Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome (PDA)

By James Abela

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Symptoms

- Obsessionally resist demands
- Passive early history
- Other obsessional behaviour
- Actively passive
- Wild mood swings
- Comfortable in role play
- Sociable at a shallow level


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Findings - Task Design

- Prefers to handle images rather than text. Use Mindmaps / diagrams
- Does not like extended writing or reading
- Break down writing tasks to smaller chunks
- Reduce challenge of tasks

Some students may prefer role-play / pretend.
Findings – Body language

- Developing relationships – Difficult
- Keep calm, actively seeks conflict
- Less eye contact, work beside or slightly behind child. Avoid positions that suggest conflict
Findings - Communication

- Responds to Praise
- Indirect motivators
- Don’t use complicated language
- Does not listen to whole class instruction very well
- Choice, but make it limited

“Do you think you can design a PowerPoint slide?”
Balance

Left completely alone will go off task

Too much supervision and he will use it as an opportunity to object
Further Info

- Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome Contact Group
  http://www.pdacontact.org.uk/

- National Autistic Society
  http://www.nas.org.uk/

- Pathological demand avoidance syndrome paper (Subscription required)
  http://adc.bmj.com/content/88/7/595.abstract