

# Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome

Presented by Lynn McCann

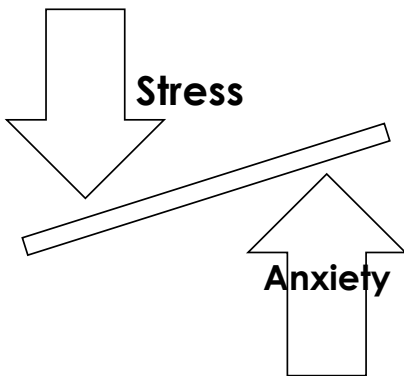


1

## What is PDA?



2



3

- Elizabeth Newson – 1980s first identified
- Looks like ASD on paper but more social understanding and engagement.
- Behaviours driven by excessive need to avoid demands.
- Controlling and manipulative of interpersonal relationships.

4

Key features: Resists and avoids ordinary demands of life.

- May seem very clever in avoidance
- Socially manipulative
- Distracting adults
- Excusing self from instructions
- Procrastinating and negotiating
- Physically incapacitating self
- Withdrawing into fantasy or role play
- Physical outbursts or attacks

5

The resistance can start subtly...  
And if the distraction doesn't work then...  
Procrastination then...  
Excuses then....  
Defiance then...  
Tantrum...  
Meltdown...

Some children go from demand to meltdown in an instant.

6

Key features: Surface sociability.

- But lacking sense of social identity
- Seemingly unaware of pride or shame
- Can seek social feedback but doesn't know the boundaries
- No understanding of responsibility
- Uninhibited
- Seem to act like an adult

7

Key features: Impulsive reactions, moods.

- Mood swings from calm to panic for no obvious reason.
- May be in response to PERCEIVED pressure / demand – from self, environment or others.
- Will only engage on their terms.
- Even favourite activities avoided if suspect someone else exerting control.

8

Key features: Comfortable in fantasy / role play.

- Can live in alternative reality – fantasy world.
- Can take on persona of others, copying every gesture, detail.
- Enjoys role play, can be controlling of others or take on role of being in control.
- Coping mechanism to avoid anxiety.

9

Key features: Verbal development.

- Delayed due to passivity when younger.
- Verbal skills usually caught up and good vocabulary.
- Good verbal skills can mask comprehension difficulties (inference, reading non-verbal communication, literal).

10

Key features: Obsessions.

- Much or most of the behaviours are intense and obsessive.
- Intense social obsessions rather than objects – focus on celebrities, peers, adults and copying them.

11

My experience of PDA by  
Isaac Russell

video

12

We haven't yet established the interaction and overlap with core ASD characteristics.

Often children are diagnosed with ASD first.

PDA diagnosis rare! Some clinicians will diagnose it but many don't recognise it.

13

We cannot diagnose PDA and cannot assume that it is PDA

We have to look meticulously at the stresses on the child from within their own thinking and from outside

Autism and Anxiety can manifest in many ways and be very complex

14

Facebook Page:  
Reachout ASC – Autism Support

Twitter:  
@ReachoutASC

Website: [www.reachoutasc.com](http://www.reachoutasc.com)

15

© Lynn McCann (2020) is the author of this course.

Please do not reuse any of this content in another format without permission from the author.

16