**PLACE Worksheet**

One of the most important factors in recovery from trauma is having a safe and loving relationship with a care-giver. PLACE is an attachment-based therapeutic parenting tool, used when children have experienced trauma, to show them that they are safe and loved. It is a framework that allows you (with practice!) to be mindful in your interactions with your dog, so that every interaction between you whispers that they are safe, they can trust you, and you will do your best to help them cope. Dogs learn *all the* *time* (whether we want them to or not!) and PLACE can help you make sure that the things they learn from you take them a step closer towards their recovery from trauma.

Don’t forget that you have needs too. Helping these dogs can be really hard, and sometimes you don’t get much in return for a really long time. Having a safe place to talk about that can stop you from feeling overwhelmed and reaching crisis point.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **What does it mean?** | **How can I do it? Scribble some ideas down…** |
| **Playfulness** | Playful connections are ones in which we:   * Play together when it feels safe (we have fun together, we do things the dog likes to do) * Respond to our dog’s distress when it doesn’t feel safe, soothe them in a way they find helpful and then create a playful mood to help them return to emotional regulation * Repair ruptures | *Examples:*   * *My dog loves to sniff stuff, so we’ll do some scent-based games together.* * *My dog finds it soothing when I do a long slow stroke along his back.* * *I know I get cross when my dog… (e.g. pulls on the lead) so I will… (e.g. use a double ended lead on his harness) to help. When I can feel it getting too much I will (e.g. pause and play ‘cheeseburgers’!).* * *It’s ok to sometimes get annoyed, I’m a human being. When it happens, I will repair the rupture in our relationship by (e.g. waiting until I feel completely calm, then sitting and reading him a story in a soothing voice until he approaches and wants to interact, then giving him his favourite scratches on his chest).* |
| **Love** | We all show love differently. You might show your dog you love him differently to how I show mine. It can be helpful to think about:   * How do you think he would like to be loved? * How is this different to the way *you* *would* *like* to show love? * How do you think your dog shows he loves you? * How is this different to the way *you’d like* to be loved?   Thinking about these things can help you appreciate the ways your dog *does* show you love (even if they seem tiny at first!), and how to express your love in a way that is meaningful and helpful to them. It’s also good to talk about your frustrations if your needs aren’t being met, and make a plan for how you can find the relationship more fulfilling. | *Examples:*  *Things we think increase the bond between humans and dogs are affiliative behaviour (like cuddles or grooming), play and training (or quality time together).*   * *Are there gaps we need to fill so you can do these things? E.g. he needs to learn eye contact is ok, he needs to learn being touched is nice.* * *List some things we could do that he’d enjoy right now e.g. setting up a freework session, enrichment activities.* |
| **Acceptance** | Acceptance is all about loving the dog as they are now, rather than always hoping they will be different soon. That can be really hard! It’s not about accepting everything they do, or not making progress in their recovery, but about:   * Noticing and celebrating the tiny steps they do take * Capitalising on the things they enjoy rather than always working on the things they don’t | *Examples:*   * *Make a list of the things you love about your dog.* * *Write about a time they really made you laugh.* * *Jot down the things they really enjoy. What are their 3 favourite things to be given? What are their 3 favourite things to do? How could you build more of these into your day?* |
| **Curiosity** | Being curious means that we look for the reason behind the behaviours you find challenging to deal with. Why is your dog doing them? What do they need to be able to do something different?  We can also use curiosity to change our frustrations. Instead of issuing commands and getting cross when they don’t listen, we can ask ‘are you able to…’? If not, why not? What do you need to be able to?  We don’t want to only be curious about the hard stuff, let’s think about the good stuff too!   * What are your dog’s strengths? * List some things they do really well. * What are your dog’s glimmers? Those are the things that make them feel safe. | *Examples:*   * *My dog won’t go to the toilet in the garden. Is this because he doesn’t feel safe? He does always bark at the slightest noise and everything he sees. What could I do to help him feel safer in the garden?* * *My dog really loves playing hide and seek with a ball in the long grass and he never gives up. How could I build on this?* * *My dog always picks up a toy when he’s greeting me, why does he do that? Would he find it helpful at other times?* |
| **Empathy** | Treating dogs impacted by trauma is hard, and it takes a long time. Having empathy for how your dog feels is an important part of staying motivated and sticking with the treatment plan, but it’s also important to be as kind to yourself as you are to your dog. Feeling judged, ashamed or embarrassed can profoundly affect your enjoyment of dog ownership and it’s important that you have a safe space to debrief when you feel like that. | *Examples:*   * *How do you like to learn, do you prefer reading, listening, or doing?* * *List some resources that fit with your learning style (e.g. the autonomic ladder exercises if you prefer doing, or a good podcast if you prefer listening).* * *Think of the times you’ve felt really judged. What happened? Is there something you wish you’d said? Preparing responses to unsolicited advice (as much as we wish it didn’t happen in the first place!) can be really helpful. Think of what you could say if someone says ‘oh just force him to go for a walk, he’ll soon get used to it’ or ‘isn’t it cruel making him wear a muzzle?’.* * *Who can you talk to when you feel really hurt by something someone has said?* |