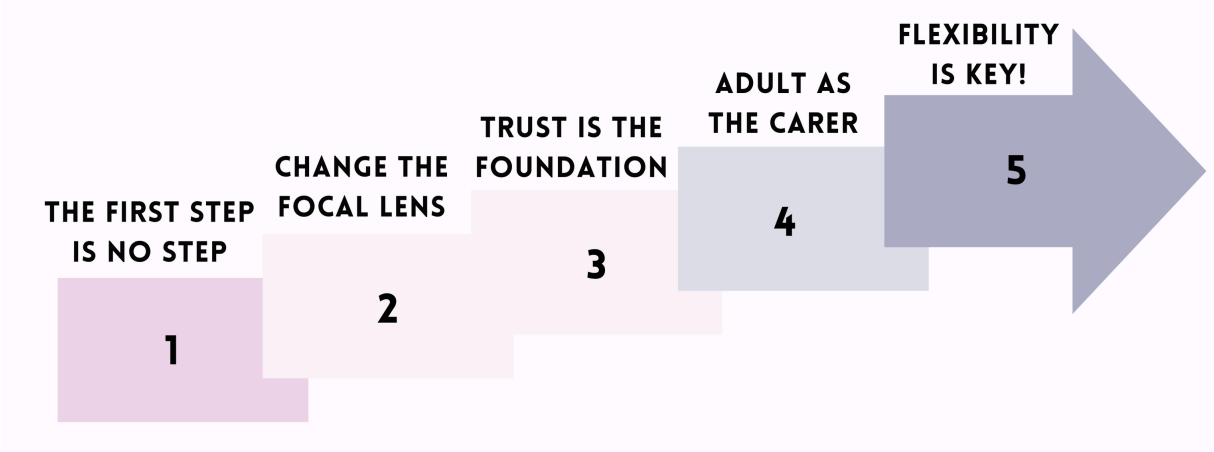
# PDA PARENTING

*Documents to support PDA families*

# HOW CAN WE BETTER SUPPORT PDA CHILDREN IN A SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT?

Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) is a profile on the autism spectrum characterised by an individual's **extreme avoidance** of **everyday demands and expectations**, due to anxiety-based behaviours. Creating the right environment and approach for a PDA learner is crucial to their development, well-being, and academic success. Here is a guide to help you navigate this process.

We have created a quick overview which we have simplified into five easy steps:




## The first step is no step

The moment you approach a PDA learner it is a demand which, simply speaking, will feel like a threat to the child's autonomy. Understanding that we naturally create a demand avoidant response is essential to the first step which is no step! Just being present and meeting the child collaboratively will ensure a smoother relationship is created. In other words, we need to let go of any agendas so that we are not creating further demands on the child.

## Change the focal lens

We have to change our approach and see that our children **can't** help that they **won't** be able to do the things that we may ask of them as well as the internal demands they put onto themselves. Supporting this process builds a better dynamic and begins to create useful strategies that can work together.

## Trust is the foundation

To create any meaningful relationship with a PDA learner you need to build their trust first - remember your actions will never be forgotten! Taking a moment to model it when our emotions get the better of us will help to make the child feel that the adults around them are safe. This is so important on a nervous system that doesn't behave in the way that is typical and is always responding in a highly stressful way.

## Adult as 'carer'

The quicker we see ourselves as guides or mentors the better! I have found that all adults should be seen as carers - not teachers, leaders or dictators - so that the playing field is equal. Learning to work **with** instead of being in **control** of the child is fundamental to the whole shift in respecting the child's autonomy and ability to learn by themselves.

## Flexibility is key!

What works one day won't work the next. We need to understand the child's tolerance to everyday demands which will vary depending on many factors. It's our responsibility to be flexible and adapt as best we can and sometimes that might mean just focusing on the high priorities to manage very little demands. Adapting and being supportive will create a positive impact on the child and the environment that they need to grow in.

**Here at PDA Parenting, we speak regularly at conferences, events and webinars, as well as by sharing information and resources online for families and professionals. We have two books available on our website and invite you to sign up for our regular newsletter which is free and provides further information and news.**

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