

Course Outline

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) Professionals

Unit 1: Beyond Traditional Approaches

Session 1: Decoding PDA Behaviours

1. Understanding PDA Dynamics

What is PDA and how does it differ from other profiles?

What counts as a “demand”? Exploring the three types.

What’s happening in the brain during demand avoidance?

2. Recognising PDA Characteristics

Where PDA comes from: history and current understanding.

Internalised vs externalised presentations of PDA.

Equalising behaviours — and why they matter.

Understanding demand avoidance in context (with animation).

PDA vs OCD / ODD — exploring overlaps and misdiagnoses.

Diagnosis: why it helps, what it looks like, and common barriers.

3. The Impacts of PDA

How PDA affects day-to-day life (with animation).

Internal vs external experiences of struggle.

Parenting a PDA child: honest reflections and lived experiences.

Understanding PDA burnout in both child and parent.

Recognising your own limitations and capacity.

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Session 2: Supporting My PDA Child at Home & in Education

1. Polyvagal Theory & Regulation

What is Polyvagal Theory — and why does it matter for PDA?

How your child reads safety (Neuroception).

Introducing the Safe and Sound Protocol.

Supporting your child's nervous system in daily life.

2. Creating Felt Safety

What is “felt safety”?

How to create a sense of safety at home and in education.

Real-life examples of building trust and emotional safety.

Being mindful of praise — why it can feel like pressure.

3. The Low Demand Approach

What does it really mean to use low-demand strategies?

How to apply this approach in everyday home routines.

Using declarative language (and why it helps) – with optional animation.

Specific examples: navigating meal times, food sensitivities, and more.

4. Threshold of Tolerance

What is a PDA child's “Threshold of Tolerance”?

Understanding the difference between capacity and tolerance — and why it matters.

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5. Before, During & After a Meltdown

Co-regulation strategies to prevent escalation.

In-the-moment support techniques.

Four practical meltdown response tools for externalising PDAers.

What to do afterwards — helping your child (and yourself) recover.

Communication strategies for post-meltdown connection.

6. Lived Experience Matters

What this really looks like in family life — three real-life examples.

When things get harder before they get better.

Being blamed for your child's behaviour.

Navigating treatment options and support.

Facing barriers to care.

PDA and bullying — what to watch for and how to respond.

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Unit 2: Managing Educational Needs

1. Educational Options for PDAers

Why many PDAers struggle to attend school.

Understanding alternatives: home education, flexi-schooling, unschooling.

Benefits and challenges of non-traditional education.

Choosing what works best for your child — and for you.

2. Teaching a PDAer at Home

What needs to be in place before learning can happen.

Creating a safe and supportive learning environment.

Strewing: what it is and how to use it effectively.

Daily planning: using flexible routines to reduce anxiety.

Why traditional autism strategies might not work for PDA.

Considering comorbidities and learning needs — and what to prioritise.

3. Additional Resources & Practical Tools

Creating flexible, collaborative learning timetables.

How to present tasks in a way that feels safe and empowering.

Using praise without pressure.

Behaviour policies — why they often fail PDAers.

Emotional and physical regulation during learning.

Signposting to further reading, tools, and community support