

Supporting Neurodivergent Children and your Family

By Laura Kerbey



Positive Assessments Support & Training

Parenting.....the dream

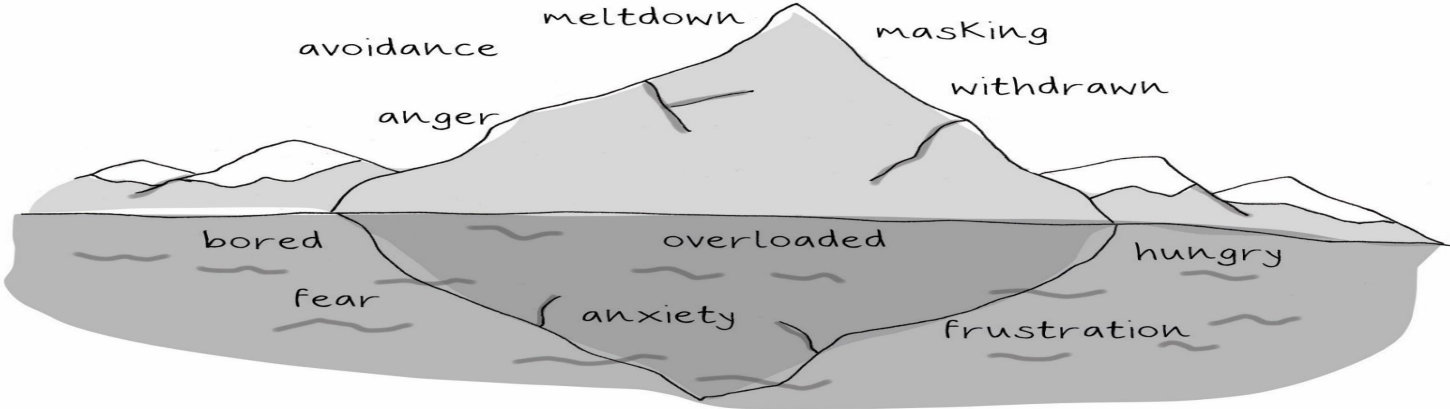


Parenting.....the reality!



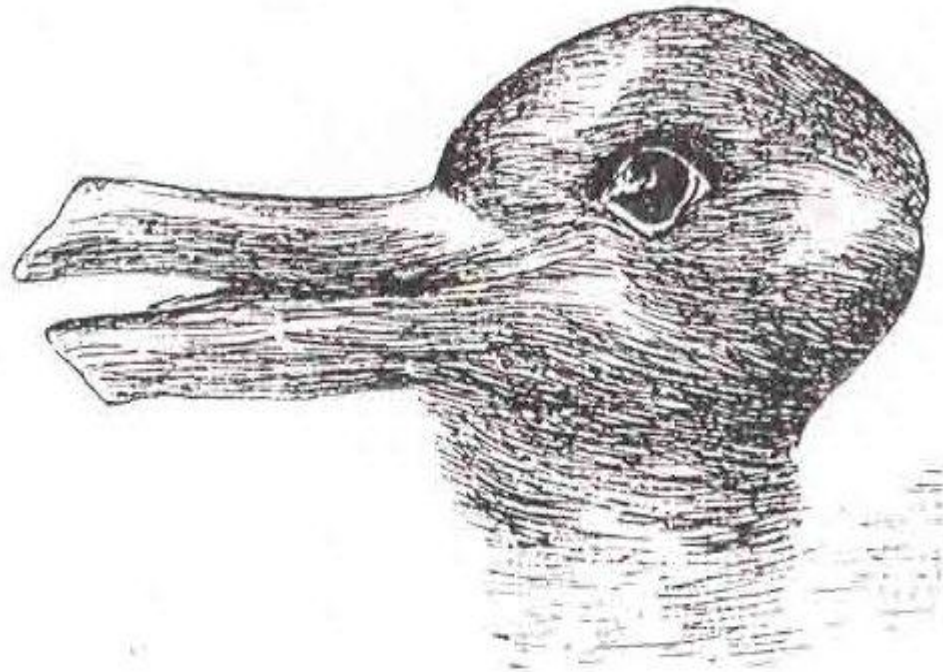
Supporting and Understanding Behaviour.

WHAT WE SEE



WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE

Remember there are always 2
ways to look at every
situation





Communicating with Children and Teens

- Understanding that apparent lack of understanding or attention is probably not deliberate
- Use child's name at the beginning of an instruction
- Simplify language and reduce sentence size
- Be ready to repeat instructions without re-wording
- Provide visual clues – write down key points. Use lists.

Communication continued.....

- Give time for response and check understanding.
- If giving a sequence of instructions, give them one at a time – do not move on until each step is complete
- Try to avoid sarcasm
- If using humour – smile!! Do not try dead pan!
- Do not say, “Would you like to go and have a bath now?”
- Use choices, “ Are you going to have a bath or a shower tonight?”

Anxiety



fight



flight

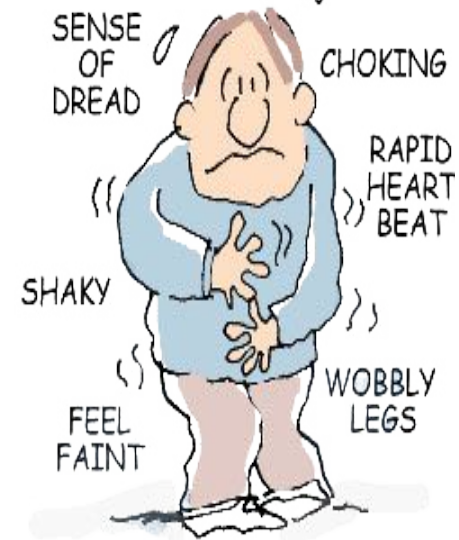
It is estimated that 1 in 6 children are suffering with Anxiety at any one time.



Help with Anxiety

What do you need when you are anxious?

- Clear information
- Validation
- Empathy
- Control



Remember the Anxiety Bucket Analogy:



Things that help

- Think of the behaviour as an Anxiety or Panic Attack!
- Stick to the facts, not opinions
- Use facts not opinions
- Remind children what they should be doing
- Ignore Secondary Behaviours such as Swearing
- Empathise and Validate emotions
- Remember there is no such thing as an “over-reaction.”

Consistency

Although there are times when our children's behaviours can be extremely challenging to us, it is really important to try and keep as calm as possible so that a child who is displaying challenging behaviour does not 'feed' off your reaction. It is also important to be consistent in your approach and for the other adults around to use the same consistent approach, so that the child does not get mixed messages and are really clear about what is expected of them.

Relaxation and Time Out

- It can be helpful to build in opportunities for children and young people to relax each day. Children also benefit from having a “safe haven” where they can go to chill out.
- Challenging behaviour can often be diffused by an activity that releases energy or pent-up anger or anxiety.
- Trampolines, punch bags, climbing etc are all great way to burn off energy!

When you / I feel / I need you to

- When you.....
- I / We feel.....
- I / We need you to.....
- Thank you!

Quotes Love and Life .com

#56

The sole purpose of a child's middle name, is so he can tell when he's really in trouble.

Fact / Sympathy / Suggestion

- Fact:

- Sympathy:

- Suggestion:

Supporting Behaviour

- Pay attention to the kind of behaviour you want to continue.
- Ignore any behaviours which are not destructive, dangerous or harmful to others.
- Be consistent no matter what!
- Let children know what your behavioural expectations are and be sure that they understand them.
- Use Natural Consequences

Supporting Behaviour

- Avoid sarcasm, negativity.
- Be careful about what you promise or threaten because you have to carry through even if it punishes you.
- Be neutral emotionally when dealing with inappropriate behaviour. If you get upset and angry, you are no longer in control.
- Say “Thank you!” Not “Please!”
- Say “Stop!” Not “Don’t!”

Supporting Behaviour

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- Don't ask why did you do that, you will probably get a shrug and "I don't know". Instead ask, "What do you think you should have done or how could you do that better?".
- Separate the behaviour from the child. "I love you, but not the way you are behaving."
- View "Bad" behaviour as a "Mistake"
- Reward and remark about good behaviour frequently. "I like the way you are sitting quietly and eating your dinner – you can go on the iPad again after pudding now."
- Take the phrase "Calm Down" out of your vocabulary

Supporting Behaviour

- Be a good model. They will do what you do a lot faster than what you tell them to do.
- If you have to reprimand a child about anything, it is important to use the next possible time to give them some kind of positive reinforcement.
- Respond immediately to behaviours whether they are good or bad.
- Whenever possible, give children choices. You choose two things which are appropriate and let them decide between them.
- Your children should know and understand consequences for good or inappropriate behaviour



What is PDA?



A profile of autism characterised by high anxiety and a need to avoid demands and remain in control.





Everyone
with PDA is
unique and
different

autistic

SENSORY

CHARISMATIC

WHAT

HUMOUR

AUTONOMOUS IS

PDA?

ANXIOUS

COMMUNICATION

STRONG
INTERESTS

The Main Characteristics of PDA include:

- Resists and avoids the ordinary demands of life, which might include getting up, joining a family activity or other day to day suggestions. This may be the case even when the person seems to want to do what has been suggested
- Using social strategies as part of the avoidance e.g. distracting, giving excuses, flattery etc
- Appearing sociable on the surface, but lacking depth in their understanding
- Excessive mood swings and impulsivity
- Being comfortable in role play and pretend, sometimes to an extreme extent
- 'Obsessive' behaviour that is often focused on other people.

Other Key characteristics of PDA

Not recognising status or authority

Require equality and reciprocity within relationships

Highly creative and imaginative

Highly empathetic

Enjoy spontaneity and novelty

Self reflective

Truth seekers and speakers

Impulsive and thrill seeking – often “overstepping the mark”

Highly sensitive to other people's feelings and emotions

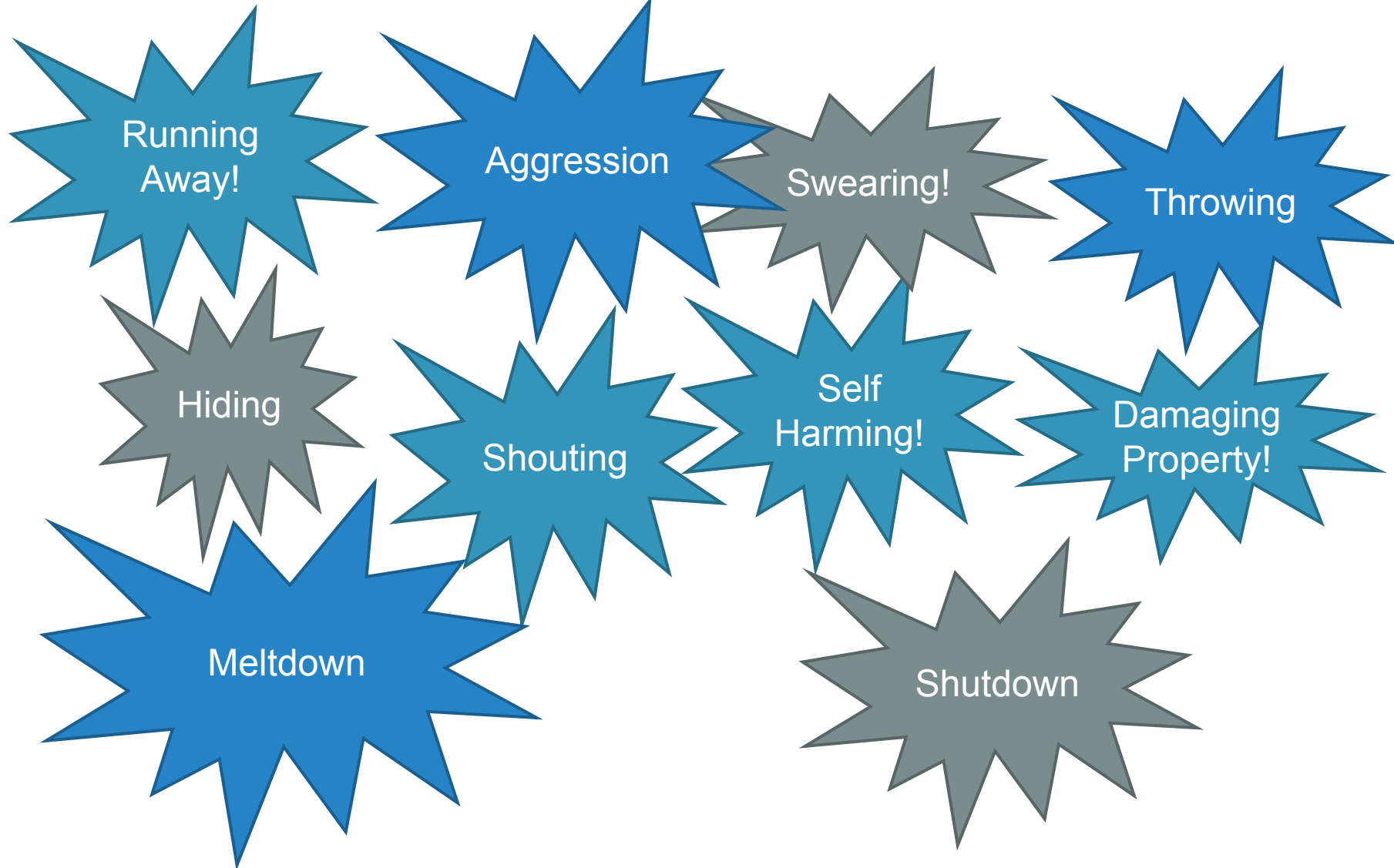
PDA is NOT just about Demand Avoidance

- Avoiding demands is something we all do at times.
- People avoid demands which are boring, frightening, painful etc.
- This is known as “rational” demand avoidance.
- Demand Avoidance’ is listed as a sign or symptom to be considered in an autism assessment under NICE (*National Association for Health and Care Excellence*) guidance. Demand Avoidance is commonly seen with ADHD.
- With PDA – demand avoidance is often “irrational” and individuals will avoid the things they **want** to do, as well as the things that they DON’T want to do.
- In the UK most places will diagnose “Autism with Demand Avoidance” or “Autism with a PDA Profile” or similar.
- Remember “Reasonable Adjustments” should be based on NEED not diagnosis.

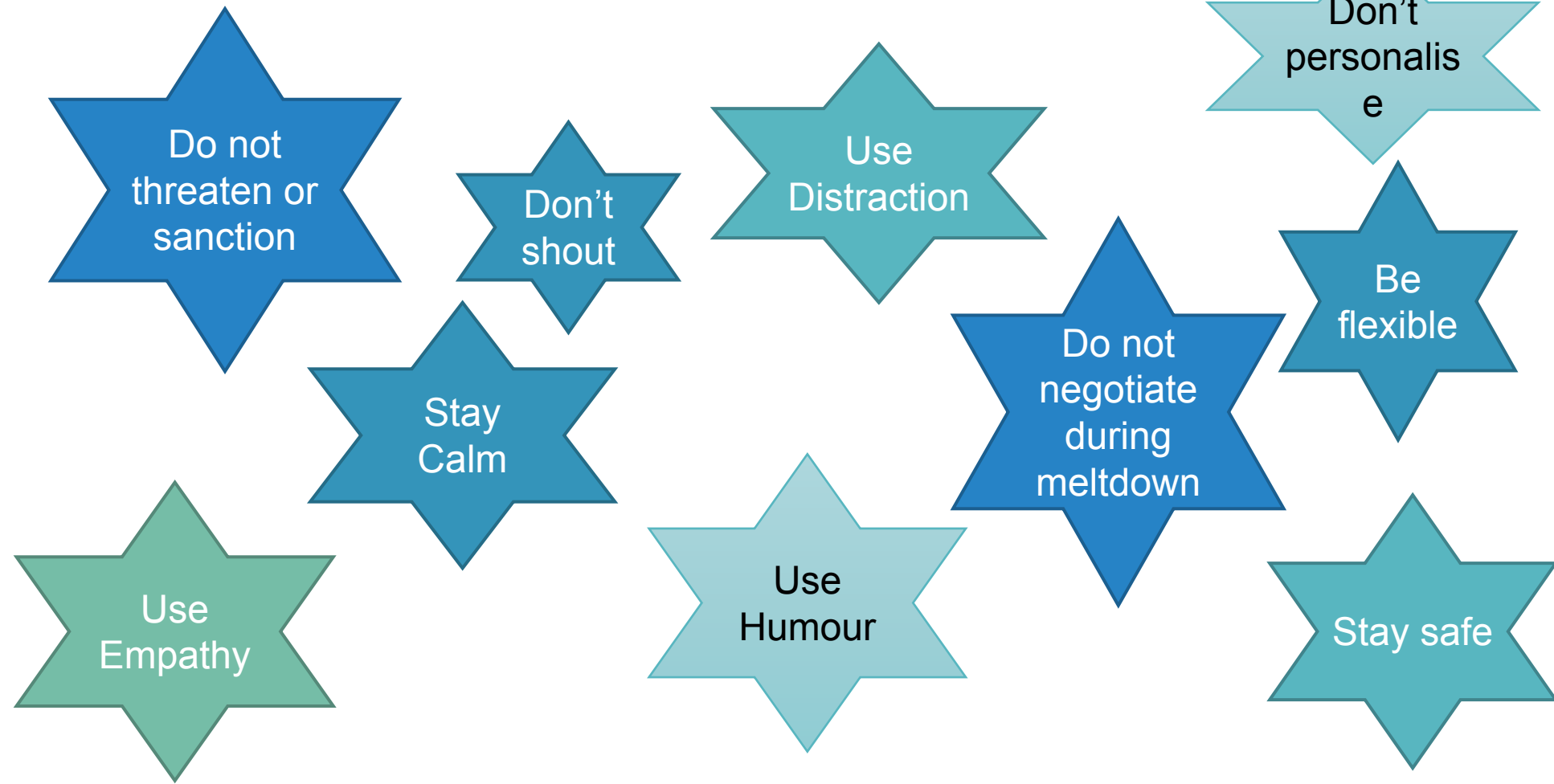
How to support an individual with PDA.

- Focus on connection and relationships first!
- Reward systems are ineffective as the individual with PDA feels out of control. Planned rewards are perceived as a demand “It’s great you have done your homework as we have time to play X together now!”
- Show empathy and talk about what helps, “I know you hate cleaning your teeth, let’s see if we can do it standing on one leg?”
- Use challenges, “I bet you can’t.....” “ I will race you.....”
- Join in activities to “share the demand” , build rapport and support reciprocity and equality in relationships
- Offer a choice “Do you want to clean your teeth or put your PJ’s on first?” “Do you want to start with X or Y?” “
- Praise indirectly rather than directly “I really love the way you have done that” or let them overhear you talking about how much you have enjoyed the time with them. Talk about how YOU feel.
- Reduce pressures – i.e allow extra time, pick your battles!!! (Ask yourself if it “really matters.”
- Give individuals the chance to help you, demonstrate what they are good at, responsibilities etc
- Take a genuine interest in their interests

Meltdowns, Crisis and Panic Attacks:



Dealing with a crisis or panic attack.





Supporting Siblings:

- Use empathy not sympathy to support siblings.
- Encourage activities that can be done together.
- Always use reward systems for all children
- Use a Family Reward Jar
- Make sure siblings get time with you on your own – even if it is just time to talk.
- Love bomb!
- Use Venn diagrams to help find things that siblings can do together and separately.

Looking after your family:

- Do not compare yourselves to others. Remember there is no such thing as a “normal” family.
- Remember you don't have to accept every invite etc and you don't have to stay for the whole party, event etc.
- Manage your own expectations and not what you imagine other people have of you and your family.
- Make time for your own interests, hobbies, relationship etc.
- Find ways to share parenting. You don't have to do everything as a unit.
- Find ways to be aware of and manage your own anxiety.
- Know your triggers.

REMEMBER
AS FAR AS
ANYONE KNOWS
— WE'RE A —
NICE NORMAL
FAMILY

Finally...



www.p-ast.co.uk

Facebook – PAST – Positive Assessment Support and Training

The Educator's Experience of PDA – JKP

The Teen's Guide to PDA – JKP