

PDA in the Early Years

Demand Avoidance

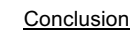
One of the main characteristics of PDA is a high level of anxiety when children feel they are having demands placed upon them, this is a trigger for their anxiety (The National Autistic Society, 2018). Every day demands can be anything and can be what the child actually wants to do, it is the way it is worded to them that can make them see it as a demand. Although this type of behaviour can be seen in the development of the majority of children, it is the extent and nature of this avoidance that makes it stand out (The National Autistic Society, 2018). Children with PDA can avoid doing something by straight forward refusal or at times show outbursts of behaviour and aggression with a sudden onset of screaming, shouting, throwing things or physically lashing out. Practitioners must treat this outburst of behaviour as a panic attack, it must be remembered that children are not acting this way because they do not want to do something, it is because their anxiety prevents them to do it (PDA Society, 2018).

One to One Teaching Assistant Support

Critique

Barriers to education

Many children with PDA struggle with school attendance due to their high anxiety. It is common for parents to be expected to force their children into school, often resulting in the child having a meltdown. Many children struggle with attendance due to practitioners not knowing how to speak with them and understanding their difficulties. Seventy percent of these children are now home educated as a result (PDA Society, 2018). Many children also struggle as practitioners fail to recognize that children are experiencing difficulties, the invisible barrier of anxiety and demand avoidance is forgotten and practitioners assume that the child is refusing to engage or are 'being naughty' (Syson and Langton, No date).



It is clear there are a number of children struggling to access education due to high anxiety levels and the demand avoidant profile of PDA. More awareness of PDA is needed and teaching assistants need to have the training to enable them to better cope with the children. Suitable training and highly trained teaching assistants will enable many children access to an education that they are currently not receiving.

Further Reading.

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