

[View in browser](#) [Unsubscribe](#)

🖤👉👉👉 *National Sorry Day – May 26* 🖤👉👉👉

“We Cannot Wait Another Generation”

As we begin this week, we pause to honour *National Sorry Day* (May 26) - a time for reflection, truth-telling, and a renewed commitment to justice for the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It has been 28 years since the *Bringing Them Home* report was tabled in Parliament - a historic moment of acknowledgment that laid bare the devastating impacts of forced child removals. And yet, almost three decades later, very little of its promise has been fulfilled.

A recent review by *The Healing Foundation* shows that only 6% of the report's recommendations have been fully implemented. Meanwhile, survivors continue to wait - often in silence - for redress, records, and systems of care that truly respect their stories, needs, and rights.

This year's theme, “***We cannot wait another generation***”, reminds us that the clock is ticking. Survivors are ageing. Many have already passed. Those still here deserve to live with dignity, cultural safety, and truth upheld—not postponed.

Key calls for action remain unmet:

- A trauma-informed aged care system
- Redress schemes in all states (still missing in WA and QLD)
- Access to family records and truth-telling support
- Long-term funding for community-led healing work

At GRANN, we believe this isn't just a matter of history - it's a matter of ongoing justice. Over one-third of First Nations adults today are direct descendants of the Stolen Generations. In some areas, that number is even higher.

Let us sit with the grief, witness the truth, and take real action - not performative acknowledgment, but meaningful change.
This includes listening to and centering First Nations voices, funding grassroots healing work, and challenging the systems that still fail to protect children and families today.

♥ *To all survivors, families, and communities: we see your strength.*

♥ *We honour your survival.*

♥ *And we stand in solidarity, calling for justice that can no longer wait.*

In solidarity, The Collaborators @ [GRANN](#)



National Volunteer Week: Honouring Invisible Labour, Radical Care, and Community Power

Last week marked **National Volunteer Week** - a moment to recognise the people who give their time, energy, and care to support others.

At GRANN, we deeply value the role of volunteers, especially in Autistic & Neurodivergent, disabled, and grassroots communities where so much of the work is done out of necessity, love, and lived experience.

But as we celebrate, we also want to challenge the mainstream narrative of what volunteering is, and who gets seen.

Because here's the truth:

Volunteering doesn't always wear a lanyard.

It doesn't always happen in boardrooms or charity drives.

Sometimes, it looks like:

A peer supporting someone through burnout

A moderator creating safe online spaces late at night

A neurodivergent parent organising a sensory-affirming gathering

Someone quietly translating advocacy into plain language

People stitching together broken systems with unpaid, emotional labour

Too often, this kind of care work goes unseen, and un-resourced.

We notice when volunteers are used to fill systemic service gaps.

We notice when “thanks” is given, but burnout is ignored.

We notice when accessibility, inclusion, and Neurodivergent needs are an
afterthought.

We notice that formal recognition leaves a lot unsaid to the many.

So this Volunteer Week, we're asking a different question:

***What would a truly inclusive, neuro-affirming, and sustainable
culture of volunteering look like?***

One that honours the invisible labour of mutual aid.

One that respects boundaries, prevents burnout, and centers lived experience
and sustainable participation.

One that sees the everyday acts of radical kindness as equally worthy of
recognition.

***To our community: We see your labour. We see your care. We see
your authenticity. We see your kindness.***

You deserve more than gratitude. You deserve support, rest, and to be valued.
Let's keep building a world where *care work is real work*, and where no one is
left behind.



When Autonomy Is the Answer: Understanding PDA Through a Neuro- Affirming Lens

This week at GRANN, we're turning our focus to Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), a presentation within the Autism spectrum that is deeply misunderstood and often pathologised. Also known as *Persistent Drive for Autonomy* or *Pervasive Drive for Autonomy*, this profile is not officially recognised in the DSM-5, but is increasingly identified by Autistic individuals and communities as a meaningful way to explain intense anxiety-driven demand avoidance.

Too often, individuals with PDA are labelled as defiant, oppositional, or controlling. But what if this "resistance" is not a behavioural flaw, but a logical, protective response to anxiety, sensory overload, or loss of agency? As *Milton (2013)* so insightfully put it, PDA may be "nature's answer to over-conformity", a pushback against coercive, invalidating environments that demand compliance over connection. Seen this way, demand avoidance is not dysfunction, it's *self-preservation*.

PDA presents a challenge not because of the individual's refusal to comply, but because of systems that continue to ignore the role of anxiety, trauma, and environmental mismatch. Recent research is highlighting that PDA-based "behaviours" are often the tip of the iceberg: individuals are masking, misunderstood, and unsupported - leading to escalations that are treated as pathology instead of *distress signals*.

"When I say 'no,' I'm not being difficult - I'm protecting myself from overwhelm." - PDAer.

There's growing concern that PDA, when framed as a behavioural diagnosis, may erode an individual's autonomy and sense of self. Labelling an individual's protective refusal as disordered can do more harm than good, especially when it invites coercive responses rather than collaborative ones.

So what if we reframed the question?

Instead of "How do we stop this behaviour?"

We ask "What unmet need is this individual communicating?"

And more importantly:

How can we honour a individual's *right to say no, to set boundaries, and to be heard?*

This is why GRANN stands behind self-determination and anxiety-informed care as the foundation of support for PDA profiles. Behaviour can often reflect communication. Avoidance is autonomy. And healing begins when we stop trying to control people and start listening to them.

We encourage parents, carers, educators, practitioners, and community to explore approaches like:

Low demand and low arousal strategies

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions

Gentle parenting and trauma-informed education

AAC and communication tools that give voice to resistance

Because *compliance isn't consent*, and understanding PDA means understanding that control, for some, is how they survive.

Let's stop seeing autonomy as the problem.

Let's start seeing it as the path to safety, trust, and connection.

"Autonomy is not a luxury. It is a need." - Kieran Rose, Autistic Advocate.

Gentle reminders for educators, therapists, carers, practitioners, school staff, & Community:

When an individual avoids a task, it may not be a refusal - it may be survival. PDA behaviours are anxiety-driven responses to feeling overwhelmed, unsafe, or trapped.

Remember:

Compliance ≠ success. Safety and trust come first.

Autonomy is protective, not problematic.


Demand avoidance can be communication.

Meltdowns aren't manipulation - they are signs of distress.

Co-regulation > consequence. Connection > control.

Predictability, choice, and permission to say no reduce anxiety.

Instead of:

 "Why are you refusing again?"

 Try: "What's feeling hard right now?"

 "You need to follow instructions."

 Try: "How can I help you feel ready?"

Let's build spaces where autonomy is respected, and behaviours are understood as signals - not problems to fix.

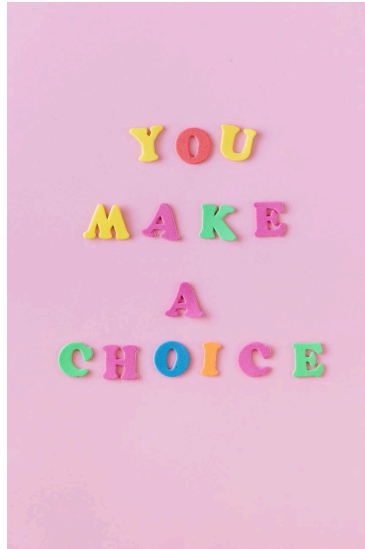
"Low demand is not low expectation. It's high respect." - PDAer

Articles & Blogs:

["PDA Autistic Support" - Kristy Forbes](#)

["The Family Experience of PDA" - PDA Society UK](#)

["Understanding the PDA Profile" - Reframing Autism](#)



Low-Demand Strategies at Home: Supporting Autonomy and Reducing Pressure for PDA-Identified Individuals

These strategies help shift from control to collaboration, reduce overwhelm, and support regulation and safety.

Core Principles

Connection first - Relationship and trust matter more than tasks.

Pressure equals panic - The more anxious or overwhelmed an individual is, the less likely they *can* comply.

Autonomy supports safety - Choice, flexibility, and control are protective.

Strategies That Help

Offer choices

Instead of "Put your shoes on now" try:

"Do you want to wear your boots or runners today?"

Why it helps:

Giving choices returns a sense of control, which reduces the threat response. When autonomy is respected, anxiety decreases, and cooperation becomes more likely. Even small choices can make big emotional shifts.

Use indirect language

Shift from direct demands to gentle prompts:

"Is your bag packed and ready to go yet..."

"When you're ready, the lunchbox is on the counter."

Why it helps:

Gentle, open-ended language feels less confrontational and gives the child space to respond on their terms, increasing the chance of engagement.

Avoid power struggles

If something feels urgent, *slow down first*. Co-regulate your mindbodies before re-engaging.

Why it helps:

Pushing through resistance often escalates distress. Slowing down gives time for emotional regulation and prevents the cycle of escalation. Calm nervous systems are better able to process and respond to requests.

Create flexible routines

Use visual schedules that can be changed with the child's input.

Why it helps:

Predictability reduces anxiety, but rigidity can backfire. Flexible routines that include the individual's voice provide structure *and* autonomy, helping them feel safe and respected.

Use soft transitions

Give gentle warnings and involve the child in the process (e.g., "Should we pause in 5 or 10 minutes?").

Why it helps:

Sudden transitions can feel jarring and disorienting. Soft transitions, especially when paired with a sense of choice, prepare the individual's nervous system for change, reducing overwhelm and resistance.

Validate, don't correct

Say: "I get that this feels too much right now" instead of "But we need to do this now."

Why it helps:

Validation helps the individual feel seen, understood, and safe. Correction without acknowledgment can increase shame, resistance, or shutdown. Meeting the individual's emotion with empathy builds trust and co-regulation.

Let play lead

Allow your child to take the lead. Enter their world. Follow their interests.

Reminders for You

Low demand doesn't mean low expectation - it's *high respect*.

It's okay to press pause. Connection > compliance.

You're not "giving in" - you're *tuning in*.

SUPPORT

What Is My Brain Telling You?

A Visual Tool for Autonomy and Emotional Safety (PDA- Affirming)

Instructions: Print and use for yourself or with your child. Point, circle, or colour the feelings and needs that best match the experience when overwhelmed by a demand.

How My Brain Feels Right Now

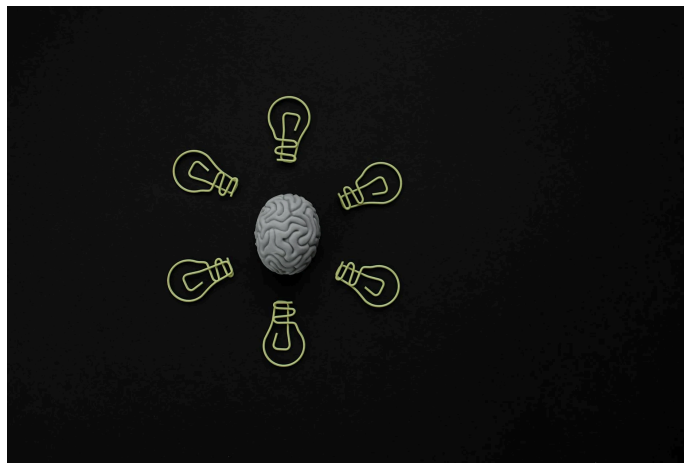
- ☐ I'm feeling overloaded
- ☐ I don't know where to start
 - ☐ I feel trapped
 - ☐ This is too much
 - ☐ My brain is stuck
- ☐ I feel like saying no, even if I want to say yes
 - ☐ I feel scared
 - ☐ I'm not ready yet

What Might Help Me

- ☐ I need some space or time alone
- ☐ I need help breaking this into smaller steps
 - ☐ I want to do something fun first
 - ☐ I need a different way to do this
 - ☐ I need a safe person near me
 - ☐ I want to do this later
 - ☐ Can I do this my own way?

 Add Your Own:

 ☐ *"I'm not trying to be difficult - I'm trying to feel safe."*



What Is Parallel Play?

Last week we discussed Body Doubling, but what about Parallel Play? What is it?

How is it different to body doubling? And how can it help?

Parallel play refers to the experience of being alongside others while engaging in your own activity, without the expectation of direct interaction. This form of connection is deeply meaningful for people of all ages, especially Autistic and Neurodivergent individuals.

Examples may include:

Two children drawing next to each other, each focused on their own picture.

Teens sitting on the couch - one reading, the other playing a game - both comfortable and co-existing.

Adults in a shared space working on separate projects, not talking, just present.

Why It Helps:

Reduces social pressure and performance anxiety.

Allows for connection through presence, not conversation.

Builds trust and comfort over time.

Validates that closeness doesn't require constant interaction.

Respects autonomy while still creating space for belonging.

Parallel Play vs. Body Doubling: What's the Difference, and Why Do They Help?

For many Autistic & Neurodivergent people, traditional models of social engagement don't always feel safe, comfortable, or accessible. But that doesn't mean connection is missing, it just looks different. Two powerful examples of neuro-affirming connection styles are parallel play and body doubling. While they may look similar, they serve distinct purposes and support different needs.

So, What's the Difference?

While parallel play and body doubling may look similar at first glance, both involving people doing activities side by side, they serve different purposes. Parallel play is focused on comfort, co-regulation, and shared presence without the expectation of interaction. It's more about simply *being near others* while engaging in your own activity, making it especially valuable for those who find traditional socialising overwhelming. In contrast, body doubling is more task-oriented. It involves having someone present, physically or virtually, while you work on a specific task, often to increase focus, motivation, or accountability.

Where parallel play fosters connection through relaxed coexistence, body doubling supports task completion through mutual presence and structure. Both are low-pressure, neuro-affirming ways to connect, but parallel play centres emotional safety and autonomy, while body doubling is typically used to reduce executive functioning load and help get things done.

Why They Both Matter for Neurodivergent People

Autistic & Neurodivergent people often experience:

Social burnout

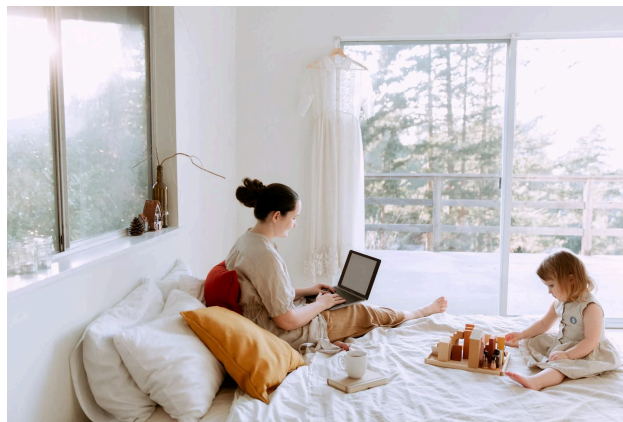
Performance anxiety

Executive function struggles

Overwhelm in high-demand environments

Both parallel play and body doubling offer non-intrusive, validating ways to connect, support self-regulation, and build trust - without forcing neuronormative forms of interaction.

They're not "lesser" forms of connection - they're powerful, adaptive, and deeply human.



*GRANN Body Doubling & Parallel Play Sessions -
Starting Monday, June 16!*

We're excited to share that GRANN's online Body Doubling and Parallel Play sessions will begin as a trial starting the week of Monday, June 16th!

These gentle, neuro-affirming spaces are designed to support motivation, connection, and co-regulation - whether you're tackling a task, creating something, or simply need company while doing your own thing.

🧠 Body Doubling: Need help starting or staying on task? Come sit with us (virtually) while we each do our own thing.

🎨 Parallel Play: Prefer quiet presence over conversation? Join a shared (virtual) space with no pressure to talk or perform - just being together is enough.

🧸 Prefer to book a 1:1 session? No worries. We're trialling this too!

📅 Trial Period: We're trialling different session times and formats based on community interest.

✉️ EOIs (Expressions of Interest) now open for:

Individual sessions (1:1 co-regulation space)

Small group sessions (2 - 8 people max)

Please contact GRANN to express your interest or request a time that works for you:

✉️ enquiries.grann@gmail.com

💬 Or message us directly on [Messenger](#)

Let us know what kind of support feels good for you. These sessions are community-led, flexible, and low-pressure. *Come as you are.*

More information will be provided via Facebook and in upcoming GRANN newsletters.



Books by Autistic and Neurodivergent Authors

Identity, Advocacy & Lived Experience

"The Educator's Experience of Pathological Demand Avoidance" - Laura Kerbey

A reflective insight into how educators can understand and support PDA-identified students with empathy and clarity.

"The Teacher's Introduction to Pathological Demand Avoidance - Essential Strategies for the Classroom" - Clare Truman

A practical guide offering essential strategies for creating safe, inclusive, low-demand classrooms for PDA learners.

"Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome - My Daughter is Not Naughty" -

Jane Alison Sherwin

A powerful and personal account of parenting a child with PDA that challenges judgement and promotes understanding.

"PDA By PDAers - From Anxiety to Avoidance and Masking to Meltdowns" -

Compiled by Sally Cat

First-person perspectives from Autistic people with PDA, shedding light on the inner world behind demand avoidance.

"Declarative Language Handbook" - Linda K. Murphy MS, CCC-SLP

A communication tool that fosters connection and autonomy by shifting from directives to curiosity-driven dialogue.

"The Family Experience of PDA - An Illustrated Guide to Pathological Demand Avoidance" - Elizer Fricker

A visually engaging and honest guide to family life with PDA, filled with humour, empathy, and hard-won insights.

Children, Youth & Young Adult Books

"Can I Tell You About Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome? - A Guide for Friends, Family and Professionals" - Ruth Fidler and Phil Christie

An accessible, illustrated explanation of PDA for children, families, and professionals learning together.

"The Teen's Guide to PDA" - Laura Kerbey

A relatable, teen-friendly guide offering affirming insight, strategies, and support for navigating PDA.

"The Panda on PDA" - Glòria Durà-Vilà

A beautifully illustrated children's book that uses a panda character to help young readers understand PDA traits.

"Pretty Darn Awesome - Divergent Not Deficient" - Lauren O'Grady

An empowering picture book celebrating neurodivergent pride and difference, created by a late-identified Autistic parent.



Autistic & Neurodivergent Resources: Organisations & Community

Kristy Forbes - InTune Pathways

Website: <https://www.kristyforbes.com.au/>

An Autistic-led support and education platform offering trauma-informed, neurodiversity-affirming guidance for families and professionals.

Christina Keeble Consulting

Website: <https://christinakeeble.com/>

A lived-experience consultant providing inclusive workshops and advocacy training for schools, parents, and service providers.

PDA Training Australia

Website: <https://pdatrainingaustralia.com.au/>

Dedicated to educating professionals and families about PDA through accessible, research-informed training and support.

Chronic Resilience Lived Experience Occupational Therapy

Website: <https://www.chronicresilienceot.com/>

A neurodivergent-run OT practice specialising in sensory regulation, masking, and client-led, strengths-based support.

A widely-loved social media hub offering visual explainers and neuro-affirming advocacy from an Autistic professional.



💬 ***Don't forget to share your thoughts on the GRANN Inc. Name Change***

Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network Inc. is evolving!
We're exploring a name that better reflects our vision, values, and growing impact as an Autistic & Neurodivergent-led social enterprise.

We're committed to keeping the acronym "GRANN Inc." to honour our roots, but we'd love your views in helping shape what it stands for moving forward. Please take a few minutes to share your thoughts by filling out the form via the link below or via the QR code.

<https://forms.office.com/r/8f59ac9RE9>

Thank you for contributing to the future of GRANN Inc.
Your views help ensure we stay community-led, inclusive, and affirming of Autistic and Neurodivergent identity.

GRANN Inc. – Community
Name Change Feedback Form



Rockabilby & Neurokin Events- Supporting RAD Artists

Are you a RAD (Regional Australian Disabled) Artist?

Did you know that RAD artists are the lowest paid people in the Australian
creative industries?

Want to be part of a collective action to improve the payment and representation
of and services for RAD artists?

Rockabilby & Neurokin Events are looking for Neurodivergent, D/deaf and
Disabled artists from across regional and remote Australia to be part of our
Tshirt Drive on October 23, National Giving Day to the Arts.

We won't let RAD artists die from exposure!

Featured artists will be paid \$10 per tshirt sold with their design on it.

Express your interest & submit a design (they don't have to relate to disability)

<https://forms.gle/Wcd4enEdL9sMQTsXA>

Are you a RAD (Regional Australian Disabled) Artist?

*Did you know that RAD artists
are the lowest paid out of all
artists in Australia?*

*Want to be part of a
collective action to improve the
payment and representation of
and services for RAD artists?*



*We are looking for Neurodivergent, D/deaf & Disabled artists
from across regional and remote Australia to be part of our
Tshirt Drive on October 23, National Giving Day to the Arts.*

*Artists selected to be part of the drive will be paid
\$10 for each tshirt sold with their artwork on it*

*Express your interest and/or submit a design
www.fb.me/rockabilby*

Neurokin Arts Festival

Showcasing diverse Neurodivergent creativity whilst fostering community,
culture and leadership

Full schedule of both weekends available now, one online and one in person in
Castlemaine central Victoria, with two ways to pay, from your own pocket or
NDIS budget.

Get an invoice for NDIS: <https://forms.gle/27dDqctDeEjyHb2C8>

Find out more about the festival & buy tickets: www.neurokin.org.au



Rethinking Suspensions: Collaborative Approaches to Keep Kids in School

Every suspended day is a lost opportunity to learn.

On Monday 2 June, the **A Right to Learn Campaign** is bringing together leading voices in inclusive education for an essential webinar.

This 60-minute session features experts from Community Resource Unit Queensland's Inclusive Education team, Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion's education advocacy specialists, and the lived experience of a parent advocate who has successfully navigated these challenges.

Why attend?

- Understand your child's rights in the education system
- Discover collaborative approaches that work for families and schools
- Connect with advocates fighting for inclusive education
- Be part of the movement creating systemic change

Details:

Date: Monday 2 June 2025

Time: 6 - 7pm

Platform: Zoom

Cost: Free

[Click here to register now](#)

Accessibility: There will be an Auslan interpreter and live captioning. If you have any other accessibility requirements, please email QAI at **qai@qai.org.au**.

Together, we're building an education system that truly works for every child.
A Right to Learn Campaign

P.S. Can't make it? **Register anyway** and you'll get sent the recording.



Autism Queensland (AQ): Autism, Stress and Anxiety Workshop

Date: Tuesday 3 June 2025

Time: 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Venue: Mindcare, 147 Goondoon St, Gladstone Q 4405

Cost: \$180.00 inc. GST

Forms provided for NDIS to cover the cost for both plan & self managed participants.

This workshop is designed to provide participants with a deeper understanding of the unique relationship between autism and anxiety, offering practical strategies to support young autistic people to manage stress and anxiety in daily life.

[Click here to register](#)

Check out AQ's upcoming webinars and local workshops via their website below:

<https://autismqld.com.au/services/workshops/>





Centre for Autistic
Social Entrepreneurship

Gladstone Region Autistic & Neurodivergent Network Inc.

enquiries.grann@gmail.com

You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

