



# Explaining the Jekyll & Hyde Effect

A resource for parents to share with schools

One of the most frustrating and isolating experiences for PDA families is the gap between how their child presents at home and how they present at school. Many parents have been told: "We don't see any of that here." This resource is designed to help schools understand why that happens — and why it matters.

## What Is the Home-School Split?

PDA children often use enormous cognitive and emotional energy to hold themselves together in structured environments like school. At school, the demands are higher, the social performance requirements are constant, and the consequences of "losing it" feel more severe. So they mask. They contain. They manage.

Then they come home — to their safe base, where they know they won't be judged — and the pressure releases. The child who sat quietly in class all day may be completely dysregulated within minutes of walking through the front door.

## Why Both Pictures Are True

<b>Important for schools to understand</b>	The child who appears fine at school and explodes at home is not being manipulative. Both presentations are real. The school version requires enormous effort to maintain. The home version is what happens when that effort runs out.
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- School performance is not an accurate measure of the child's anxiety level
- A child who is "fine at school" may be in chronic distress that is being concealed
- Home is the environment where the child feels safest — that is why the pressure releases there
- Parents are not exaggerating or causing the home behaviour

## What Schools Can Do

<b>Practical steps for schools</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Believe parents' accounts of home behaviour — they are seeing a fuller picture</li><li>• Ask: "What does the end of the school day look like for this child?"</li><li>• Watch for physical signs of masked distress during the day</li><li>• Build in low-demand decompression time — especially at the end of the day</li><li>• Reduce after-school obligations (homework, clubs) during high-demand periods</li><li>• Communicate proactively with parents about the child's day</li></ul>
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## What to Say to School Staff

You might share this with your child's teacher, wellbeing coordinator, or principal. You can personalise it to your child's situation:

- "My child works very hard to hold things together at school. What you see is the result of significant effort — not an indication that everything is fine."
- "When they come home, that effort runs out and we see the full impact of the day."
- "I'm not asking you to manage the home behaviour — I'm asking you to understand that school is part of why it's happening."
- "Could we look at what's costing them the most energy during the day and see if anything can be reduced?"

**A note to parents** You are not imagining it. You are not failing. The home-school split is well-documented in PDA research and is experienced by families all over the world. Sharing this resource with your school is a good first step toward being believed.