

Doing Neurofeedback: An Introduction

Pathological Demand Avoidance is usually associated with autism, but it can also affect people with ADHD. Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) is a profile associated with autism and ADHD. If you have PDA, you may find it challenging to carry out demands, even if you want to. You might go to extreme lengths to avoid complying with demands of all kinds. PDA is also called Extreme Demand Avoidance. To others, a person with PDA might seem like they're being deliberately antagonistic or rebellious. But PDA isn't a choice, and treatment is generally necessary to manage demand avoidance behaviors.

What is pathological demand avoidance? Pathological demand avoidance is a term that was coined by Professor Elizabeth Newson in the 1980s. It's a proposed subtype of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), but it's also seen in people with ADHD. Additionally, this behavior can appear in both adults and children. PDA is not recognized as a condition by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition, text revision (DSM-5-TR) or the 10th revision of the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10). According to the PDA Society, it's understood to be a profile on the autism spectrum. But according to a 2018 study, there's no consensus on whether PDA is a separate condition from autism or a set of related symptoms. People with PDA may go to extreme lengths to avoid complying with demands. This demand avoidance is associated with high levels of anxiety. These demands can be: External : imposed by others, like a deadline or an instruction from a teacher.

: imposed by others, like a deadline or an instruction from a teacher. Internal : imposed by yourself, like a plan you've decided to follow.

: imposed by yourself, like a plan you've decided to follow. Explicit : such as a direct demand.

: such as a direct demand. Implicit: such as a polite request or unspoken expectation. Not only might people with PDA reject doing things they don't find interesting, but they also may avoid their favorite activities and hobbies. Although this can be frustrating for others, it's important to remember that PDA isn't a choice.

Relationship between pathological demand avoidance and ADHD According to PDA Society, there are anecdotal reports that many people with PDA also meet the diagnostic criteria for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), but more research is needed to establish whether there is any connection. Generally, the traits associated with PDA can overlap with the traits associated with ASD. The connection between ADHD and PDA might be because ADHD and autism often co-occur together. To others, ADHD might seem like PDA and vice-versa. Both ADHD and PDA can cause executive dysfunction: both can make it difficult to initiate tasks, complete tasks, and control impulses. But, with PDA, people avoid demands simply because they are demands. Although people with ADHD might avoid demands from time to time, extreme demand avoidance isn't a typical symptom of ADHD. A 2020 study found that ADHD was a better predictor of PDA than autism. In other words, ADHD might have a stronger relationship to PDA than

P

autism. But more research is needed to explore this connection.

Pathological demand avoidance symptoms Although PDA isn't recognized by diagnostic manuals, the PDA Society has established a few key features of PDA. The symptoms of PDA are as follows: resisting and avoiding ordinary demands

using social strategies to avoid demands

obsessive behavior, often focused on other people

being superficially sociable but lacking depth in understanding

impulsivity

excessive mood swings The PDA Society notes that PDA presents differently in different people. Everybody with PDA is different; some people might find certain demands easier to cope with than others. Additionally, PDA can be more extreme in some people than others. ADHD symptoms In addition to the features of PDA mentioned above, someone can experience symptoms of ADHD. There are three main types of ADHD symptoms: inattentive

hyperactive-impulsive

combined (both inattentive and hyperactivity-impulsivity symptoms) The symptoms of inattentive ADHD include: difficulty paying close attention to detail

difficulty sticking with or finishing tasks

difficulty following instructions

challenges with staying organized

difficulty with time management

memory problems

easily being distracted The symptoms of hyperactive-impulsive ADHD include: fidgeting and restlessness

impulsiveness

interrupting others often

having difficulty waiting or sitting still

a need to keep moving Combined ADHD can include a mixture of all of the above symptoms.

Is there a relationship between pathological demand avoidance and autism? PDA is often considered a profile on the autism spectrum, meaning that some people who meet the criteria for ASD have the traits of PDA. The PDA Society notes that people with PDA might have an ASD diagnosis that "doesn't quite fit." Or, they might be close to but don't actually meet the ASD diagnostic criteria. Although most people with PDA meet the criteria for an autism diagnosis, the PDA society notes that people with PDA tend to have: superficially better social skills (including feeling more comfortable with eye contact) than most people with autism

fewer repetitive behaviors and less obvious routines than most people with autism

interests that may be intense but are not as long-standing as the "special interests" many people with autism It's important to note that not everybody with PDA is autistic, and not everybody who is autistic fits the PDA profile. PDA autism symptoms The PDA Society notes that people with a PDA profile of autism: Experience persistent difficulties with social interaction.

Engage in restricted, repetitive patterns of activities or interests that impair everyday functioning.

Are sensitive to sensory experiences.

Have an anxiety-related need for control.

Go to extremes to avoid demands and expectations, including things they want to do.

Tend not to respond to conventional parenting or teaching approaches.

How is pathological demand avoidance diagnosed? Because PDA isn't recognized by the DSM-5-TR or the ICD-10, there aren't any universal diagnostic criteria. In 2013, PDA researchers developed the "Extreme Demand Avoidance Questionnaire" (EDA-Q) to measure the behavior of autistic and adolescents. The questionnaire is used for research purposes and is based on parental reports of their children's behavior. As such, the EDA-Q is not a diagnostic tool.

Reference

[Intuitive Biostatistics: A Nonmathematical Guide to Statistical Thinking
Research Methods, Design, and Analysis](#)