

Let the MUSIC PLAY!



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Regardless of who you are, most people have some artist, band, genre, or playlist that they tune to when they are feeling sad, anxious, or just need to relax! Music is therapeutic for sure, and this article will explore the mental health benefits of music and ways to use it to impact your nervous system.

Music can help decrease fatigue and can be useful in improving memory. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) did a study that noted 69% of adults that go to musical performances reported better cognitive abilities. In fact, some memory care units for individuals with dementia and Alzheimer's use music to help manage the symptoms. The American Music Therapy Association notes that Music therapy with patients who have memory disorders will often experience improved mood, lessened anxiety, a decreased need for medication, more alertness, better memory recall, improved communication, improved sleep and appetite and caregivers will have reduced stress.

Music Therapy can be utilized to heal trauma and increase resiliency in individuals. The American Psychiatric Association
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www.threetrailsefap.org
threetrails@threetrailsefap.org



Three Trails EFAP
812 South David Street
Casper, WY 82601



P: 307.237.5750
F: 307.237.5772

Let's talk PDA, and it isn't what you think!

by Jennifer Bays, LPC

Pathological Demand Avoidance, or PDA, is a subtype of autism spectrum disorder recognized by the National Autistic Society in the UK. While PDA is not yet recognized in the US, there is a growing body of evidence supporting this diagnosis. So, what exactly is PDA? According to the PDA society, PDA is the avoidance of everyday demands, most often brought on by high levels of anxiety experienced by the individual. For these individuals, it comes down to can't, not won't. Let's break this down even further.

What is a demand? A demand is any request, suggestion, instruction, expectation, or praise. For example, asking an individual, "Could you please put that book on the bookshelf?" (request), "It would be great if you put that book on the bookshelf" (suggestion), "Please put the book on the bookshelf" (instruction), or even the expectation the individual has such as knowing the book belongs on the bookshelf and should be put back on the bookshelf. Even receiving praise (It was great that you put the book on the bookshelf when you were done with it) can seem like a demand. As we can see, these demands can be direct, indirect, or implied. Someone with PDA will do everything in their power to avoid doing the demand, even when it is something they want to do.

Many features of PDA can be confusing for parents, educators, and others involved in this individual's life. Many who have PDA appear more social than one would see with an individual on the Autism Spectrum. These individuals appear social but struggle to grasp what is meant in conversations. They also struggle with the social hierarchy and will treat everyone as equal to them. What happens if we think about a child with PDA that places themselves on the same level as their parents? This child ends up in trouble often. Individuals with PDA are also prone to excessive mood swings and impulsivity. This comes from being constantly anxious and trying to mask their anxiety to the point that they explode. Many still believe that individuals on the autism spectrum are not creative or imaginative. However, those with PDA are very creative and are comfortable in role-playing and pretending. Language delays are common in early childhood, and individuals with PDA often catch up to their peers. Common characteristics of PDA are:

- *Obsessive behaviors.*
- *Low self-esteem.*
- *Use of threats of violence.*
- *Trauma.*
- *Obscene language in response to pressure.*
- *Executive functioning difficulties.*

Some may feel that these characteristics sound a lot like oppositional defiant disorder, and it does, but there is a difference.

The difference between PDA and ODD is the underlying cause or reason for the behavior. Individuals with ODD are spiteful and vindictive, refusing to follow the rules, but can usually participate in everyday routines and activities, especially when it suits them. Individuals with PDA, however, are oppositional to reduce their anxiety and maintain control. They struggle and often cannot participate in activities someone else suggests, even when they want to. They also have difficulty with everyday expectations.

There is a push to recognize PDA to gain acknowledgment of the needs of an individual with PDA and the differences in those needs from someone who may be on the autism spectrum but not have PDA.

So, how do you work with someone with PDA? Raelene Dundon's book "PDA in the Therapy Room" describes how therapy needs to look for a client with PDA. This author discusses the challenges of traditional therapy when working with individuals with PDA and the benefits of providing a trauma-informed therapy approach. She details essential things to consider in the therapy room and how to support the family unit. The book also contains some practical activities to try when confronted with specific difficulties during the therapy session.

So, if you have a client you are working with presenting with some oppositional defiant disorder characteristics but not meeting all the criteria or responding to treatment, think about trying this approach. This book is a great resource to utilize when working with someone who may be struggling with PDA.



Trish Hussion's go to Comfort Soup for the Fall!

Trish is sharing the recipe for a great Fall Comfort Soup!

Creamy Chicken and Gnocchi Soup

Chicken and Gnocchi Soup is the coziest way to warm up this season! It's filled with lots of potato gnocchi dumplings, tender pieces of chicken, fresh colorful veggies (like spinach and carrots) and it's all bathing in a rich and creamy broth. You just can't go wrong with this soup!

Servings: 5

Prep Time: 20 minutes

Cook Time: 30 minutes

Ready in: 50 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cups finely chopped yellow onion
- 1 cup small diced carrot
- 1 cup small diced celery
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced (1 Tbsp)
- 2 (14.5 oz) cans low-sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary or 1 1/2 tsp minced fresh
- 1/2 tsp dried thyme or 1 1/2 tsp minced fresh
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lb boneless skinless chicken breast, pounded evenly to nearly 1/2-inch thickness, or 2 1/2 cups cooked shredded rotisserie chicken
- 1 (16 oz) pkg potato gnocchi or homemade gnocchi (I like to use mini)
- 5 Tbsp butter
- 6 Tbsp all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk, then more to thin as needed
- 1/3 cup heavy cream
- 2 cups (2 oz) packed fresh spinach, roughly chopped
- Shredded Romano or parmesan cheese, for serving (optional)



Instructions

1. Heat 1 Tbsp olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onion, carrot and celery and sauté 6 minutes, add garlic sauté 1- 2 minutes longer.
2. Pour in broth, add rosemary, thyme, nutmeg and season with salt and pepper to taste.
3. Add in chicken breasts (if using rotisserie chicken wait to add at the end) and bring soup to a boil, reduce heat to medium-low, cover and allow to simmer until chicken is cooked through (it should register 165 in center), about 8 - 12 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, while chicken is cooking, melt butter in medium saucepan over medium heat. Add flour, cook and stir constantly 1 minute.
5. While whisking vigorously pour in milk then continue to whisk vigorously to smooth any lumps. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
6. While whisking constantly, cook until mixture thickens and lightly boils. Stir in cream, remove from heat.
7. Once chicken in soup has cooked through remove chicken from soup and allow chicken to rest 5 minutes then dice or shred into pieces. If veggies aren't nearly soft let that soup simmer a few minutes longer before adding gnocchi.
8. Add gnocchi to broth mixture, cover and simmer for recommend time directed on package, about 5 minutes. Reduce to low heat.
9. Stir milk mixture into broth mixture, then add in cooked chicken (shredded rotisserie or cooked chicken breasts) and spinach. Cook until spinach wilts, about 1 minute.
10. Serve warm with Romano cheese if desired.

Notes

1. Use fresh spinach for best results, skip the frozen kind here. It will turn out mushy.
2. Pasta or cooked rice would also be delicious in this soup in place of gnocchi.
3. Cooked Italian sausage would be a good substitute for the chicken.
4. Makes about 9 cups.



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notes that Music Therapy is an evidence-based intervention. That means there has been research done to justify its use in the therapeutic world. The American Psychiatric Association goes on to note that music making activities (drumming circles, group singing) can facilitate emotional release and create a sense of community.

Music can increase dopamine. Dopamine is a neurotransmitter produced by your brain that plays a part in your memory, reward and motivation, sleep, and other roles. It is one of the feel-good neurotransmitters needed to help battle depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders.

Music can be used to stimulate the vagus nerve and increase emotional regulation. Counselors who are trained in Polyvegal Theory may use music with clients to help them engage their vagus nerve and work on emotional regulation. Polyvegal Theory works on recognizing awareness of when a client is in their fight, flight or freeze response by use of the vegus nerve. The vegus nerve impacts how we respond to stressors and impacts if we respond with fight, flight, or freeze. Counselors can teach their clients to help regulate their nervous system through music (Singing, humming, and listening to specific music)

So now let the music play! Below are ideas of what you can do to incorporate music into your life to start receiving mental health benefits!

1. Create a playlist with Spotify or Pandora and start making it a habit to listen when you notice you are nervous or stressed.
2. Join a Choir or band. Singing with a group of people helps us regulate our breathing and increases community.
3. Check out some local music events:
 - Styx Concert (November 7 & 8 at 8PM)
 - Casper Civic Chorale (Fall Concert – November 19th at 3:30pm)
 - Penatonix Concert (November 18 at 7PM)
 - Casper Kirtan (First Friday of every month 7-9pm)
4. Try out a Sound Bath – (<https://www.sacredsoundsvst.com/>)
5. Try out some music lessons – (<https://www.vibescasper.com/>)

Are Puzzles Good for the Mind?

Yes, puzzles are a great way to keep your mind engaged and active. Studies have shown that doing jigsaw puzzles can improve cognition and visual-spatial reasoning. The act of putting the pieces of a puzzle together requires concentration and improves short-term memory and problem solving. Puzzles can also help reduce stress and improve memory.

So, if you're looking for a healthy distraction and escape from the world around you, consider doing a puzzle. It can be a solitary activity or a collaborative activity with someone else.

Spending time alone with a puzzle is also a great way to unwind and reset from a busy day. Working on a puzzle with someone can help you get away from screens and create a personal connection.

