



# Supporting Your PDA Teenager's Social Life

A guide for parents

---

PDA teenagers often have complex, sometimes painful social experiences. They may desperately want connection while simultaneously being overwhelmed by the demands it involves. Understanding this tension — rather than trying to fix it — is the starting point for real support.

## PDA Teen Friendship Patterns

- May have one or two intense relationships rather than a wide social circle
- Strong preference for one-to-one over group socialising
- Friendships often built around shared intense interests
- May experience significant social exhaustion even after enjoyable interactions
- Online friendships can be as meaningful and sustaining as in-person ones

## What Makes Socialising Hard in PDA

- Social interactions involve constant implicit demands — to respond, to reciprocate, to perform
- Navigating the unspoken rules of peer relationships is cognitively exhausting
- Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) makes peer conflicts catastrophic in the moment
- Masking in social settings depletes energy rapidly

## How to Have Low-Demand Conversations About Social Life

### Try this approach

- Express interest without creating demand: "I know you've been hanging out with [friend] — sounds like you two have fun."
- Avoid probing questions about peer conflict — let them bring it when ready
- "I'm not going to tell you what to do about it — I just wanted you to know I'm here."
- Validate the difficulty without minimising: "Social stuff in Year 10 is genuinely hard."

## Online Social Life

Online friendships and communities are often where PDA teenagers find their most genuine social connection — particularly in gaming communities or interest-based groups. These connections are real and meaningful. Dismissing or restricting them without good reason causes significant harm.



# Supporting Your PDA Teenager's Social Life

A guide for parents

---

**Genuine safety concerns vs control** Reasonable safety conversations about online safety are appropriate. Restricting online socialising as a behaviour management tool is counterproductive — it removes one of the most regulation-supporting and connection-providing activities available to your teenager.