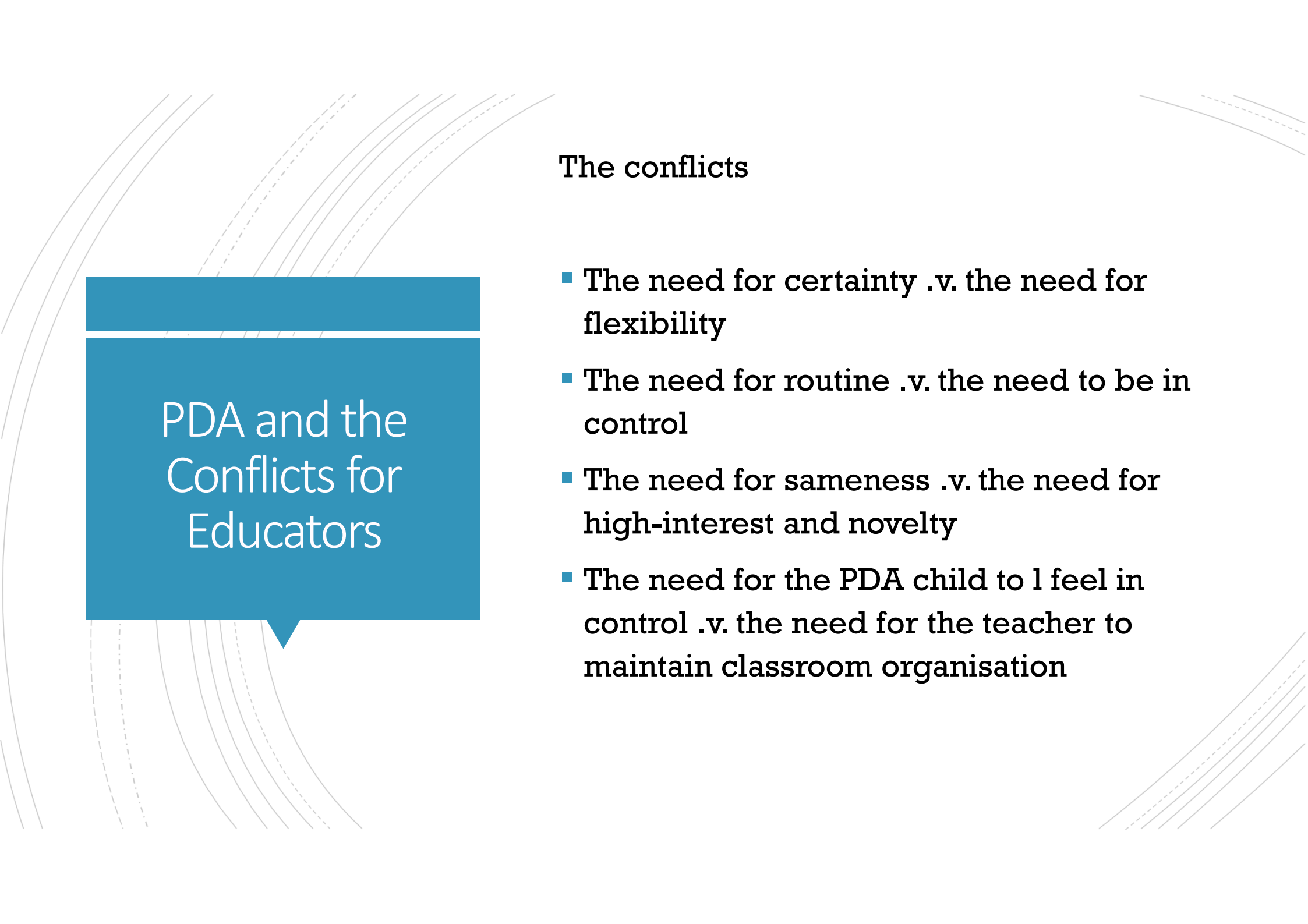


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# PDA School Provision Challenges and Strategies

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## PDA and the Conflicts for Educators

### The conflicts

- The need for certainty .v. the need for flexibility
- The need for routine .v. the need to be in control
- The need for sameness .v. the need for high-interest and novelty
- The need for the PDA child to feel in control .v. the need for the teacher to maintain classroom organisation

## PDA and The Conflicts for the Child

- A specified start time and specific days chosen for them
- Clothing chosen for them
- Things they are told they have to learn and they must show interest and engagement with
- Food chosen for them and given at a set time
- Two further changes of clothes a day required if PE day
- Adults in charge and instructions must be followed at all times, all through the day
- Transitions happen suddenly and when the adult decides i.e. playtime ends at the blow of a whistle
- Various sensory triggers to tolerate
- Visitors to class that the child must accept

## The Most Confusing Thing....

Sometimes they are ok with these things and sometimes they are not! This can lead people to believe that the child has control over their behavior. Essentially, how able they are to tolerate these aspects of school life depends on the child's levels of anxiety on a given day.

Anxiety can be triggered by;

- Perceived demands
- The excitement of expecting something and not being able to wait

This makes triggers hard to see as being able to identify them require a very in-depth understanding of what affects the individual child. The child is unlikely to articulate what has upset them as they will have learned that it is socially unacceptable to do so.

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## Approaches to Consider

### Communication styles

- Open
- Genuine
- Calm and clear
- Honest
- Humorous
- Give choices
- Show no fear or discomfort
- Be able to let things go quickly

Communication is a key skill which also relates to personality and the well-being of the individual.

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## Some Small Ways to Help

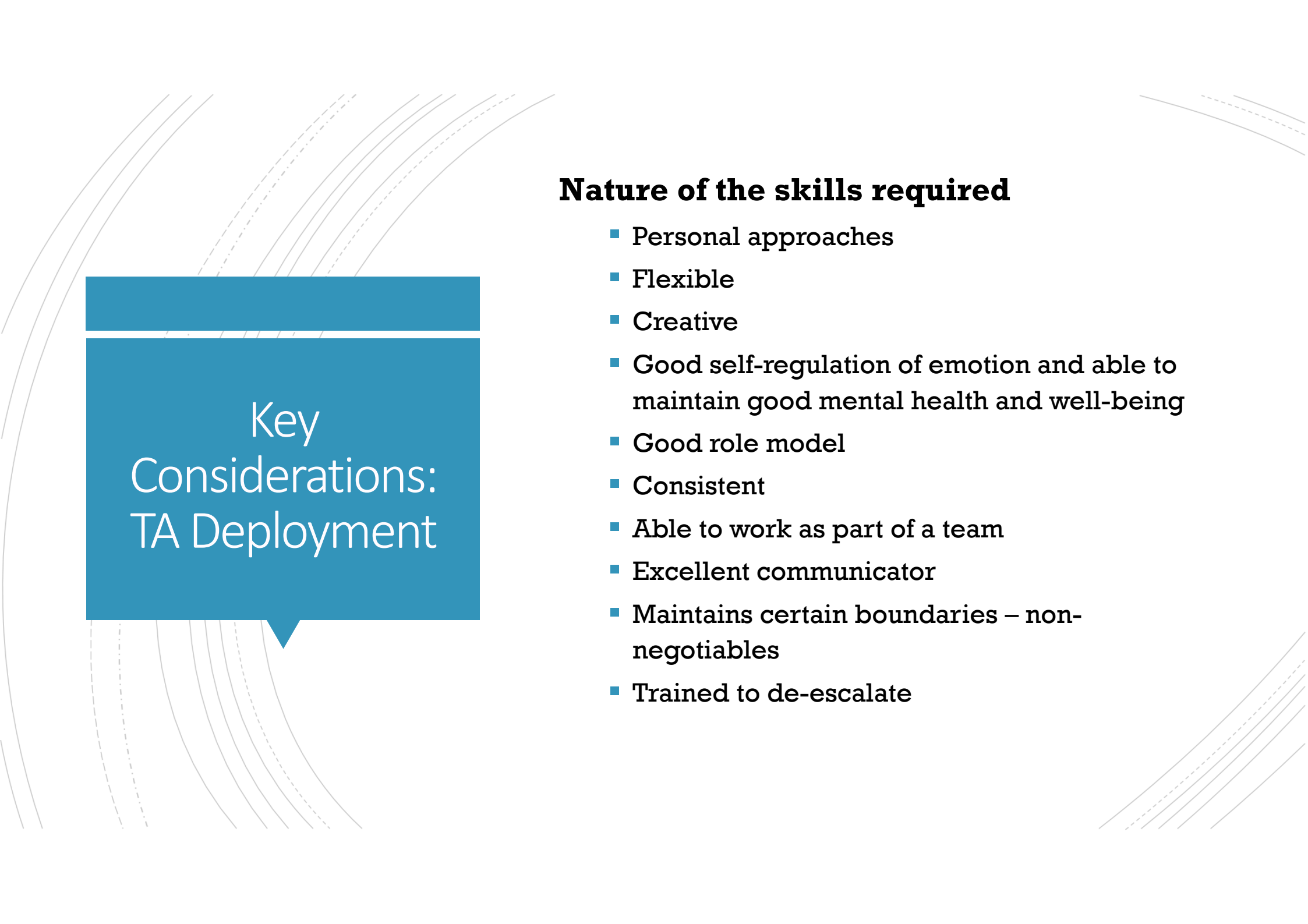
- Allow the child to express their view without being told they are being rude or disrespectful i.e. the child says 'I don't like this lesson' then why can't the response be 'Oh really, why is that?' and see where an open and non-judgmental conversation takes you. It can be hard not to take these responses personally.
- Pre-plan your response to the child saying 'I just don't want to'. How does this make you feel? Can we recognise these feelings but also rationalize that this does not mean the child is being anything other than simply honest. Can we appreciate these feelings and provide an alternative? Will it work if we just say 'Well you just have to because I have told you to'.

## Key Consideration: TA Deployment

Consideration needs to be given to who works closely with a child with PDA, what their skills are and also how they are deployed.

### **Deployment**

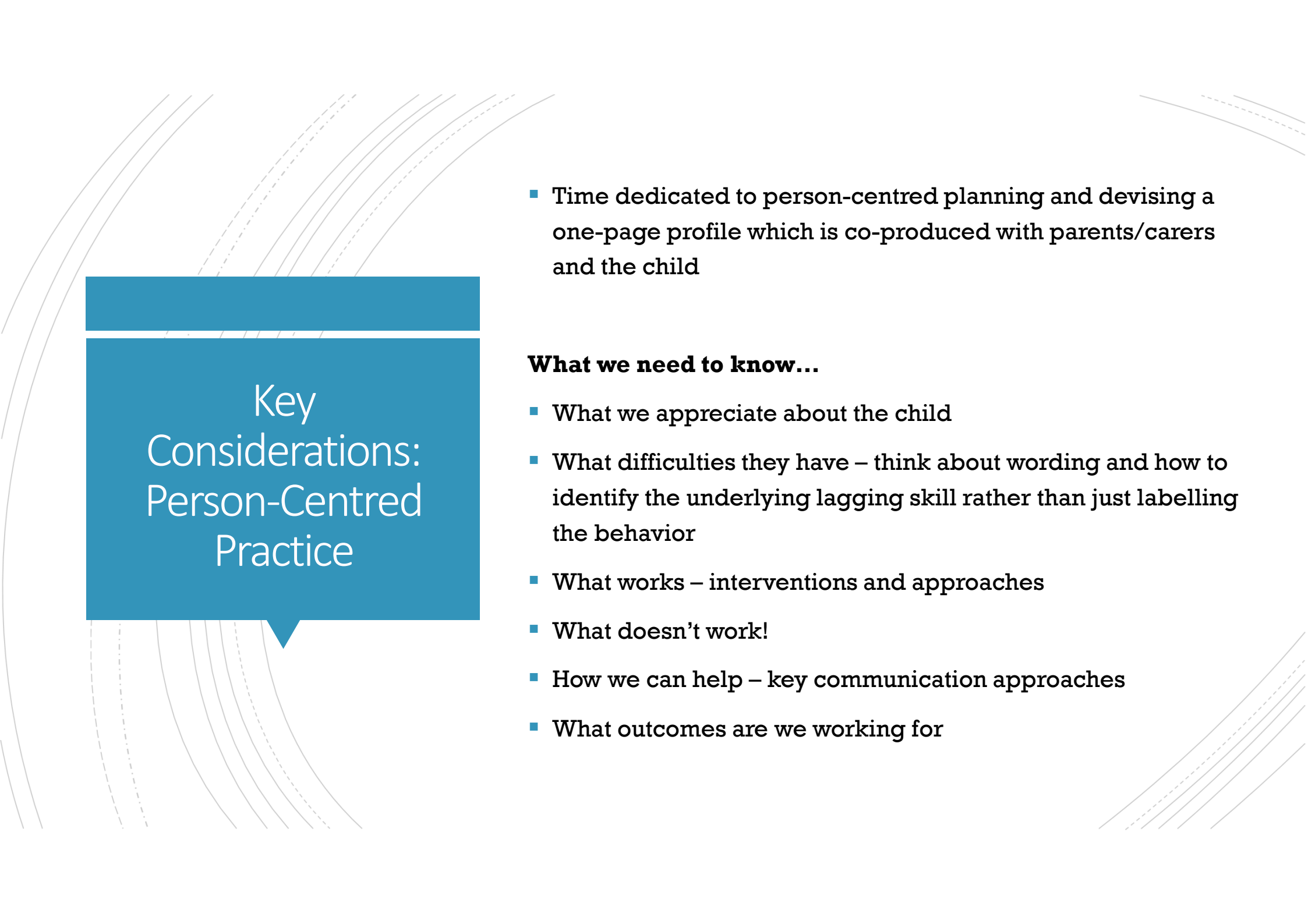
- Shared role – Some pupils benefit more from working with different individuals as long as the plan is consistent. The role of 1:1 TA is challenging for both the child and the member of staff.
- Flexibility in timetable and planned proximity of support – close proximity can sometimes heighten the demand and create friction. The individual needs to be confident and intuitive in stepping way when required.
- Interventions – A tricky area. Must be presented carefully or will be seen as another demand.

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## Key Considerations: TA Deployment

### **Nature of the skills required**

- Personal approaches
- Flexible
- Creative
- Good self-regulation of emotion and able to maintain good mental health and well-being
- Good role model
- Consistent
- Able to work as part of a team
- Excellent communicator
- Maintains certain boundaries – non-negotiables
- Trained to de-escalate

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## Key Considerations: Person-Centred Practice

- Time dedicated to person-centred planning and devising a one-page profile which is co-produced with parents/carers and the child

### **What we need to know...**

- What we appreciate about the child
- What difficulties they have – think about wording and how to identify the underlying lagging skill rather than just labelling the behavior
- What works – interventions and approaches
- What doesn't work!
- How we can help – key communication approaches
- What outcomes are we working for

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## Key Considerations: De-escalation

- Training in the stress cycle
- Meltdown prevention planning/Risk assessment
- Reduction/avoidance of physical intervention
- Key spaces within the environment
- Awareness of the effect of adrenaline on processing and overall mental health and well-being
- Maintain calm and neutral tone
- Acknowledge the feelings of the child
- Give time and space – the child can remain in a heightened state for up to 90 minutes

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## Prevention is Better than Cure

- A calm, relaxed and well-organised learning environment
- Confident staff – training, planning and back-up
- A high level of parental involvement
- Flexibility and differentiation in approaches to behaviour
- Support from specialist agencies
- Whole school approaches to self-regulation and growth mindset

A blue speech bubble graphic with a white border, containing the text 'Any Questions?'. The bubble has a tail pointing downwards and to the right.

Any Questions?

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**Further advice: The PDA Society website**