

Key Issues /Strategies to use with Demand Avoidance (DA)

1. Create an environment where the child can tolerate the process of being educated.
2. Disguise demands – even a demand to enter a classroom potentially means a further demand to do some work. And if work is done there may be a demand to do an extension task. In education demands breed demands. The demands may not even be real just the child's perception that there will be one.
3. Inclusive, creative, flexible, adaptive placements are more likely to succeed.
4. There are no set strategies that work unlike for ASD/AS. Keep reinventing the wheel. Innovative and intuitive approaches. Challenges and projects work much better than directed tasks.
5. Control reduces anxiety. DA children seek to control at any cost.
6. Keyworker approach: They can determine when to push and when to pull back. Widen the team gradually to spread the load.
7. Individualised and less directed. 'I wonder how we might...?' Disguise expectations.
8. Adults to stay calm: There is already one inflexible and rigid person in the equation. Adult emotion will jump start child's emotional responses.
9. Work alongside, together or behind. Don't do work to the child or create any oppositional body language.
10. Novelty and variety can exploit the pupils desire to sabotage.
11. Praise creates anxiety. Rewards mean further demands.
12. Reward as a surprise.
13. Drama and role play may work well.
14. Visual clarifications – of rules, of feelings. Comic Strip Conversations. Depersonalise. Not a visual timetable – easy to find ways to avoid doing stuff.
15. A Den/safe haven to allow child to recover from outburst with dignity in tact or to process will I won't I....thoughts
16. Use complex, indirect embedded language as less confrontational than short concise statements. Use humour.
17. Any strategy to reduce anxiety.
18. Increase physical activity.
19. SEAL work- 'emotional literacy', Social stories, SOCCSS can be used to debrief and explain BUT Child with DA may not realise that this exercise applies to them.

From Phil Christie: 'The distinctive clinical and educational needs of children with Pathological Demand Avoidance syndrome: guidelines for good practice.'