

# What I wish my family knew about PDA

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Disability &  
Mental Health  
*Summit*

Co-hosted by  
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# PDA

A hand is shown holding a human brain. The brain is rendered in a semi-transparent style, revealing internal structures. Various regions of the brain are highlighted with different colors: orange, yellow, green, red, pink, light blue, and purple. The background is a soft, out-of-focus grey.

**Pathological Demand Avoidance**

- ✓ Lifelong disability
- ✓ Autistic profile

**Pervasive Drive for Autonomy**

- ✓ Removes negative connotation with “pathological” (e.g. “pathological liar”)
- ✓ Holistic description of neurology & neuropsychology rather than focusing on a behavioral reaction

# PDA Characteristics

- ✓ Anxiety driven need for control
- ✓ Obsessive or rigid control of situations
- ✓ Extreme avoidance of everyday demands
- ✓ Use of social strategies to avoid demands
- ✓ Surface sociability with underlying social difference
- ✓ Frequent, unpredictable mood shifts & rapid escalation
- ✓ Role play and fantasy as regulatory tools

# Spoon Theory

By Christine Miserandino, 2003



- Energy
- Non-specific
- Finite
- Choice
- Refillable

# Ticket Theory

By Hilary Knutson, 2021



- Motivation
- No choice
- Specific
- Expires
- Shareable

Admit One  
Fold Laundry

Cost: 

Admit One  
Play Games

Cost: 

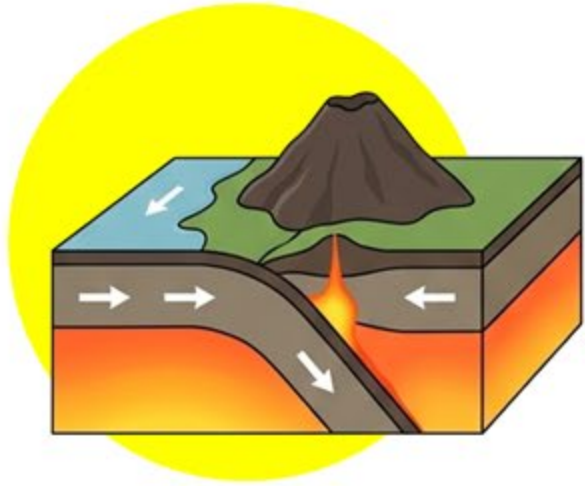
Admit One  
Wash Dishes

Cost: 

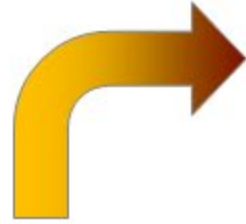


*Spoons or Tickets?*

# Stages of a PDA Episode



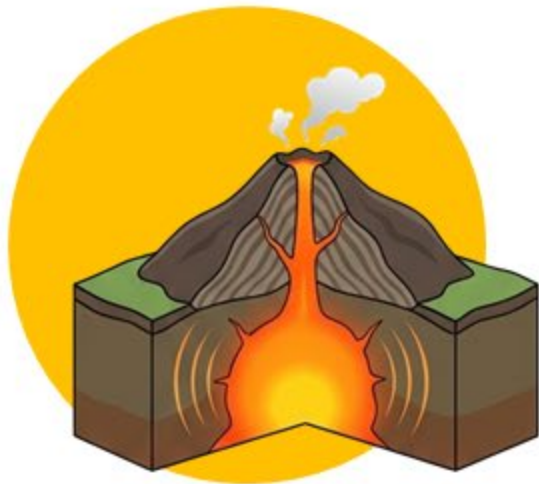
1. Trigger



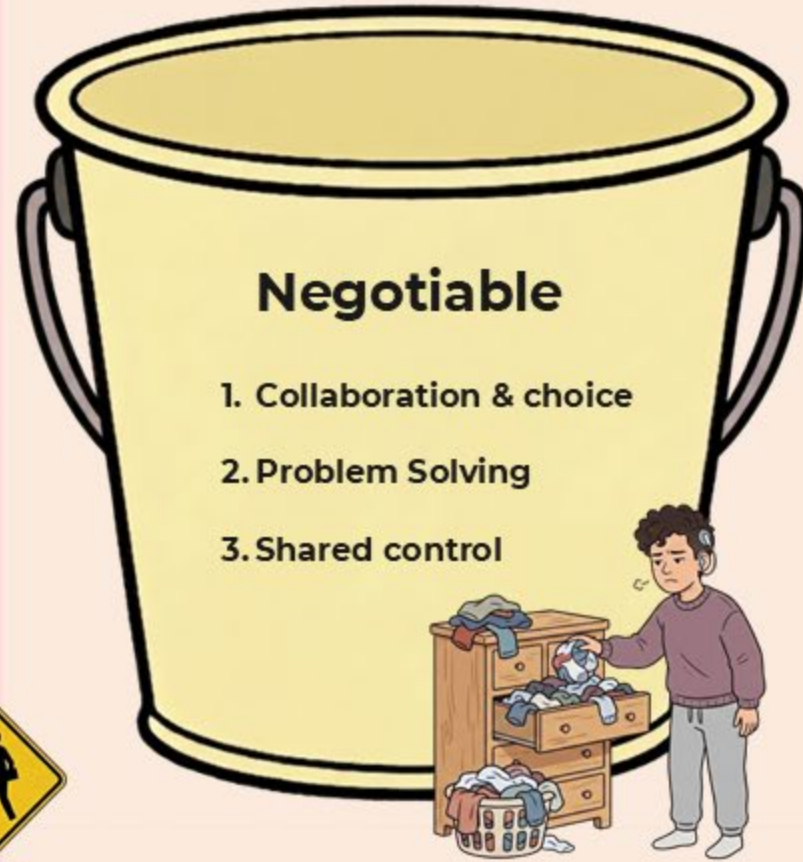
3. Explosion Point



5. Resolution



# Identify Your Buckets



# Strategies & Tools for Managing PDA Episodes

By Liz Peace, LPC, and Tessa Watkins

May 7, 2026

<https://Just1Voice.com/disability-summit-pda>

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STABLO Pen 68

# Q&A



## Presentation's Materials, Sources, References & Tools

[Just1Voice.com/disability-summit-pda](https://Just1Voice.com/disability-summit-pda)

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