



ODD AND PDA

Have you heard of ODD (Oppositional Defiance Disorder) & PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance)? I am seeing more and more children with a dual diagnosis of ASD and ODD & PDA. It is generally agreed PDA is part of the Autism Spectrum Conditions whereas ODD can occur on its own.

Phil Christie, a child psychologist, said *"It is inevitably the case that when conditions are defined by lists of behavioural features there will be interconnections and overlaps. This results in certain aspects of ODD and PDA presenting in a similar ways"*

What is ODD?

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is described by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) as an **ongoing pattern of disobedient, hostile and defiant behaviour toward authority figures** which goes beyond the bounds of normal childhood behaviour. People who have it may appear very stubborn. ODD children may present as negative, defiant, unable to take "no" for an answer, deliberately annoying others, easily annoyed themselves, or blaming others for all that goes wrong. The child's behaviour often disrupts the child's normal daily activities, including activities within the family and at school.

What is PDA?

PDA is characterised by an **extreme avoidance of everyday demands and an anxiety-driven need to be in control**. People often describe children with PDA as unpredictable or 'Jekyll and Hyde' as they can be charming at one moment and angry or distraught at another. Children will often appear charming and more socially able than a child with typical autism, but will struggle to understand the subtleties of social interaction on a deeper level. PDA obsessions tends to be more social in nature, often about a particular person. They often have a "best friend" who they won't let play or work with other children in the class.

What you might see with either ODD or PDA

- Refuses to do what is asked
- Always answers with “No”
- Talks back
- Deliberately ignores instructions
- Won’t participate in activities
- Makes own rules
- Angers very easily
- Stuck in negative thought patterns
- Has strong likes and dislikes but often can’t tell you why
- Withdrawing into fantasy world
- Giving excuses like ‘I’m tired’ or complaining of physical impairment ‘my hand hurts’



Although there is some debate over whether ODD and PDA are different disorders or the same, I find similar strategies seem to be effective for both

11 Quick Tips For Supporting Students with ODD/PDA

- 1 **Choose your battles.** As soon as you find yourself in conflict ask “Is conflict going to resolve or escalate the situation?”
- 2 **Try distracting the child** to something else in a very calm voice.
- 3 **Try to catch the child doing LOTS of great things.** Even if they sit still for one second, tell them “great sitting” as soon as they do the right thing!
- 4 **Let them be your special helper** or give special jobs
- 5 **NEVER take what they say personally** (yes we know that sometimes what they say is awful – killing, hurting, etc., but what they want the most is a reaction so don’t react!)
- 6 **Remember that strategies will wear out very quickly,** and when they do, move on to another strategy.
- 7 Children with ODD have a strong resistance to change. Any changes can cause a lot of anxiety, so **look at strategies to help them manage their anxiety.**
- 8 **Offer clear choices** with set boundaries
- 9 Break tasks and activities into **small achievable steps**
- 10 **Find small ways to connect and build a relationship with them.** Start with talking about things they love or are interested in
- 11 **Use physical prompts rather than directly asking them to do something.** E.g. point to what work they need to do, rather than telling them to do it. (refer to pg 6 on why visuals are so important)

SUPER SHAMLAL

LIVING AND LEARNING WITH PATHOLOGICAL DEMAND AVOIDANCE

by Kay Al-Ghani and Haitham Al-Ghani



Shamlal the Camel finds it almost impossible to do all the normal, everyday things that the other camels do. Her first word was 'NO!' and this is still the word she repeats the most through every day. Luckily, Shamlal's parents take her to a psychologist who explains that she has PDA, and gives her tips for how to live and learn with the syndrome.

This simple, illustrated storybook will help children aged 7-11 with PDA to recognise its features, and develop tools to support them. A helpful introduction for parents and carers explains how it feels to live with the panic attacks and general anxiety that are caused by living with PDA, and the appendices at the back provide useful strategies to be adopted at school and at home.

➤ Price \$33.95

COLLABORATIVE APPROACHES TO LEARNING FOR PUPILS WITH PDA

STRATEGIES FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

By: Ruth Fidler, Phil Christie

Educational environments can present challenges for children with Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), who require different strategies than children with a more straightforward presentation of autism, and schools frequently find themselves struggling to meet their complex needs. In this guide PDA experts Ruth Fidler and Phil Christie outline effective strategies for supporting pupils with PDA in education settings.

Including a useful overview of PDA, this book outlines the impact of this diagnostic profile on learning, and explains why Collaborative Approaches to Learning is such a successful method for supporting pupils with PDA. It shows how teaching professionals can get started with this approach, with advice for implementing key strategies to overcome common challenges.

➤ Price \$4.025

