

PDA Strategies

Individual experiences with PDA vary significantly, particularly across different age groups - keep in mind that not every strategy will work for every person with PDA, and that many strategies stop working over time (particularly with children).

- Check if there's more going on than demand avoidance - does the person understand the task? Is there a sensory issue happening? Do they know where to start?
- Rephrase your requests (see next page for suggestions)
- Check if the person would like help, or suggest ways that you can help
- Explain the reasons behind requests, and be ready to accept alternatives that address those reasons
- Accept "no" as an answer whenever possible
- Offer alternatives, or let the person come up with their own
- Turn the task into a role play, a challenge, or a game
- Validate the person's emotional response, and try to help them work through their feelings before and during the task
- Be careful with praise. Praising someone with PDA, or showing excitement when they achieve something, can turn the achievement into an expectation to maintain that standard, or a demand in the sense that it becomes something someone else wants for them. Some people with PDA may love the praise and excitement, while others may need to know you're proud but be unable to handle big reactions, and others may need you to ask how they feel about what they've done.
- **Be ready to negotiate, be ready to listen, and be prepared for tasks to take much longer than you expect!**

Instead of:

Try:

You need to have a shower.

Would you like a shower now, or in ten minutes?

Can you wash your hair please?

Would you like me to wash your hair, or would you like to wash it yourself?

It's time to fold your clothes now.

I have time to help you fold your clothes now, if you like.

You can't go outside now.

It's really cold outside, and I don't want you to get sick - do you want to try jumping up and down to use up some energy instead?

That maths homework needs to be done for tomorrow.

I bet you can't finish your maths homework before I finish doing the dishes!

Please clean your room.

How many toys can you pick up in the next five minutes?

Some more helpful phrases:

- I can see that this is really hard for you.
- Would you like some help?
- Do you need help figuring out the next step?
- Can you help me think of another way around this problem?
- We have three tasks: shower, brushing teeth, and putting pyjamas on. Which one do you want to do first?
- Do you want to take a break and try again in ten minutes?
- I'd really love it if you could help me with the dishes today.
- If you have the time and energy today, would you mind folding those clothes?
- How are you getting on with cleaning your room? Is there anything you need help with?

This resource was written by an autistic author with lived experience of PDA.

For more information see our full PDA resource, or visit www.pdasociety.org.uk