

This resource was created to help a child going from being home-schooled into a special school, but could be used in many other situations.

Created by Sally Russell as a template for you to adapt in whatever way you choose. Simply download, delete this intro and amend as you wish....

What PDA Means for Me

I have Pathological Demand Syndrome. It means my brain is wired differently from most people's. I have some things that I can do better than most people as a result and I find other things very difficult. I get very anxious much of the time and am quite good at covering it up sometimes but it makes life very difficult for me.

I hope this sheet will help you to know what will help me.

| PDA Trait | What it means for me | What would help |
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| Demand avoidance: I struggle when I WANT to do something for myself – I often find I can't | I get anxious when I start to do everyday things like thinking about showering, and even going to do something nice eg trip to cinema, is hard | If people encourage me it makes it worse, but with time and space and others around me doing the same things, I think it will get easier. (At the moment I need Mum to do most things for me – I hope to be able to do more for myself again) |
| Demand avoidance: If asked to do something directly, I can almost never do it | I usually get anxious, panic or freeze when I am asked to do something, especially when asked by an adult (and especially mum or dad) | I know that the way people say things to me makes a big difference - it's the way my brain responds to requests, and not a behavioural problem. If I am asked in an indirect way I am more likely to be able to do something (eg 'dinner is ready' might work, whereas 'please can you come for dinner' will not.) Changing approaches regularly helps too – you could try texting one day?! |
| Mood lability (extreme mood) | I find I can be really enthusiastic and | After doing something exciting and fun, I need to wind down and rest. When I'm |

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| swings) | <p>excited one minute and really quiet and down just a few minutes later.</p> <p>I feel tired and sick quite a lot and don't seem to feel better by thinking about the good times</p> | feeling down or sick I need people to acknowledge how I feel. |
| Plans and lack of routines | <p>I find I like to know plans in advance, but also I hate 'routines'</p> <p>I find variety, flexibility, and being able to control things are important to me</p> | <p>When things are de-personalised it is much easier, so timetables which everyone is following together might be ok for me. Making things fun is helpful too - I sometimes use apps which help me develop good habits.</p> <p>I need people to listen carefully to me.</p> |
| Overload and Choices | At the moment I don't like to be given choices, as I find it hard to take decisions. I'm quite easily overloaded. | I visibly get more anxious when I feel overloaded, so hope that people will understand and give me a bit of time when that happens. I very rarely have meltdowns these days, but if I lose it, I'm most likely to cry and curl up. |
| Affirmation but not praise | <p>I need very regular affirmation, and I appreciate indirect praise.</p> <p>Direct praise for achieving something can</p> | I like it when people, including adults, show an interest in what I am doing, or to listen to me talking. I like it when we agree about things. I can find it difficult when people have a different point of view – I don't like debates these days. |

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| | make me feel bad though. | |
| Impulsivity | I get an idea that I want to do something, often related to my special interests (eg watch something, or buy something) and I get a bit distressed if I cant do it pretty immediately | I don't know how to manage these feelings but I know I need to be able to learn to manage money better in the future. |
| Sensory difficulties | I've become more restricted in my food and drink tolerances in recent years. I don't have much sense of thirst. I don't like very soft fleecy fabrics. I can't touch wet-wipes, soap or use toothpaste. I have trouble brushing my teeth. I sometimes find sounds too loud | I only drink (diet) coke and other fizzy drinks and only drink through a straw. I tend to eat very plain food, such as pasta and sometimes rice and I like soft fruits. I worry that I can't eat enough, but just do what I can when I can at the moment. My sensory difficulties just make it harder to do some of the things I need to do. I can use a flannel, bubble bath, shampoo and deodorant. |
| Difficulty conveying some thoughts | I think it depends on my mood, but | I hope people will have patience with me |

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| | sometimes I find it difficult to express myself. | |
| Easily distracted / tuning out | I can find it very hard to concentrate on things that are not my special interests. | I often use my ipad as a stim toy. Sometimes I can concentrate better if I am using it, so don't assume that because I'm doing something I'm not listening. |
| Tendency to get absorbed in own 'special interests' | When not concentrating it's often because I find it hard to think of anything except my special interests. Sometimes I have no choice – it's my 'safe place' | My interests are specific films, TV shows, and musicals. They are often series that have a fantasy or psychology aspect to them. |
| Difficulty stopping talking | When younger I was often chatty (eg in class) | I hope I don't do this <i>too</i> much... but I appreciate it when people talk with me. |
| Unable to understand what people are thinking or feeling | I've had difficulty understanding my neuro-typical friends which makes me more anxious | I think that I will have fewer problems if spending time with other autistic people – I have autistic friends that I understand well. |
| Have very high levels of anxiety | I find it hard to get to sleep (so often wake late). I get more tired because I don't eat well, I | I cope by listening to music or fiddling with my ipad or watching things. I hope this will decrease over time as I get used to doing more. |

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| | <p>don't like to go out to places very often (but I like to be driven around)</p> | |
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I am also good at these things....

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| <p>Unique ideas and logic</p> | <p>I have a creative mind. I am good at problem solving. I'm logical and can ask questions that give a different perspective. In debates I'm good at seeing all the arguments but know which one is 'right'. (It can be frustrating that others are not so logical!)</p> | |
| <p>Skilled in certain subjects / topics</p> | <p>When I'm enthusiastic and able to focus I am very keen to know more and engage.</p> | <p>I often used to put my hand up in lessons when I was engaged and it made a big difference to me to be allowed to contribute in class and for my effort to be recognised by teachers</p> |
| <p>Strong sense of equality and justice</p> | <p>I'm very passionate about some topics</p> | |
| <p>An interest in grammar</p> | <p>I like to make sure my grammar is good and enjoy the use of interesting</p> | <p>Language is important to me, and I can get upset if people use some terms (eg 'high-' and 'low-functioning') – but I can explain why so this shouldn't be a</p> |

| | words | problem. |
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| Memory of special interests | I have an amazing memory, remembering all the details of my interests and I have a talent for researching and learning new things associated with them. | |
| I care about others | I try to be kind, and while I can't always put other people first, I care about them. | |

Summary

I would like support to:

- Find ways to be able to do things for myself, so one day I can live independently and hopefully be able to work as well.
- Improve my strength and health and ability to concentrate on new things
- Learn to find ways of dealing with my extremes e.g. so I can manage money
- Be encouraged in my enthusiasms