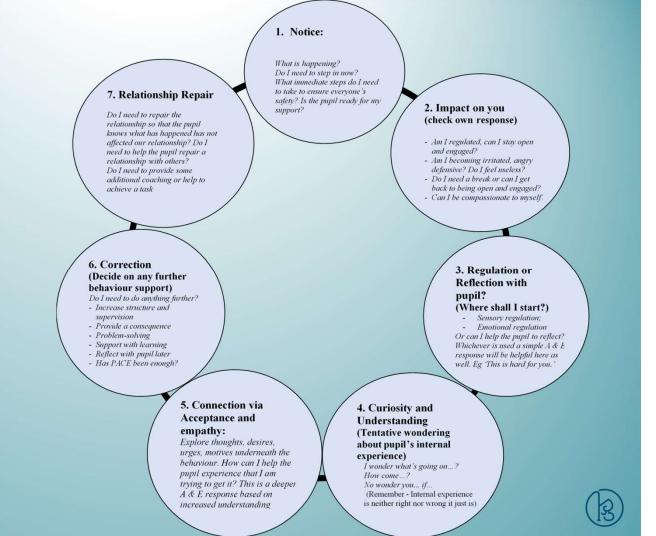
Derek shakes his head. Derek is not yet ready to join in with thinking about this. He needs more time and some normal routine to regulate further.

Teacher: "Don't you worry I have some ideas. At lunch time we will spend some time together and I'll tell you my ideas. Then tomorrow we will try a break with some adult help beside you to test them out. But today, you will stick close to me, so you don't get into more trouble. Deal?

Derek: begrudgingly mumbles "Fine"

At lunchtime with the additional regulation from eating Derek is ready to think about and even offer his own ideas for managing when he feels angry.

Practicing in the Moment





An Example

Mrs Kay, a teacher discovers PACE

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1. Notice:

What is happening? Do I need to step in now? What immediate steps do I need to take to ensure everyone's safety? Is the pupil ready for my support?

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What did Mrs Kay need to pay immediate attention to?



2. Impact on you (check own response)

- Am I regulated, can I stay open and engaged?
- Am I becoming irritated, angry defensive? Do I feel useless?
- Do I need a break or can I get back to being open and engaged?
- Can I be compassionate to myself:

What indicates that Mrs Kay needed to take care of herself Mentimeter before talking with Lucy?



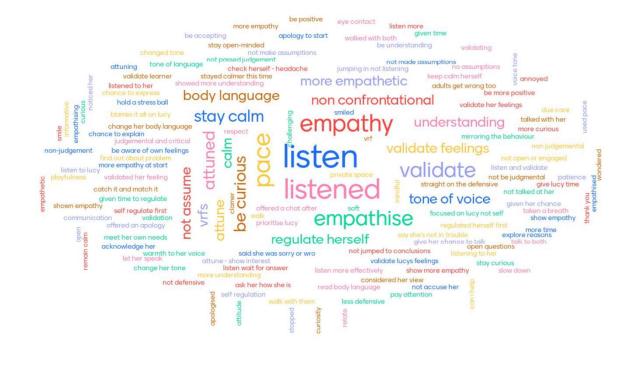
3. Regulation orReflection withpupil?(Where shall I start?)

- Sensory regulation;
- Emotional regulation

Or can I help the pupil to reflect? Whichever is used a simple A & E response will be helpful here as well. Eg 'This is hard for you.'

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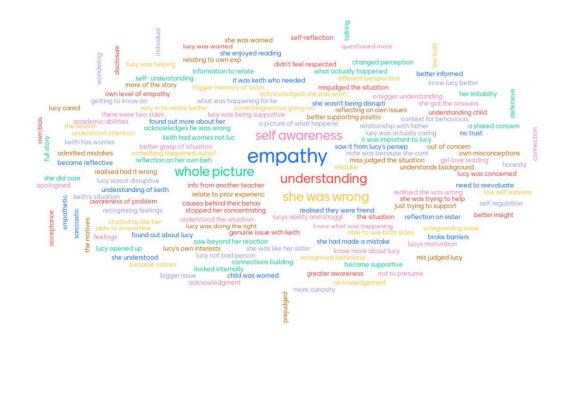
What did or could Mrs Kay have done to help Lucy stay regulated whilst she talked with her?



4. Curiosity and Understanding (Tentative wondering about pupil's internal experience)

I wonder what's going on...? How come...? No wonder you... if... (Remember - Internal experience is neither right nor wrong it just is)

What understanding did Mrs Kay get when she became curious?



5. Connection via Acceptance and empathy:

Explore thoughts, desires, urges, motives underneath the behaviour. How can I help the pupil experience that I am trying to get it? This is a deeper A & E response based on increased understanding

How did Mrs Kay communicate her understanding through acceptance and empathy?



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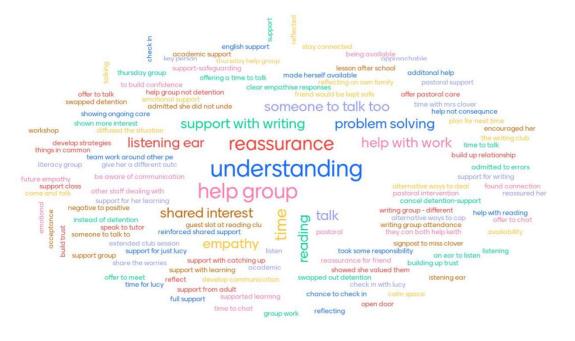
6. Correction (Decide on any further behaviour support)

Do I need to do anything further?

- Increase structure and supervision
- Provide a consequence
- Problem-solving
- Support with learning
- Reflect with pupil later
- Has PACE been enough?

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What additional support did or could Mrs Kay offer to Lucy?



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7. Relationship Repair

Do I need to repair the relationship so that the pupil knows what has happened has not affected our relationship? Do I need to help the pupil repair a relationship with others? Do I need to provide some additional coaching or help to achieve a task

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What relationship repair occurred during this scenario?



"In order to learn anything, we have to feel safe....telling someone that they are safe rarely translates into feeling safe. Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy provide the foundation for that felt sense of safety as they are experiences that our brains instinctively respond to with pleasure and a sense of calm. They allow for intersubjective experiences of being seen, whichis essential for the brain's circuitry to develop in the way that optimizes physical and mental health. Our brain is a social organ, and playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy bring us into connection. They are signals of safety."

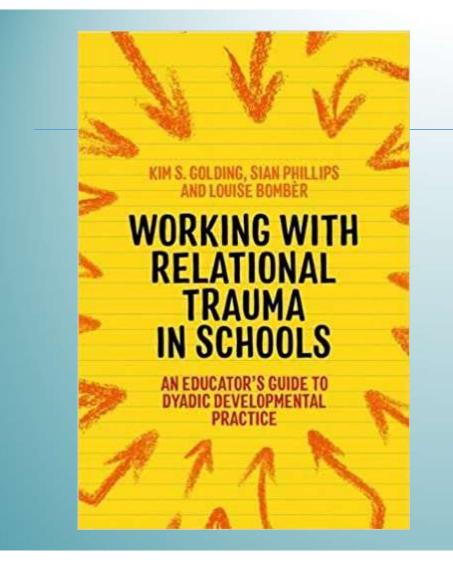
(Philips, Melim & Hughes (2020) Belonging. P47)

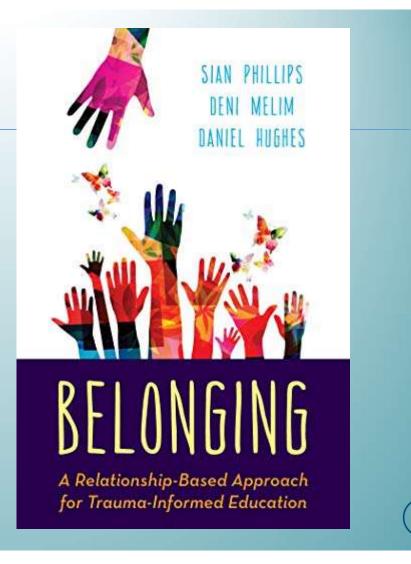




"Once the child experiences through primary intersubjective interactions that they are liked and have value and once they have repeated experiences of their emotions being co-regulated by their teachers, they will be more settled to learn."

(Philips, Melim & Hughes (2020) Belonging. P48 - 49)





And I also mentioned

Polyvagal exercises for safety and connection by Deb Dana W W Norton & Co Ltd, 2020



Q & A

Some questions put in the chat that we did not get to:

Q. Strategies worked well with a child and they are now engaged in learning whereas previously they had tried to escape. The child is now clingy with one member of staff. Other staff perceive this as the strategies having made the child clingy and dependent on the staff member.

A. The easiest way to understand this scenario is through Attachment Theory alongside understanding the nervous system. The child has an insecure attachment and therefore perceives relational danger in school. The child manages this by themselves (self reliance) by escaping (flight response). This would suggest an avoidant pattern. Children with avoidant patterns do not get their dependency needs met. To achieve healthy independence they need to go through a stage of being dependent. They will do this when they meet an adult they have some trust in and are starting to feel more secure with – a healthier attachment figure. If their dependency needs are met they will develop independence supported in small steps by the adult. The bottom line is children need to be safely dependent before they can be healthily independent.

Q. Advice about helping children who have experienced trauma and also neurodevelopmental challenges such as ASD and PDA.

A. This is not an unusual situation that children can present with. It does slow the work down and the children are likely to take longer settling to learn with this being easily disrupted by additional stresses – changes in routine, transitions etc. The good news is that these children do respond to the same approaches that we were discussing. With time and patience they will progress. They also need additional flexibility from the adults to meet them where they are at. Progress can be two steps forward, one back. Incidentally, some of the strategies used to help with the neurodevelopmental difficulties such as social stories and visual calendars also work well with children who have experienced trauma.



Q. A foster child is nervous about moving to a new class and is withdrawing from the current 1:1 support.

A. This child is likely to be experiencing fears of abandonment, probably resonating with past experience. The child is likely to be rejecting before being rejected. I don't know the age of the child but naming this can be helpful. The supportive adult needs to accept the child's fears whilst remaining available. The child might also be helped if the adult lets them know all the ways they are going to carry on thinking about them, remembering them in the future.

Q. How to help a child who is having to transition to a new school because of challenging behaviour they have presented in an old school. There is an initial 'honeymoon' period when the child is quiet and co-operative. This is then followed by a period of challenge when all the work on building relationships and trust with the child appears to be lost.

A. Don't despair, the good work that has been done during the quiet phase has not been lost, just gone underground. Often the challenges begins as the child starts to settle and experience some trust. This generally links with feeling not good enough and fear of being discovered. The child demonstrates how they feel about themselves through the challenging behaviour, another example of reject before being rejected. Holding the child through this challenge is essential to give the child a different experience of being valued by adults. Keep everyone safe whilst staying available to the child. The adults will need their own support to withstand the feelings of rejection from the child and to allow the tentative trust that was initially being built to be found again and strengthened.



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What was your experience of this webinar today?

