



How can I help at home?

Top strategies for helping your child with a PDA Condition.



What is Pathological Demand Avoidance?

'Demand avoidance' involves not being able to do certain things at certain times, either for yourself or others, and the use of techniques to avoid these things.

It's a natural human trait – avoiding demands is something we all do to different degrees and for different reasons.

When it occurs to an extreme extent, it may be that it relates to poor physical or mental health, personality development or developmental conditions. So, it's important to understand that a PDA profile of autism may not always be the explanation for demand avoidant presentations.

Much like those with Autism, children and young people with Demand Avoidant features may also avoid demands or situations that trigger anxiety or sensory overload, disrupt routines, involve transitioning from one activity to another, and activities/events that they don't see the point of or have any interest in.

They may refuse, withdraw, 'shutdown' or escape in order to avoid these things.

In addition, many everyday demands are avoided simply because they are demands. The very fact that there's an expectation that something should be done can result in an inability to do it.

The expectation might be from other people or it may be something internal. Some people explain that it's the expectation which leads to a feeling of a lack of control (even though it may be something they want to do), then anxiety increases, and panic can set in.

Demands will be perceived differently by different individuals, and response to demands may also be variable but once you begin to look at life in terms of demands you can see how all pervasive they are and you can see how difficult things might be for someone with a PDA profile of autism.





The PDA Panda symbolises the need to tailor the environment to meet needs and our P A N D A mnemonic is a simple reminder of helpful approaches.

PDA SOCIETY

Helpful approaches for a PDA profile of autism

Conventional support strategies, including those often recommended for ASD, are often ineffective and counter-productive with a PDA profile. In place of structure, routine, firm boundaries, praise, rewards/consequences, is a person-centred approach based on negotiation, collaboration and flexibility.

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For more information please visit www.pdasociety.org.uk

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Pick battles

- Minimise rules
- Enable some choice & control
- Explain reasons
- Accept that some things can't be done

Anxiety management

- Reduce uncertainty
- Recognise underlying anxiety & social/sensory challenges
- Think ahead
- Treat meltdowns as panic attacks: support throughout & move on

Adaptation

- Try humour, distraction, novelty & roleplay
- Be flexible
- Have a Plan B
- Allow plenty of time

Disguise & manage demands

- Word & position requests indirectly
- Constantly monitor tolerance for demands & match demands accordingly
- Doing things together helps

Negotiation & collaboration

- Keep calm
- Proactively collaborate & negotiate to solve challenges
- Fairness & trust are central

Pick battles
Anxiety management
Negotiation & collaboration
Disguise & manage demands
Adaptation

P **A** **N** **D** **A**

See the person Explore interests

Engage positively

To find out more about PDA;

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/what-is/pda.aspx>

<https://www.pdasociety.org.uk/what-is-pda-menu/>