



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) is a term used to describe a profile of a spectrum disorder ADHD & AU. It was first proposed by Elizabeth Newson, a British developmental psychologist, in the 1980s. PDA

Individuals with PDA typically demonstrate a strong need to be in control of situations and resist everyday demands. They may exhibit behaviors such as avoidance, defiance, and extreme anxiety when faced with demands or expectations. Individuals with PDA may have well-developed social skills and may be able to mimic or blend into social situations when they choose to.



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

Characteristics of PDA may include:

Resisting and avoiding ordinary demands: Individuals with PDA may go to great lengths to avoid completing tasks or following instructions, often due to a fear of losing control or autonomy.

Surface sociability: They may appear sociable and outgoing on the surface but struggle with the deeper aspects of social interaction, such as forming genuine relationships or understanding social cues.



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

Anxiety and unpredictability: There may be significant anxiety and an unpredictable response to certain situations, especially when demands are perceived as threatening or overly controlling.

Lability of mood: Their mood may fluctuate rapidly, and they may exhibit emotional outbursts or meltdowns when overwhelmed.

Lack of flexibility: Individuals with PDA may have difficulty with transitions or changes in routine and may insist on things being done in a specific way.



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Managing PDA involves understanding the individual's unique needs and implementing strategies that foster cooperation and reduce stress. Here are some strategies that may be helpful:

- **Understanding and Acceptance:** It's crucial to understand that PDA is a genuine condition and not simply a behavioral choice. Acceptance and empathy are key to creating a supportive environment.
- **Flexible Approaches:** Traditional approaches to managing behavior may not be effective with PDA. Flexibility in expectations and approaches is essential. Allow for negotiation and compromise whenever possible.



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

Reduce Demands: Minimize the number of demands placed on the individual, particularly those that trigger anxiety or resistance. Focus on prioritizing and breaking tasks into smaller, more manageable steps.

- **Offer Choices:** Providing choices empowers the individual and can reduce resistance. Offer limited choices within parameters to maintain control while still accomplishing necessary tasks.



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

- **Use Visual Aids:** Visual schedules, charts, and timers can help individuals with PDA understand expectations and manage their time effectively. Visual aids provide structure and predictability, reducing anxiety.
- **Build Trust and Rapport:** Establishing a positive relationship based on trust and respect is fundamental. Building rapport encourages cooperation and reduces confrontation.



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

- **Sensory Considerations:** Be mindful of sensory sensitivities that may exacerbate anxiety and avoidance behaviors. Create a sensory-friendly environment and offer sensory tools or breaks when needed.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Teach and model strategies for emotional regulation, such as deep breathing, mindfulness, or sensory activities. Help the individual recognize and express their feelings in constructive ways.



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

- **Collaborate with Professionals:** Work closely with therapists, educators, and other professionals experienced in supporting individuals with PDA. They can provide valuable insights and strategies tailored to the individual's needs.
- **Family and Peer Support:** Seek support from other families or support groups who understand the challenges of PDA. Sharing experiences and strategies can offer valuable support and encouragement.



PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

- **Consistency and Predictability:** Maintain consistency in routines and expectations as much as possible. Predictability can help reduce anxiety and improve cooperation.

Remember that managing PDA requires patience, understanding, and ongoing adaptation. What works for one individual may not work for another, so be prepared to adjust strategies based on the individual's responses and needs.