



Practical approaches to working with Children who demonstrate PDA **Characteristics**

Useful Phrases-indirect speech

“I wonder if anyone can help me with this?”

“ I wish I knew someone who could help me with x task”.

“I wonder how we can get this done?”

“Would you like to do x or y tasks?”

“ Would you like to do it sitting here or upstairs?”

“Would you like to do it at x or y time?”

“You chose, what can I do to help you?”

“What would x character do in this situation?”

Use games- to distract from the demand of a task or journey

“Can you do this task in this time limit?”

How would a character do this?

To help distract on journeys/transitions- write a game on a laminated challenge card (add pictures of a favourite character e.g. Scooby Doo challenge card)- how many x can you see on the journey, how many steps to the end of the road?

Information can also be made into games e.g. in the form of a quiz or challenge. Use motivating images where possible.

Avoid competition with others when using games.

Choices



Give limited choices e.g. a choice of 2 or 3 things. This gives the child a feeling of being in control.
Give lots of opportunities for children to make choices e.g. food, activities and display these visually in words or pictures where possible, to depersonalise it and make it an indirect demand. Give them a piece of paper or Velcro strip to write/out their choices on, rather than give to you directly.

Praise

Giving direct praise in speech can take away a child's power and sense of control.

Try indirect praise-

"I'm going to let x (e.g. a relative) know how well your game went". Or, let them overhear you telling someone else how well they did.

Let them know that someone else commented on how well they did.

Leave a reward on a table with a note referring to how well they did.

Have a toy whisper in your ear and say this out loud e.g. teddy is saying he can't believe how well you did that puzzle.

Give them a clue to where a reward may be or where they might find a key to unlock a box with a reward inside, this makes it into a game and avoids you giving them the reward directly and them losing a sense of power.

Praise the behaviour/event rather than the child e.g. "looks like that spelling test went well".

Other ways to place demands

If you have to give a direct verbal demand, say it in a calm voice and body language and walk away for a minute. Standing waiting for a response increases pressure.

Put a 'post it' near them with the request on.

Send them a text or put a note under their door e.g. diner's ready, rather than call up the stairs. Can be humorous e.g. a diner invitation.

Slip the demand casually into conversation e.g. it would be really great if the settee was tidy, then we can sit down and watch a film together.



Talk to the child as an equal, as if he is an adult

“I can see this is hard, just do your best/do you need help?”

“You look upset, what’s up?”

“I can see you’re feeling sad, do you want to talk about it?”

“I can see you’re standing on the table, do you want to talk about why you’re doing this?”

“Can you let me know when you’re ready to start?”

“Would you be able to do x?”

“Would you mind doing x?”

“Do you want to do x or y first?”

“How do you feel about doing x?”

“Is it ok with you if?”

“What do you think about the idea of?”

“It would be good if x could be done by y time”.

“How much time do you think it will take to get ready?”- help them make a plan, breaking down when actions need to be done by, so they are responsible for completing a task/leaving the house on time, rather than you asking them.

Use timers that they can set themselves to count down to leaving/ finishing (e.g. timetracker-amazon)

Using authorities

This is away of giving information about something or why something should be done in a way that depersonalises it from you giving it as a demand.

“The official advice on x is...”.



“A dentist would be proud of you for brushing your teeth”

Leave information lying around for them to see, e.g. advice on why it's good to brush teeth.

Make sure not to name an individual e.g. a particular teacher or dentist as the child may avoid demands from them in future.

Other characters

Favourite toys/characters talking to each other, make simple cartoon strips or pretend to be characters yourselves as a way of giving demands or information

Reverse psychology and humour

Good for defusing tension e.g. “what ever you do, don't smile”.

If you want the child to do a task, give them the option of something they would like to do even less, so they chose what you want them to do.

Bargaining e.g. if you want them to go bed at 8.30pm ask them to go at 8pm so

they can have the last word by bargaining to 8.15pm.

Invent a credible reason why you need to leave the house if you just want to get them out for a walk.

Other advice

Novelty and change can work well.

Choose your battles.

Allow time for the child to carry out a task in their own time or to take a moment before they are able to start. Give advanced notice before things need doing.

Remember



Children may want to do what is being asked of them but they feel that can't if it is given as a demand.