

# SUNNY TIMES

Early Intervention  
Service  
supporting  
independence



[www.youcanwecan.org](http://www.youcanwecan.org)

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to our edition "SUNNY TIMES". We hope to deliver interesting facts, helpful hints and tips and let you know what is happening in our company.

I can't believe how quickly this year is flying by—Easter is just around the corner! It feels like only yesterday we were welcoming in the new year, and now we're already seeing so much growth and change.

This year, we've adapted our sessions to better support our Kindy kids in their different environments—at home, in school, and in daycare. Each setting provides unique opportunities for learning and development, and we're committed to ensuring our approach meets the needs of each child wherever they are. Whether it's building independence at home, fostering social skills at daycare, or supporting engagement in the classroom, we're excited to see the progress being made in every space.

We look forward to sharing updates, insights, and strategies with you in this edition. Thank you for being part of our journey—we're excited to continue supporting each child's growth!

Please contact me for further information.

Have a lovely Easter break.

*Tanja*

## Upcoming events

**Workshops for parents, caregivers and staff providing support for children with autism and/or developmental delays**

- Understanding autism
- Behaviour is communication-what is the message?
- Visual supports
- Sleep management
- Toilet training



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## Understanding Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA) in Autism

PDA is a profile within autism where individuals experience extreme anxiety-driven resistance to everyday demands. Unlike oppositional behaviour, PDA avoidance stems from a deep need for control rather than defiance.

### Signs of PDA:

- Intense resistance to demands, even preferred activities
- High anxiety leading to meltdowns or shutdowns
- Negotiation, distraction, or avoidance strategies
- Mood shifts, appearing engaged but suddenly withdrawing
- Strong need for autonomy and struggles with authority
- Use of fantasy or role-play to cope with demands

### Supporting Children with PDA

#### 1. Reduce Direct Demands

Instead of: *"Put on your shoes now."*

Try: *"Would you like sneakers or sandals?"*

Using playful or indirect approaches reduces anxiety.

#### 2. Offer Choices & Control

- Let them choose the order of tasks (e.g., brushing teeth before or after breakfast).
- Provide opt-out or delay options to ease pressure.
- Frame tasks as collaborative rather than instructional.

#### 3. Use a Low-Demand Approach

- Allow for flexible routines and demand-free zones.
- Introduce tasks through play or storytelling.
- Use timers or countdowns they can control.

#### 4. Support Emotional Regulation

- Encourage movement-based regulation (trampoline, swings).
- Use sensory tools like weighted blankets or deep breathing.
- Support self-awareness with emotion charts.

#### 5. Focus on Relationships Over Compliance

- Avoid power struggles and validate emotions.
- Engage with humour, role-play, and storytelling.
- Praise problem-solving and self-direction over compliance.

### Fostering Independence

Instead of forcing compliance, empower autonomy:

- Encourage self-chosen routines (*"What do you need to do to get ready?"*).
- Break tasks into small, flexible steps.
- Use motivation based on interests (e.g., superhero dressing).

## Demand Avoidance (PDA) in Autism

A Guide for Parents and Professionals

Autism is a spectrum and PDA is a characterised by an extreme need to resist everyday demands, driven by high anxiety and a deep need for control. Traditional approaches for supporting children with PDA—such as visual schedules, structured routines, and direct instructions—can often lead to tens avoidance, distress, or emotional outbursts. This article explores what PDA is, how it presents in children, and the best ways to support independence and engagement for those with this profile.



### Final Thoughts

Supporting PDA requires a shift from compliance to autonomy-based strategies. By reducing demand anxiety, offering choice, and prioritizing emotional well-being, children with PDA can develop independence in their own way.

**At You Can, We Can Early Intervention Services**, we provide tailored, strengths-based approaches to help every child thrive. Reach out for support—we're here to help!



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