BOOK REVIEWS

Creating loving attachments, by K.S. Golding and D.A. Hughes, London, Jessica Kingsley, 2012, £15.99, 240 pp. (Kindle download also available), ISBN 978-1-84905-227-6

The subtitle of the book is ‘Parenting with PACE to nurture confidence and security in the troubled child’. PACE does not hark back to Brain Gym; it is an acronym for ‘Play’, ‘Acceptance’, ‘Curiosity’ and ‘Empathy’, the four key elements that Golding and Hughes suggest are the most important aspects of parenting that should be especially considered when caring for troubled children – particularly in the care system.

The book is divided into four parts with an introduction called ‘Love: The essential ingredient’. Part 1 considers the world of play and playful parenting. Part 2 focuses on acceptance – acceptance of the inner world of the other, and parenting and unconditional acceptance. In Part 3 two aspects of curiosity are focused on: finding a different perspective and staying curious within parenting. Finally, Part 4, concerned with empathy, considers how we connect in the emotional world and with our child.

The introduction to this book considers the importance of love in parent/child relationships, and posits that the emotional bond that we call love is the centre of a child’s security and development.

Part 1, ‘Play’, looks at how children learn to play by playing with their parents from a very early age. Golding and Hughes suggest that play starts almost as soon as the infant is born. They consider how play develops through childhood and how if a playful relationship exists between parent and child there is less likelihood of trauma occurring in the relationship.

In Part 2, ‘Acceptance’, the authors consider how parents and carers need to take the approach of looking beyond the behaviour of the children in their care – the ‘I like you but not your behaviour’ principle. Children often feel quite justified in their behaviour but adults only ever view the surface behaviour, and often don’t acknowledge why they might have behaved in such a way. Golding and Hughes suggest that if parents are able to acknowledge and accept the children for who they are, then they are providing them with a secure internal working model to go forward into adulthood.

In Part 3, ‘Curiosity’, curiosity is explored as a natural human phenomenon – although for children who experience trauma it is often safer not to be curious and, as a result, they often react without thought for the consequences. It also stresses the importance of parents remaining curious in order to properly understand and relate to the children in their care.

Finally in Part 4, ‘Empathy’, empathy is described as ‘the glue that holds PACE together’ (166). In this chapter the authors even draw on Harry Potter to illustrate their point. There is a description of what empathy is and how it works in a relationship, as well as an exploration of empathy and brain development. The final section considers how empathy in parenting can be therapeutic, something to help resolve problems rather than compound them.
The final chapter is called ‘Bringing it all together and an additional ingredient’ – the additional ingredient being therapy. Therapy on its own will not help a troubled child, but it can be a valuable part of the healing process in conjunction with PACE. Parenting with PACE will enable children to overcome early trauma and to face future difficulties with an emotionally secure outlook on life.

Throughout the book Golding and Hughes draw on their professional and personal experience to illustrate the differing points they are making. There are frequent stories of parent/child relationships in each chapter, these demonstrating how to put theory into practice. Each section also makes reference to attachment theory and the recent research into brain development, in particular research that shows the brain’s involvement in the different aspects of PACE.

This book works as good addition to earlier reading on attachment theory, as it makes use of Bowlby’s writing on how attachments are formed and the importance of the parent or carer as a safe base. It could also serve – not as an introduction – but as a taster to encourage readers to read more about attachment theory.

I enjoyed reading this book both as a parent and a professional and would recommend this book to anyone who works with or cares for children, not just those who are involved in the care system. The ideas in this book will be of help to all parents, either to prevent past trauma causing problems for their children in later life or to help them deal with current difficulties. I can think of many teachers who would benefit from reading it, especially the chapter on acceptance.

Amanda Barrie
Sandwell MBC, UK
Email: amanda_barrie@sandwell.gov.uk
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Treating attachment disorders: from theory to therapy, 2nd edition, by Karl Heinz Brisch, New York, The Guildford Press, 2012, $34.00, 369 pp., ISBN 978-1-4625-0483-1 (hardback)

Karl Heinz Brisch brings a remarkable range of professional expertise and experience to this treatise on attachment disorders and treatment. He is a child and adolescent psychiatrist, psychotherapist and neurologist. All of these perspectives are incorporated in his writing and his direct contact with current research practice makes this a defining book. The first chapter covers the history and summarises research outcomes of Attachment Theory, but also incorporates psychoanalytic concepts which gives the framework a deeper flavour. Brisch goes on to outline the characteristics of the attachment patterns that have been observed and defined – a range of behaviours which enable us to recognise the breadth and depth of experience within the early maternal/child relationship, clearly defined as the organiser of behaviours with brief descriptions of diagnostic procedures and tools.

The main content of the book is detailed description and discussion of a range of cases representing all ages and experiences, described from an attachment perspective. He emphasises the importance of the client’s experience of the therapist as the secure base led mainly by his counter transference interpretations which relates to the importance of endings and ongoing availability of the therapist. Each case is discussed in