



Discovering Your PDA Profile as an Adult

What comes next after identification

Discovering that PDA explains your experience — whether through formal diagnosis or personal recognition — is a significant moment. It can bring enormous relief and considerable complexity. This guide is for the weeks and months that follow.

The Discovery Process

For most adults, PDA discovery doesn't happen in a clinician's office. It happens while reading about a child's diagnosis, or stumbling on a description online, or having a conversation with someone who uses language that suddenly makes sense of a lifetime of experiences.

Common Emotional Responses

- Relief — finally a framework that fits
- Grief — for the years of not knowing, the support not received, the cost of masking
- Anger — at systems, clinicians, or people who dismissed your experiences
- Disorientation — if this is true, what else needs to be rethought?
- Excitement — a new way of understanding yourself and building your life

All of these responses are valid

You may experience several simultaneously, or move through them in any order, or return to earlier feelings unexpectedly. There is no right way to process late identification. Give yourself time.

Formal Assessment: Should You Pursue It?

Formal diagnosis is not required for self-understanding, community connection, or beginning to build a PDA-compatible life. It is required for NDIS access, formal workplace accommodation requests, and some healthcare adjustments.

Reasons to Pursue Formal Assessment

- NDIS eligibility — formal diagnosis is required
- Workplace reasonable adjustments — formal documentation strengthens requests under the DDA 1992
- Healthcare adjustments — some services require formal diagnosis
- Personal validation — for some people, formal recognition matters
- Family understanding — a formal diagnosis can shift conversations with partners and family

Reasons You May Not Need It Right Now

- Cost — adult assessment in Australia typically runs \$1,500–\$3,000
- Access — long wait times in public systems, limited clinicians experienced in adult PDA



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- Self-identification may be sufficient for the changes you want to make
- The process itself can be demand-heavy — timing matters

Rethinking Your History

One of the most significant parts of late PDA discovery is rethinking your history. Jobs that didn't work. Relationships that collapsed. Periods of burnout that felt like failure. These experiences look different through a PDA lens — not as personal failures, but as what happens when a PDA nervous system meets environments built for neurotypical people.

This reframing is not an excuse. It's accurate information. The capacity was always there — the environment wasn't built for the nervous system.

Beginning to Build a PDA-Compatible Life

Audit Your Demand Load

Start by identifying where your biggest demand load sits. Work? Relationships? Daily living routines? Social commitments? Understanding where the most significant load comes from allows you to prioritise where to make changes first.

Reduce Unnecessary Demands

Not all demands are essential. Many are habits, social expectations, or accumulated obligations that aren't serving you. Identifying and removing avoidable demands creates capacity for the ones that matter.

Build Genuine Recovery

Real recovery from demand accumulation requires genuinely low-demand time — not productive rest, not useful tasks, not social obligations dressed up as relaxation. Identify what actual recovery looks like for your nervous system and protect it.

Key Takeaways

1. Discovery — formal or self-identified — is a significant moment that takes time to process
2. Formal assessment is required for NDIS and formal workplace accommodations
3. Rethinking your history through a PDA lens is not excuse-making — it is accurate
4. Building a PDA-compatible life is a gradual process of demand reduction and recovery
5. Community with other PDA adults accelerates all of the above

Helpful Tip

Visit pdaaustralia.com.au/adults for the full suite of resources for adults with PDA in Australia.