

A series of thin, black, intersecting lines forming various geometric shapes like triangles and polygons, located in the upper left portion of the slide.

# **CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF ALLIES: USING PACE IN DAY-TO-DAY PARENTING**

**BRANDON MOCK, ATR-BC, LPC, LCMFT**

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# ATMOSPHERE OF ALLIES

**Atmosphere:** a surrounding influence or environment.

**Ally:** to unite or form a connection or relation between.

One that is associated with another as a helper : a person or group that provides assistance and support in an ongoing effort, activity, or struggle.

Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

# ATMOSPHERE OF ALLIES

Delaney (1998) suggests that the negative outlook held by children with attachment problems can lead them to:

- Expect mistreatment
- Create that mistreatment in a safe environment (re-enact past experiences)
- Desperate need to take control of what happens to them.

## **Family Atmosphere**

- It is the atmosphere in which we experience things, including relationships, which is most important.



**“Pick up the PACE”**

**Playful**

**Accepting**

**Curious**

**Empathic**



A PACEful Attitude helps children experience an adult's interest in them, they learn how to be in reciprocal relationships, and PACE reduces their shame.



# PACE: PLAYFULNESS

Reflects joy and fascination with each other

Positive, unconditional deep interest

Searches and finds strengths

Communicates hope

*Playfulness can allow the child to become more open to positive emotional experiences.*

**The roots of play are linked to the evolution of a neural mechanism that enables mammals to shift between mobilized fight/flight and calm socially engaging states.**

**Play functions as a neural exercise that improves the efficiency of the neural circuit that can instantaneously down-regulate fight/flight behaviors.**

**- *Stephen Porges (2015)***



**PACE: PLAYFUL**



# PACE: ACCEPTANCE

- Psychological safety & intersubjective discovery
- Nonjudgmental attitude
- Helps build trust in talking about inner life – thoughts, wishes, emotions, memories, fears, etc.
- Differences are addressed rather than confronted
- Conveys confidence in whatever is being explored can be experienced
- Even when caregiver has concerns with an aspect of the inner life it is accepted and explored in depth
- Accept the underlying motive of the surface behavior.



# PACE: CURIOSITY

- **Curiosity** – Goal: understanding how the person has developed and organized his experience
- Active, nonjudgmental openness to and interest in the experience of the other
- Deep desire to know and understand the experience of others
- Directive – therapist may take the lead in helping client be curious about inner life
- The act of guessing always remains tentative until the client's nonverbal or verbal responses validate it or not.





## **Examples of responses to children's behaviors, with an emphasis on Curiosity**

*"I'm wondering if it is hard to look at me.... when I tell you how well you have done?"*

*"I wonder why you felt you had to throw your dinner plate on the floor?"*

*"I'm confused about why you get so angry with me when I ask you to...?"*

*"I wonder what it's like, to hear your dad say that about ..."*

Enable the child to give feedback and let you know if you are wrong:

*"I'll guess - you let me know if I am wrong"*

*"Help me find of way of knowing when I've got it wrong"*

# PACE: EMPATHY



Empathy is expressed more ***non-verbally***.

Put empathy in your ***tone of voice***.

Empathy invites the child to become more ***vulnerable***.

Empathy is the ***other side of playfulness***. The infant that turns to the parent for safety, wanting the parent to end the distress. Empathy conveys to the infant that the parents are aware of their distress and will not leave them alone or help them manage the distress.

## Examples of responses, with an emphasis on Empathy

*“You seem a little sad now.”*

*“You look really upset at what she said.”*

*“You seem to be finding writing that essay hard.”*

*“You seem pleased that you made that choice.”*

*“You seem angry with me. I wonder if you think I said you couldn't go out because:*

*...I'm being mean,”*

*...I don't really care about what you want.”*

*...I don't really get how important this is to you.”*

*“\_\_\_\_\_ seems hard for you right now.”*

*“Thanks for letting me know \_\_\_\_\_. No wonder you don't feel like going to school today...”*

# *DAN'S TWO HANDS OF PARENTING*



## **Experience**

NEVER JUDGE THIS  
Includes the child's:  
perceptual world, thoughts,  
feelings, and motives, wishes



## **Behavior**

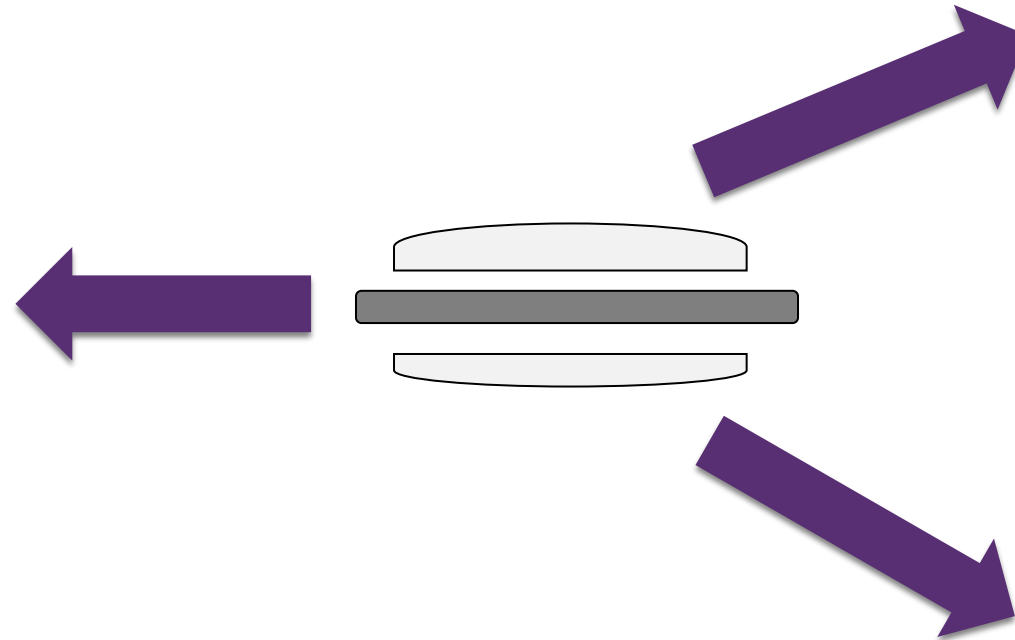
Needs to be JUDGED and some  
sort of related natural and  
realistic consequence given

# *THE PARENTING SANDWICH*

## **Discipline**

Remain calm, warm and empathic, while being clear about the boundary (what isn't allowed) and the consequence (if – then).

**Avoid anger**



## **Attunement**

Use empathy to communicate your view for how the child is feeling.

## **Relationship Repair**

Help the child to know you still care about them. The relationship is stronger than this episode.

# Effective Discipline

Empathy with discipline

May need to remain physically near the child

Limit choices and structure activities

Use the “Two Hands of Discipline” – ACCEPT inner life of the child but not always the behavior

Provide natural and logical consequences for behaviors

Be predictable in your attitude, less predictable in your consequences

Repair relational ruptures when they occur



Relationship Repair, not perfect parenting, is the key!

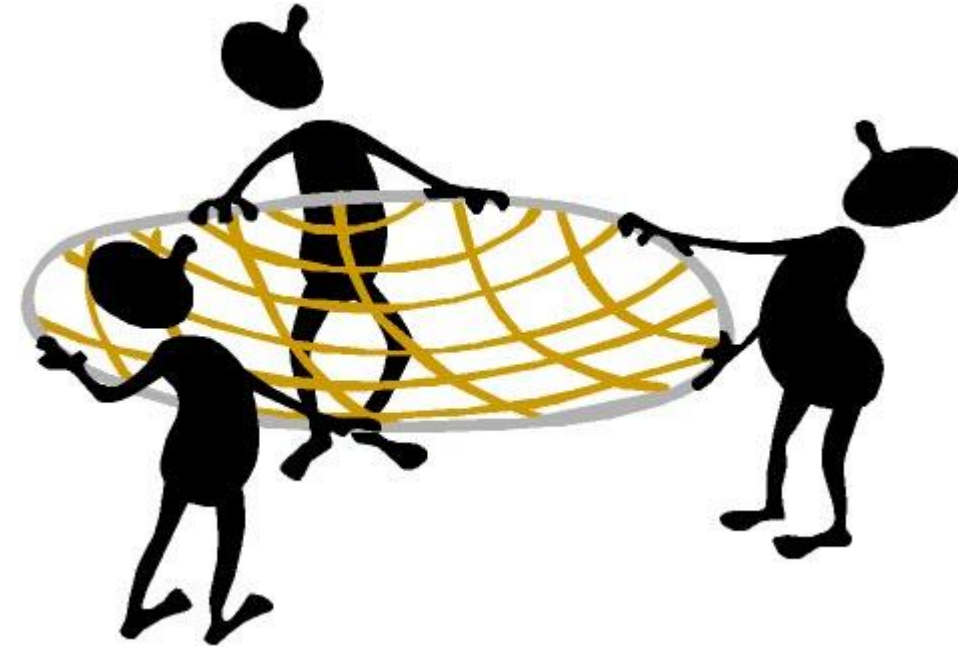
Caregivers “make it right” when they make a parenting mistake

Relationship breaks occur when there is lack of attunement

Discipline

Emotional separation

Physical separation





THANK YOU!

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE HEROIC CHILDREN  
& FAMILIES WHO GAVE PERMISSION TO  
SHARE THEIR STORIES.