

PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance)



- The central difficulty for people with PDA is their avoidance of the everyday demands made by other people, due to their high anxiety levels, when they feel that they are not in control. Hence the name of the syndrome: pathological demand avoidance.
- People with PDA tend to have much better social communication and interaction skills than other people on the spectrum, and are consequently able to use this ability to their advantage.

Behaviours often seen in PDA

- Obsessively resisting ordinary demands
- Appearing sociable on the surface but lacking depth of understanding
- Excessive mood swings, often changing suddenly
- Comfortable in role play and pretending
- Obsessive behaviour- often focused on people, rather than things.
- Strategies for avoidance range from simple refusal, distraction, giving excuses, delaying, arguing, suggesting alternatives, and withdrawing into fantasy. They may also resist by becoming physically incapacitated or complaining of feeling unwell. If pushed to comply, they may become verbally or physically aggressive, or have a panic attack.

Strategies for PDA

- Strategies for PDA may differ from ASC.
- Strategies usually need to be fluid and ever-changing.
- Externalise blame (for example, “I know you don’t like PE but the government says every child in the country needs to do PE”.)
- Avoid direct challenge or demands
- Avoid demand language
- Use of humour

