

Further things to do:

Set clear individual learning targets for the child and use any opportunity to reinforce them. In school, lesson objectives may become unachievable when the child actively avoids them. At these times the adult's focus becomes about managing potentially explosive situations and attempts to pursue the lesson objectives are often necessarily abandoned. When this happens the adult can try to make the most of the situation by using any opportunity to introduce target related learning into the child's activity. E.g. A child with an interest in dinosaurs and a target of being able to count to ten could be encouraged to count the number of dinosaurs in a book or other resource.

TEN THINGS TO DO GUIDES

These are designed to provide a brief introduction only. Further advice and resources can be found on the website:

happylearners.info

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TEN THINGS TO Do

to support children with

PDA



1

Keep calm and try to keep body language neutral.

PDA children are very good at reading people and use this to manipulate or escalate the situation.

2

Be indirect when giving instructions. Hide demands by using statements that describe what needs to change. For example – *'Close the door'* becomes *'The door is open'*.

3

Intentionally complicate language in instructions.

Processing complex sentences can distract the PDA child from the demand hidden within it. For example – *'It's time for reading'* becomes *'When we've found your reading book we'll have time to enjoy it together'*.

4

Use novelty to distract or calm. PDA children are generally curious and can sometimes be distracted when a new situation, person or interesting object is presented.

5

Use their interests to distract and maintain attention. PDA children often have specific focussed interests. These can sometimes be used to gain some cooperation and concentration on adult directed tasks.

6

Be flexible and make the most of the situation.

Children with PDA are experts in avoiding demands and so things will often not go to plan. Adults need to be able to 'go with the flow' and adapt to changing circumstances.

7

Reduce pressure around demands. Try to make doing a request a very casual, ordinary and unhurried experience. Use reassuring comments such as 'You have as much time as you need.' 'It doesn't matter how you do it'.

8

Transfer the demand to them. Encourage the child with PDA to come up with the next step themselves. For example - *'Now you need to put your coat on'* becomes *'What do you think we need to do now?'*

9

Create silly challenges. For example - *'I bet you can't finish before I say "Hibbily Dibbily Do" three times'* or *'I don't think there is anyone in the whole universe who can do this sum.'* Avoid trying to get the child to compete with others as this may increase anxiety.

10

Depersonalise rules. PDA children are more likely to comply with requests that are established as coming from a higher authority than the adult saying them. For example - *'This is a school rule'* or *'It is the law.'*