



Self-Identified PDA Women — A Resource Guide

pdaaustralia.com.au

Many women discover PDA through their own research — reading, community forums, or recognising themselves in material written for parents of PDA children. This guide is for those women. Your self-identification is valid. Here's what comes next.

Self-identification as autistic or PDA

Self-identification as autistic or PDA is widely accepted and valued within the neurodiversity community. Formal diagnosis is not required to begin understanding yourself or accessing community support — though it opens additional formal pathways.

Why Many PDA Women Self-Identify First

- Formal autism assessment for adult women is expensive and not always accessible
- Many women are dismissed by GPs or specialists when they raise autism
- The autism criteria still skew toward male presentations — many women don't 'fit' the clinical picture even when clearly autistic
- Online communities have made PDA self-identification accessible and well-supported
- Years of masking mean the PDA profile is often most visible in private, self-reflective contexts

What Self-Identification Can Give You

- A framework for understanding your history — the jobs that didn't work, the relationships that were exhausting, the years of being 'too much'
- Access to community — other PDA women who understand your experience
- Language to explain yourself to partners, family, and employers
- Permission to build a life that works for your nervous system, not against it
- A starting point for therapy with a clinician who understands your profile

Pursuing Formal Assessment in Australia

Why Pursue Formal Diagnosis?

- NDIS access — formal diagnosis opens NDIS eligibility
- Workplace reasonable adjustments — formal documentation strengthens requests
- Healthcare adjustments — formally documented autism means adjusted clinical care
- Legal protections under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992

How to Access Assessment



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- Start with your GP — request a referral to a psychologist experienced in autism in adult women
- Be specific: mention you suspect autism and PDA, and that you present with significant masking
- Be prepared to advocate for yourself — some GPs are dismissive, and it's okay to push back
- Private assessments cost \$1,500–\$3,000+ in Australia — Medicare rebates may apply through a psychiatrist pathway
- Some states have public assessment pathways — wait times are long but options exist

Finding PDA-Aware Therapy

Standard CBT and many common therapeutic approaches are poorly suited to PDA nervous systems — they are often demand-heavy, structured, and built on neurotypical assumptions. Look for therapists who mention autism explicitly in their practice, who are familiar with PDA, and who use flexible, collaborative approaches.

- Search for 'autism affirming therapist' or 'neurodiversity affirming therapist' in Australia
- Ask directly in your first contact: 'Do you have experience working with PDA adults?'
- Online therapy can reduce barriers for PDA adults — geography, routine demands, environment
- The relationship is more important than the modality — trust and safety come first

Disclosure — Who, When, and How

At Work

Disclosure to an employer is a personal decision. It can open access to reasonable adjustments — but it also carries risk in workplaces that are not genuinely inclusive. There is no obligation to disclose.

In Relationships

Many women find that sharing their PDA profile helps partners and family understand their needs better. This works best when the person you're disclosing to has access to good information — directing them to a resource like this website can help.

Building a PDA-Compatible Life

Understanding your PDA profile is the beginning of building a life that works with your nervous system, not against it. This means identifying your demand thresholds, designing work and home environments that reduce unnecessary load, and finding community with people who understand.

- Reduce avoidable demand accumulation — audit your daily demands and eliminate what isn't essential
- Build genuine recovery time — not 'productive rest', actual low-demand recovery
- Connect with other PDA women — shared understanding is one of the most powerful protective factors
- Be patient with the process — unmasking and recalibrating takes time, and it's not linear



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Key Takeaways

1. Self-identification as PDA is valid and widely accepted
2. Formal diagnosis opens NDIS, workplace, and healthcare pathways — but is not required for everything
3. PDA-aware therapy is available — it requires some searching but is worth finding
4. Building a PDA-compatible life is a process, not a destination
5. Community with other PDA women is one of the most valuable resources available

Helpful Tip

Visit pdaaustralia.com.au/girls for more resources, community links, and guidance for PDA women in Australia.