

LANGUAGE OUT LOUD



THE VOICE

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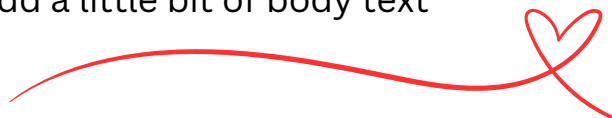


PDA: Pathological Demand Avoidance

People on the autism spectrum have difficulties in three main areas: social communication, social interaction and restrictive or repetitive patterns of behaviour. Those with the PDA profile are said to have one extra characteristic in particular which they all share - their avoidance of everyday demands made by other people, due to their high anxiety levels when they feel that they are not in control.

The characteristics of a person with Pathological Demand Avoidance are:

- resisting and avoiding ordinary everyday demands
- appearing sociable on the surface but lacking depth in their understanding (often recognised by parents early on)
- uses social strategies to avoid demands - maybe distracting those giving the demands, or coming up with reasons (such as 'my legs don't work') why they can't do something
- excessive mood swings, often switching suddenly
- comfortable (sometimes to an extreme extent) in role play and pretending
- obsessive behaviour, often focused on people rather than things



copy the link below to your browser to read about some useful strategies

[HTTPS://WWW.STEPHSTWOGIRLS.CO.UK/2016/12/STRATEGIES-FOR-PDA-PATHOLOGICAL-DEMAND.HTML](https://www.stephstwogirls.co.uk/2016/12/strategies-for-pda-pathological-demand.html)



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Positive Anticipation



After listening to a recent interview with Dr Helena Popovic on ABC Radio, it has increased my thirst to find out how we can expand on strategies used with children, to enhance their self-awareness and have a positive outlook on life. Throughout my years in wellbeing education, I have noticed that if children have events, big or small to look forward to it helps them practice positivity. A brilliant strategy to put in their toolbox to help them regulate their big emotions.

In the past, I have often used an opening line with clients asking them, “how are you?” or “what did you do today?”. Common phrases we all use, the latter particularly when we pick our children up from school. Interestingly, when we reflect or look back on events, our brain doesn’t fire up with dopamine, the past is often not a motivator for positive action. So, yesterday, I started a conversation with a young person with, “What are you looking forward to?” I could see their eyes light up and a rich conversation ensued about events that would be exciting and fun. In fact, when we talked about positive anticipation, they came up with lots of ideas of how this could help them with everyday mundane tasks. Saying “if I finish my homework, it’s like I’m rewarding myself with an activity I really like to do afterward!” Kids get this – so if we can flip the switch from feeling negative to enhancing positive thought, then we help our kids develop more strategies to use when they slip into a prolonged dysregulated space. Positive anticipation gives our brain a dopamine hit, that moves us from the negative to the positive. To anticipate events helps all humans, not just kids.

Some might say that those on the autism spectrum may not be able to cope with positive anticipation, as it could throw them into a state of anxiousness. The unknowing or unpredictability of events could trigger them. As I explain to the young people I work with, there is a great deal of certainty in positive anticipation – these events are not a surprise, they are well planned activities by parents. For example, going to the library, going to stay with grandparents, or simply having a special dinner. To encourage our children to plan ahead, is an experience that gives them autonomy, giving them opportunities to develop the confidence to manage themselves.

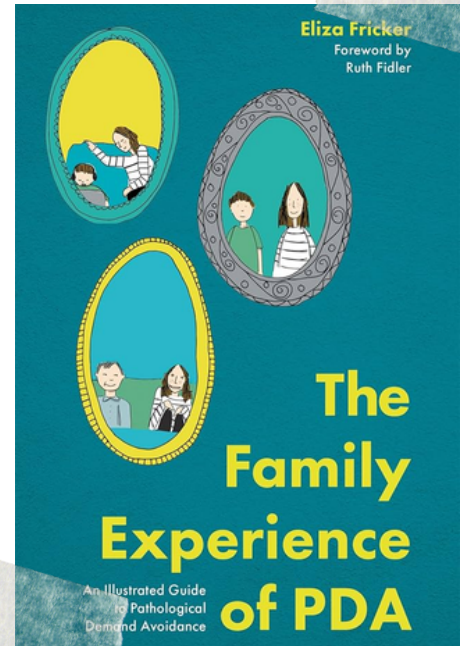
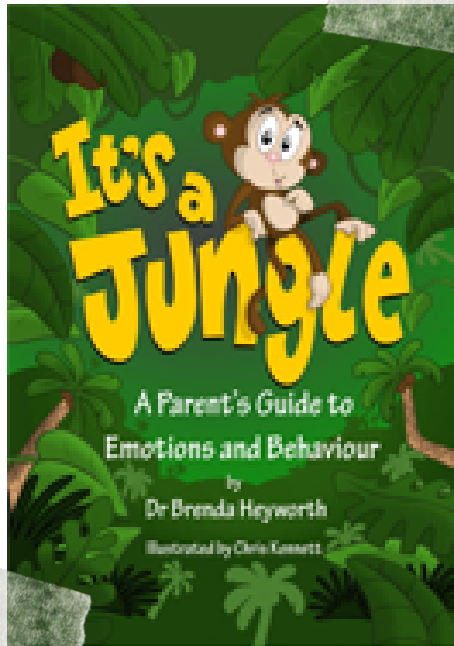


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