



Parenting a PDA child is one of the most demanding parenting experiences that exists. When the parent is also PDA — which is common, given the genetic nature of autism — the challenge is layered in a way that's difficult to describe to someone who hasn't lived it.

This guide is for PDA

This guide is for PDA mothers. You matter. Your nervous system matters. Your regulation is not optional — it is the foundation everything else rests on.

Why PDA Parenting Is Particularly Hard for PDA Mothers

The Demand Load Is Relentless

Parenting a PDA child means living inside someone else's demand avoidance all day. Every request, every transition, every routine is a potential flashpoint. For a PDA mother whose own nervous system is demand-sensitive, this is profound.

The Co-Regulation Requirement

PDA children need a regulated adult to co-regulate against. But a PDA mother's own regulation capacity is limited — it has a ceiling, and it refills more slowly. The expectation to stay calm indefinitely is not realistic.

The External Pressure

PDA mothers are often blamed for their child's behaviour. Schools, extended family, professionals — many assume the mother is the problem. Carrying this judgment while simultaneously managing your own neurology and your child's is an enormous burden.

Protecting Your Own Regulation

Identify Your Own Demand Threshold

Just as your child has a demand threshold, you have one too. Notice where yours sits. What fills your tank? What depletes it quickly? Understanding your own nervous system is not self-indulgent — it's essential information for sustainable parenting.

Build Recovery Into the Day

- Identify non-negotiable recovery time — even 15 minutes of genuinely low-demand space
- Tell your partner, co-parent, or support network what recovery looks like for you
- Protect early mornings or late evenings as low-demand windows if possible
- Reduce your own demand accumulation — identify which demands you can remove from your day

Repair Without Self-Destruction



You will not always get it right. Your nervous system will sometimes activate in ways that don't serve your child. When this happens, repair — briefly, simply, without extended self-flagellation. Modelling repair is actually valuable for PDA children.

Repair does not mean an

Repair does not mean an extended apology that increases demand and emotion for everyone. It means a simple acknowledgement: 'I got overwhelmed earlier. That wasn't your fault.' Then move on.

NDIS Access for Yourself

If you have your own autism or PDA diagnosis (or are working toward one), you may be eligible for NDIS in your own right. NDIS as a carer is also possible if you are supporting an NDIS participant and your own functional capacity is affected.

- NDIS can fund your own therapy — psychologist sessions, OT support
- Carer support through NDIS participant plans can include respite that benefits you directly
- Carer Gateway (1800 422 737) provides free services to unpaid carers regardless of NDIS status

Community Connection

Isolation is one of the most consistent features of PDA parenting. The behaviour is hard to explain. Mainstream parenting groups don't understand. Extended family are often critical. Finding even one person who gets it — preferably another PDA parent — changes things enormously.

- Search Facebook for PDA parent groups in Australia — there are several active communities
- PDA Society (UK-based but internationally active) has online community spaces
- Autistic parent communities often include parents who are themselves PDA
- Online community reduces geographic barriers — many parents find their support network entirely online

When You Need More Support

Carer burnout is real, serious, and common among PDA parents. Signs include persistent emotional numbness, feeling unable to connect with your child even when things are calm, and a loss of hope about the future. If you're experiencing these, please reach out for support.

- Your GP — request a referral to a psychologist familiar with carer burnout
- Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737
- Lifeline: 13 11 14 (crisis support)
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636



Support for PDA Mothers — Protecting Your Regulation

pdaaustralia.com.au

Key Takeaways

1. Your regulation is the foundation of your child's regulation — it is not optional
2. PDA mothers carry a double nervous system load — yours and your child's
3. Recovery time and demand reduction are not luxuries, they are necessities
4. NDIS and Carer Gateway may offer support for you directly
5. Community with other PDA parents is one of the most valuable things you can access

Helpful Tip

Carer Gateway: 1800 422 737 | Lifeline: 13 11 14 | Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

For more PDA resources, visit pdaaustralia.com.au/girls and pdaaustralia.com.au/resources