

Book Review

Everyday Parenting with Security and Love: Using PACE to Provide Foundations for Attachment (Jessica Kingsley, 2017) ISBN: 9781785921155 (paperback) ISBN: 978-1-78450-384-0

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Aimed at parents of children who are experiencing relationship difficulties and practitioners supporting those families, this book is underpinned by the PACE model developed by Dan Hughes. It aims to provide practical guidance on how to strengthen attachment and trust. The book is written to complement the Foundations for Attachment programme (Golding, 2014) but it can also be read as a stand-alone text.

Everyday Parenting invites the reader to explore a child's early experiences, understand the challenges to parenting and consider alternative ways of parenting. It is a comprehensive read and covers blocked care, attachment history, building connections, shame and loss of intersubjectivity. The importance of looking after yourself is also included. The combination of theoretical descriptions and practical examples is helpful. The use of fictional characters, as a way to explore concepts, is a useful one and these characters appear throughout the book adding to its richness. The use of dialogue as a way of illustrating challenges and solutions is another welcome feature.

As I read the book, I was struck by the compassion shown for the children and those who care for them. The tone and content remains caring and warm. This can be in contrast with the way children are described when their behaviour challenges systems or adults in those systems. The book demonstrates how to describe and explore what the child may be feeling and why, the feelings of adults and how repair can take place. It manages to avoid those negative descriptions.

Golding asks that parents and practitioners explore deeply the experiences of children even when this may cause pain to the adult, and explains how some

behaviours can lead to triggers or obstacles for those adults. Golding points out that some of these are unconscious and that by making the unconscious conscious these stock responses can be avoided and parents can continue to respond in a way that supports repair. An example is how a child's early experiences leads to blocked trust, leading to a need to be in control, which then limits their capacity for comfort, curiosity and joy.

The inclusion of a 'frequently asked questions' section took me by surprise in this type of book. However, the questions reminded me of those parents asked me when they found it tricky to respond to distress in children which does not reduce despite their efforts. The questions are presented in the context of implementing the PACE approach but they seem more widely applicable. Questions like, why is my child becoming more distressed? and why do I feel like I'm back at the beginning? were common in my practice with families. The answers provided by Golding are given in a way that can deepen the understanding of carers about the steps in a child's healing.

I found this book both readable and usable, which is not always the case when exploring complex situations and responses. The content of the book lends itself to shared reading and dialogue between parents, carers and practitioners. Unfortunately, the paperback format is not supportive of that type of activity in practice - it is crying out for a different format, including a better use of some of the illustrations.

Evidence suggests that support to parents and carers is not always prioritised, so the final section 'Looking after Self' is a helpful addition to the current conversation. The model of Dyadic Development Practice is clear that parental

emotional regulation is a key part of therapeutic parenting. Remaining connected to a child's emotions helps develop trust and security. Golding names some of the things that can get in the way of a carer's ability to stay connected - the carer's own attachment, their own experience of being parented and their relationship history. She is clear that by caring for themselves they are able to support the child. The helping partnership between parent and social worker is nicely illustrated by describing a 'take one and take two of the same conversation. However, as Golding says, 'parenting traumatised children can be challenging. Parents cannot do this alone' (p. 224). I would always encourage that the support to carers be seen in the context of the wider organisational/system.

I recommend this book and it is one I think I will return to in future.

About the author

Lorraine Sillars works at CELCIS as the Improving Care Experiences programme lead, working with our partners to explore new approaches to improving the care experiences of children and young people living away from home. Lorraine has a background in social work with children and families and learning and development