

## The Attitude / PLACE – Dan Hughes

In Dan Hughes' book 'Building the Bonds of Attachment, Awakening Love in Deeply Troubled children', he talks about 'The Attitude' that therapeutic parents need to have to help a hurt child. The idea of 'The Attitude' is to facilitate the capacity for love and fun. It is achieved through PLACE.

**Playful**

**Loving**

**Accepting**

**Curious**

**Empathic**

When parents (and teachers) work in this way they can achieve a great deal even in the absence of any other strategies. It is not easy, but it can make a huge difference to the adult/child relationship.

Being **playful** can be achieved by the parent ruffling the child's hair when walking past, chasing them round the room when they come in from school, or giving them a quick hug when they don't expect it. Praise from parents and teachers can be positive when it is kept specific, short and done with pizzazz – a pretend fanfare, wolf whistle, or victory dance when they get their spellings right or remember their books.

**Loving** Parents should show the child that they love them at all times, even when they misbehave. All adults can show similar regard by staying calm even when they feel angry or the child is misbehaving. If you do lose your temper, reconnect with the child very quickly afterwards.

**Accepting** the child for who they are, not what they achieve is important for hurt children. This does not mean that their behaviour has to be accepted! Adults can say something like, 'I know you are upset about this. That doesn't mean you are allowed to hurt people.'

Be **curious** wondering out loud why the child is behaving in a certain way - can be helpful. 'I wonder why you feel so angry today', 'I wonder why you remembered that (particular event) today,' can help a child stop and think about what their actions and is usually more effective than asking him directly what's wrong. A child who has 'switched off' his feelings may not know what is bothering him, he may say something trivial, or withhold the information as a form of control or through lack of trust. It is often more useful to be curious, or make an educated guess, 'I wonder if you are worried about the spelling gala on Friday.' This can be an excellent way to open a discussion, in which the adult should listen attentively and not interrupt.

**Empathy** is the most important quality that an adult can have when working with a hurt child. To understand the child's needs the adult must 'put herself into the child's shoes'. The adult should convey empathy to the child, 'I can see that this is hard for you', 'Your knee is really red,

I bet it hurts.' Empathy allows the child to feel his feelings, not repress them. It encourages the release of grief and rage, which if buried can continue to cause emotional and behavioural problems. Adults should empathise with the child before putting disciplinary measures in place and while employing those measures (eg, consequences). The adult must be genuinely empathic, not flippant.

### Resources

- *Attachment Focused Parenting - Daniel A. Hughes*
- *Everyday Parenting with Security and Love: Using PACE to provide foundations for Attachment - Daniel A. Hughes*
- *No-Drama Discipline - Dr Tina Payne Bryson and Dr. Daniel Siegel*
- *Parenting with Theraplay - Rodwell Helen*
- *Therapeutic Parenting in a Nutshell - Sarah Naish*
- *The Whole Brain Child - Dr Tina Payne Bryson and Dr. Daniel Siegel*
- *Why can't my child behave? Empathic Parenting Strategies that work for Adoptive and Foster Families - Amber Elliot Books, websites etc.*

### Useful Websites

- [www.danielhughes.org](http://www.danielhughes.org)
- [www.ddpnetwork.org](http://www.ddpnetwork.org)
- [www.theraplay.org](http://www.theraplay.org)

Visit the Adoption UK websites [www.adoptionuk.org.uk/Scotland](http://www.adoptionuk.org.uk/Scotland) and <https://adoption.scot/> or call our helpline on 0300 666 0006.



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