

Compassion for Capacity Saves Lives

Understanding PDA Autism: Critical to Safety and Wellbeing

Having a basic understanding of how PDA autists (Neurodivergent individuals with nervous system disabilities) perceive and experience the world is crucial to their safety and, at times, their ability to stay alive.

Foundations for Compassion

Neurobiological Realities:

- **Highly Sensitive Threat Response:** Neurodivergent individuals with nervous system disabilities have an increased sensitivity to perceived threats.
- **Limited Window of Tolerance:** PDA autists can quickly become overwhelmed, leading to heightened distress states.

Critical Misconceptions:

- **Behavioral Expressions Misunderstood:** Actions often seen as maladaptive may actually be autonomic responses seeking safety and homeostasis.
- **Traditional Approaches Contraindicated:** Behaviorist methods can exacerbate rather than alleviate distress.

Consequences of Misunderstanding:

- **Cumulative Distress:** Prolonged activation can lead to autistic exploitation (burnout), overriding access to basic skills.
- **Systemic Failures:** Misdiagnosis, mistreatment, and lack of support exacerbate challenges.

The Reality

PDA autists are:

- Misunderstood, misdiagnosed, mislabeled, mistreated, and under-supported.
- Doing their best within fluctuating tolerance limits.
- Often forced to survive rather than thrive.

Rethinking Behavior

What appears as maladaptive behavior may actually be:

- Autonomic nervous system responses seeking safety and homeostasis.
- Connection-seeking and nervous system co-regulation.

Compassion for Capacity

In moments of crisis, others' understanding is crucial for safety.

A Path Forward

Examine and explore the nuances of "compassion for capacity" beyond simplistic messaging.

Compassionate Practices

- Recognize individuals in distress.
- De-escalate rather than increase activation.
- Prioritize compassion over compliance.

Be Part of the Solution

Elevate "compassion for capacity" to ensure ALL individuals experience safety beyond mere survival and live to their fullest potential.

For more resources, visit: www.rehumanizationproject.org (add qr code)