

# PDA- Pervasive Demand For Autonomy

A guide to anxiety driven demand avoidance



By Catrina Lowri

## Who?

Catrina Lowri; experienced SENCO, qualified SEND teacher and founder of Neuroteachers. I am Neurodiverse myself; dyslexic and bipolar.

## What?

We will begin with introduction to PDA. Discuss how this affects behaviour in the classroom and at home and how the educators and parents can support this.

A Neuroteachers Perspective

**We will talk about the**

**This will include:**

- What is PDA – terminology, research and definition**
- PDA as an autism profile?**
- What you will see in the classroom**
- Issues for Parents and Schools**
- PDA as an ND**
- Differentiation for PDA**
- Classroom tactics – being consistently in consistent**
- Planning for your child in mind**
- Q and A**

**What we will cover  
today**



Your 'learner in mind'

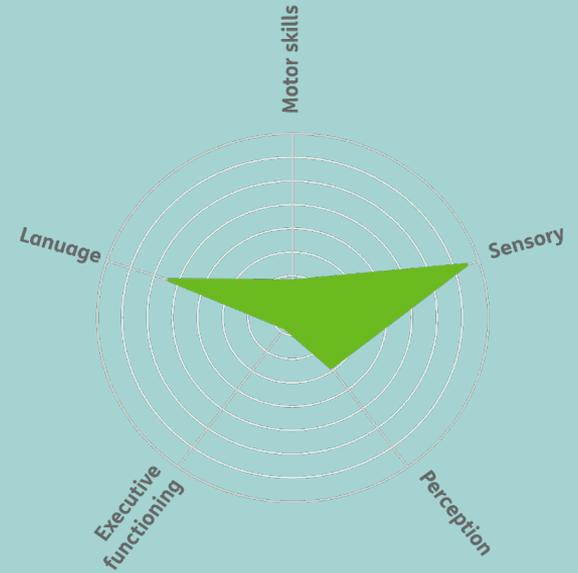


# What is autism?

Autism is referred to as a 'spectrum' because each child experiences autism differently. There is no 'typical' autistic child. Every autistic individual has their own strengths and differences, their own life journey, and their own unique story.

Less  
autistic

More  
autistic



What autism really looks like

# Autism really looks like

- Language
- Motor Skills
- Sensory
- Perception
- Executive Functioning

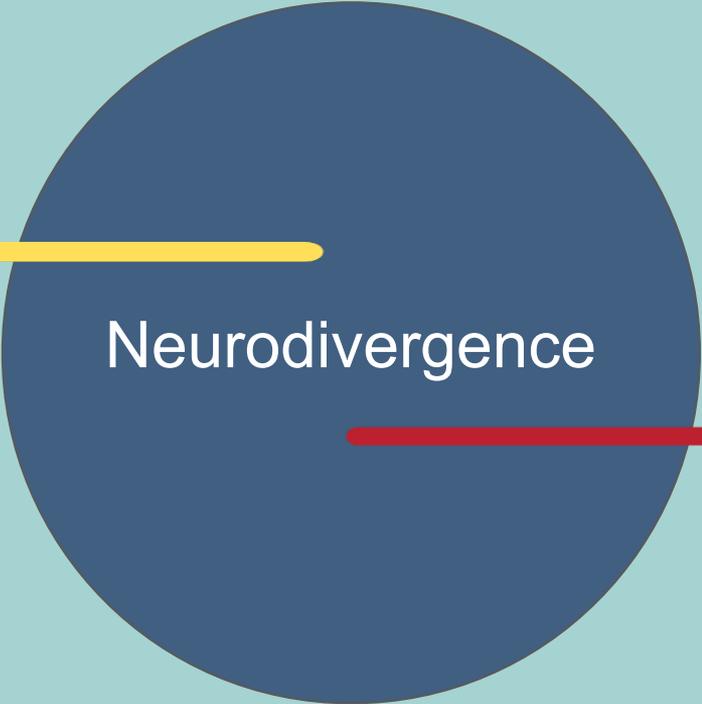


**This includes**

\*All hereditary conditions which cause a difference in neurology

\*All hereditary mental health conditions

\*All acquired neurological difference such as those caused by injury



# Neurodivergence

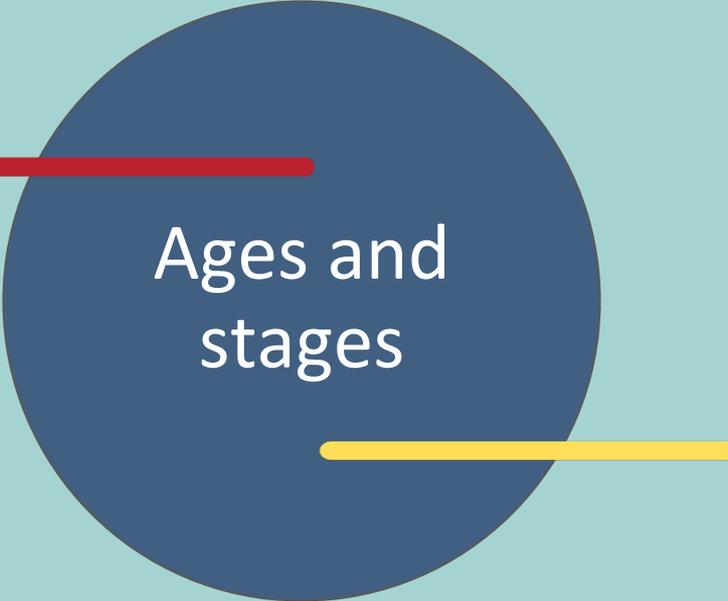
# The Fruit Salad Approach



## Pause for Reflection

- What did you know before that you now see differently?





# Ages and stages



# Demand Avoidant Profile



You may have heard the term Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) or Demand Avoidant profile being used to describe autism. The existence of PDA as a 'diagnostic term' and how it fits within the autism spectrum is widely debated.

You can find further information about this topic on the NAS website and PDA website – links in delegate pack.





Trauma



# PDA Research?

- Richard Wood and Damian Milton and both autistic researchers who are deeply critical of the term and notion on PDA. They argue that this is 'culture bound concept'.
- Milton refers to this as ' Rational Demand Avoidance' (2021)
- Woods refers to these behaviours as DAP ( Demand Avoidant Phenomenon
- Both argue that PDA is not a subset of autism but may be a form of attachment disorder or a personality disorder
- They argue that much of the research is based on caregiver responses and that this is inherently biased.



# What will you see in the classroom?

- Delaying
- Distracting
- Negotiating
- Charming Making excuses
- Falling to the ground
- Shouting
- Explosive behaviour



# Break time

- Take a short break



# Issues for parents and teachers

Those who exhibit traits of EDA are often the most challenging due to their high level of anxiety which can manifest as extremes of behaviour  
Yet it not an official diagnosis on either DSMV or ICD 10.

It was included by Wing et al (2002) in their Diagnostic Interview for Social Communication Disorder (DISCO)

The concept of EDA is well known amongst educators



## Sensory processing

The brain processes all the sensory information sent from various sensory systems in the body and helps to organise, prioritise and understand the information.

Question: how many senses are there?

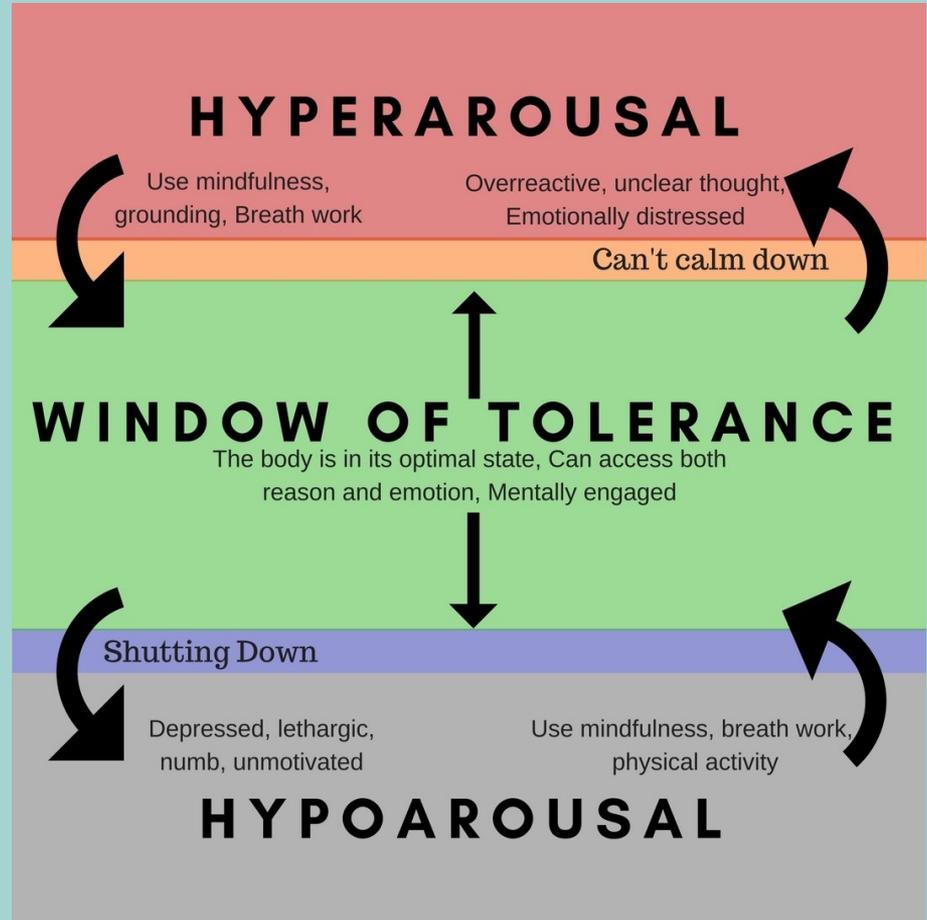




# The 8 senses

- Smell
- Sight
- Touch
- Hearing
- Proprioception
- Vestibular ( balance)
  - Interception
  - Taste

# The window of tolerance



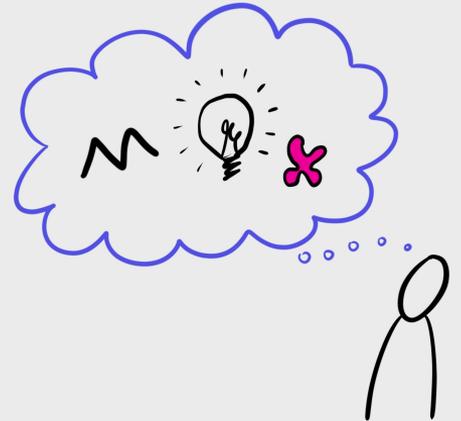
# Executive Function

- Impulse control,
- emotional control,
- Flexible thinking,
- Self motivation,
- organization,
- planning and prioritizing,
- Task initiation ,
- Working memory



# Processing

- This takes time



# Educational Outcomes

- (Gore Langton 2013a)
- From an educational point of view individuals with the characteristics of EDA can call into question all that teachers and support staff understand about autism.
- Persistent absence 25%
- Exclusion from 1 or more settings 69%



# Pedological Tact

Herbert 1804



- ‘A tactful teacher will be able to accurately assess the needs of the individuals in the classroom and make appropriate decisions to allow the students to make the most out of the lesson’ ( Patry, Gastager and Fageeth 2018)

# Differentiation strategies

<u>Strategy</u>	<u>Description</u>
<b>Adjust rate</b>	More time to process, to complete a task, to demonstrate knowledge
<b>Adjust volume</b>	Change amount of material to process or produce
<b>Adjust complexity</b>	Change number of details or complicated ideas to create or interpret
<b>Staging of tasks</b>	Tasks completed in logical steps or increments instead of all at once
<b>Prioritisation</b>	Certain task components are stressed or de-emphasised during a complex activity or task
<b>Change presentation format</b>	Information is presented in a way that pupil can process more effectively, e.g. more visual medium
<b>Change production format</b>	Pupil is allowed to demonstrate competency using a different medium
<b>Change evaluation system</b>	Performance is assessed differently for the pupil, e.g. P scales descriptors
<b>Use of support or aids</b>	Specific tools are used to facilitate learning or output e.g. laptop



# Can you be consistently inconsistent?

Make a list of 10 things which keep your learner in the green zone

Try and match your response to the behaviour



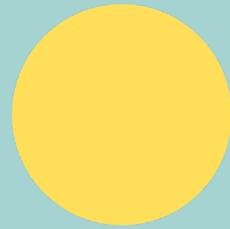
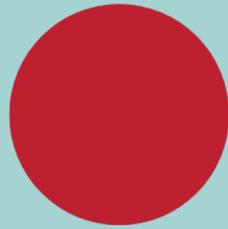
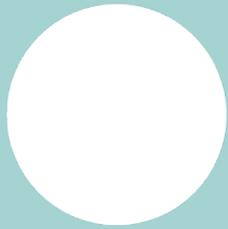
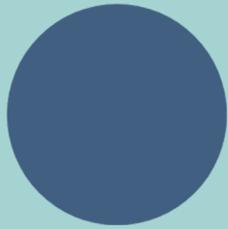


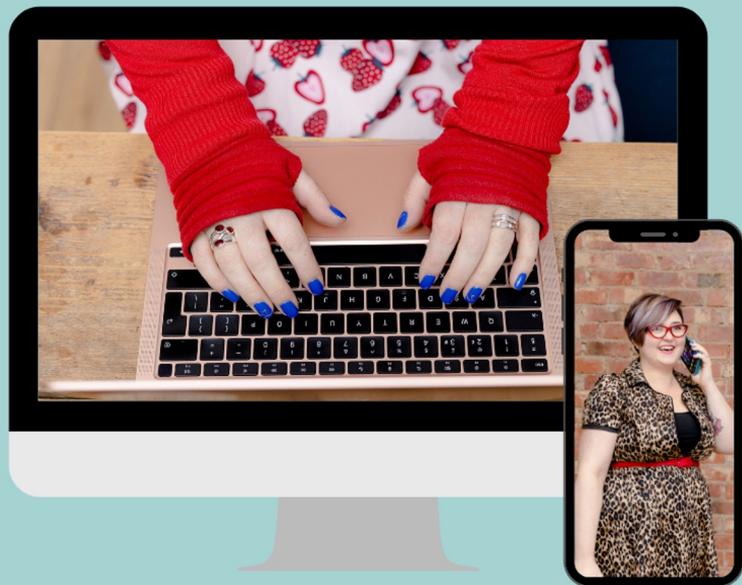
# Classroom tactics

How do approaches vary between autism and PDA?

- Use indirect language ‘ I wonder if...’
- Allow take up time  
‘Plant the seed of what you would like to happen at the start of the session, but don’t expect it to happen straight away.’
- Use the child’s interests  
‘ what would Darth Vader do in this situation?’
- Give the child choices.  
Give the child a sense that they have control
- Use humour  
If you feel the tension rising, humour is a fantastic distraction. You could try making jokes, using physical humour (exaggerated facial expressions, or silly walks), being silly or feigning ignorance
- Use distraction  
Distraction can be a handy way to temporarily press ‘pause’ and ease the child’s anxiety.

# Any Questions?





# Neuroteachers

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