

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
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

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.

	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

	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.

	<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....

<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.
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