



Neuropsychology  
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## About Me: Understanding My Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) Worksheet

By Dr. Huffman, Neurodivergent Neuropsychologist and Fellow PDA'er

This "About Me" guide is designed to help individuals with PDA *across the lifespan* understand themselves better, reflect on their experiences, and identify strategies for success. It is neurodiversity-affirming and encourages self-reflection, connection, and personal growth. This "About Me" guide is a living document. Feel free to update it as you grow and learn more about yourself. Remember, understanding and embracing your PDA profile is a journey, and you are not alone. There are people and resources available to support you every step of the way. It is possible to be neurodivergent and thrive.

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### Personal Information

- **Name:**
- **Age:**
- **Preferred Pronouns:**
- **Date:**

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### Understanding Myself

#### 1. My PDA Profile:

- **How do I experience demand avoidance?**
- **What are some common demands I find challenging?**
- **Reflection:** Is my demand avoidance helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

#### 2. My Social Strategies:

- **What social strategies do I use to manage demands (e.g., distraction, negotiation, charm)?**
- **How do these strategies help me?**
- **Reflection:** Are my social strategies helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 3. My Mood and Emotions:

- **How do my moods change in response to demands?**
- **What helps me manage my emotions?**
- **Reflection:** Are my mood and emotional responses helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 4. My Interests and Obsessions:

- **What are my intense interests or obsessions?**
- **How do these interests help me feel in control and manage anxiety?**
- **Reflection:** Are my interests and obsessions helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 5. My Role Play and Pretend:

- **Do I enjoy role play or pretending to be someone else?**
- **How does this help me cope with real-life demands?**
- **Reflection:** Is my role play and pretending helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

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## Self-Reflection

### 1. Current Obstacles:

- **What are the biggest challenges I face at home, school, or work?**
- **How do these obstacles affect my daily life?**
- **Reflection:** Are these challenges helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 2. Next Steps:

- **What are my goals for the near future?**
- **What steps can I take to achieve these goals?**
- **Reflection:** Are my next steps helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

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### 3. People I Am Connected With:

- **Who are the important people in my life (family, friends, teachers, colleagues)?**
- **How do these connections support me?**
- **Reflection:** Are my connections helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 4. My Interests:

- **What activities or topics am I passionate about?**
- **How can I incorporate these interests into my daily routine?**
- **Reflection:** Are my interests helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

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## My Needs for Success

### 1. At Home:

- **What do I need to feel comfortable and successful at home?**
- **How can my family support me?**
- **Reflection:** Are my needs at home helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 2. At School:

- **What accommodations or supports do I need to succeed at school?**
- **How can my teachers and classmates help me?**
- **Reflection:** Are my needs at school helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 3. At Work:

- **What accommodations or supports do I need to succeed at work?**
- **How can my colleagues and supervisors support me?**
- **Reflection:** Are my needs at work helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

## My Drive for Autonomy

### 1. Autonomy and Control:

- **How important is it for me to have control over my own life?**
- **What choices and decisions do I want to make for myself?**
- **Reflection:** Is my drive for autonomy helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

### 2. Supporting My Autonomy:

- **How can others support my need for autonomy?**
- **What strategies help me feel more in control and less anxious?**
- **Reflection:** Are the strategies for supporting my autonomy helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

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## Seeking Support

### 1. Neurodiversity-Affirming Providers:

- **What It Means:** Seek out healthcare and educational professionals who affirm and support neurodiversity, recognizing and valuing the unique strengths and challenges of individuals with PDA.
- **Why It Helps:** Neurodiversity-affirming providers can offer more personalized and respectful support, promoting a positive self-identity.
- **Reflection:** Are my providers helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 2. Neuropsychological Evaluation:

- **What It Means:** Consider a comprehensive neuropsychological evaluation to better understand the individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral profile.
- **Why It Helps:** This evaluation can provide valuable insights and guide the development of tailored strategies and supports.
- **Reflection:** Is my neuropsychological evaluation helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

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### 3. Therapy Focused on Connection, Engagement, and Support:

- **What It Means:** Engage in therapies that prioritize your agency and authentic self, such as autistic-focused cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or occupational therapy, with a focus on supporting your autonomy and self-expression. It's important to note that individuals with PDA do not need treatment for being neurodivergent, but we can often benefit from connection, engagement, and support to not feel isolated or alone. This is also true for parents and loved ones.
- **Why It Helps:** Such therapies can help the individual develop coping strategies and navigate daily demands while honoring their true self. Treatment is particularly needed for the emotional health complications that arise from being PDA and not understanding oneself or being in environments that are too demanding and where the individual is often misunderstood. Accommodations are often needed for attention, processing, or learning differences.
- **Reflection:** Is my therapy helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

### 4. Educational Support:

- **What It Means:** Work with the school to develop an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 Plan that includes accommodations for PDA. For adults in school, request ADA accommodations through the disability department.
- **Why It Helps:** School accommodations can provide the support needed to succeed academically and socially.
- **Reflection:** Is my educational support helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

### 5. Workplace Accommodations:

- **What It Means:** Discuss with employers the possibility of reasonable accommodations, such as flexible work hours or a quiet workspace.
  - **Why It Helps:** Workplace accommodations can help manage anxiety and improve productivity.
  - **Reflection:** Are my workplace accommodations helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?
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## Understanding the Underlying Areas Impacting PDA

### 1. High Anxiety and Drive for Autonomy:

- **What It Means:** PDA is characterized by high anxiety and a strong drive for autonomy, leading to extreme avoidance of everyday demands.
- **Why It Helps:** Understanding these underlying factors can help tailor strategies to reduce anxiety and support autonomy.
- **Reflection:** Is my understanding of anxiety and autonomy helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

### 2. Social Awareness and Strategies:

- **What It Means:** Individuals with PDA are often very socially aware and use various strategies to manage demands.
- **Why It Helps:** Recognizing these strategies can help in developing supportive approaches that respect the individual's social skills.
- **Reflection:** Is my social awareness and strategies helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 3. Mood Swings and Emotional Responses:

- **What It Means:** Rapid mood changes and impulsive behaviors are common in PDA, often as a response to anxiety and stress.
- **Why It Helps:** Understanding these emotional responses can guide the development of coping strategies and emotional support.
- **Reflection:** Are my mood swings and emotional responses helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 4. Role Play and Pretend:

- **What It Means:** Many individuals with PDA find comfort in role play and pretending, which helps them manage real-life demands.
- **Why It Helps:** Encouraging role play can provide a safe outlet for managing anxiety and gaining control over situations.
- **Reflection:** Is my role play and pretending helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

## 5. Obsessive Behaviors and Interests:

- **What It Means:** Intense interests or obsessions can provide comfort and a sense of control for individuals with PDA.
- **Why It Helps:** Building on these interests can make demands more manageable and engaging.
- **Reflection:** Are my obsessive behaviors and interests helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

## 6. Executive Functioning:

- **What It Means:** Executive functioning involves skills like planning, organization, time management, and self-regulation.
- **Why It Helps:** Understanding executive functioning challenges can help in developing strategies to improve task completion and reduce overwhelm.
- **Reflection:** Is my executive functioning helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

## 7. Processing:

- **What It Means:** Processing refers to how individuals take in, understand, and respond to information.
- **Why It Helps:** Recognizing processing differences can guide the use of clear, concise communication and allow for additional time to process information.
- **Reflection:** Is my processing ability helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?

## 8. Sensory Sensitivities:

- **What It Means:** Sensory sensitivities involve heightened or reduced sensitivity to sensory input (e.g., light, sound, texture).
- **Why It Helps:** Creating a sensory-friendly environment can reduce anxiety and improve comfort and focus.
- **Reflection:** Are my sensory sensitivities helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

## My Personal Affirmations

### 1. Strengths and Abilities:

- **What are my unique strengths and abilities?**
- **How can I use these strengths to overcome challenges?**
- **Reflection:** Are my strengths and abilities helping me thrive and live authentically, or are they obstacles that need support?

### 2. Positive Self-Identity:

- **How do I view myself in a positive light?**
- **What affirmations or reminders help me stay confident and self-assured?**
- **Reflection:** Is my positive self-identity helping me thrive and live authentically, or is it an obstacle that needs support?