

DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE

PDA or Pathological Demand Avoidance is a sub-type of Autism characterized by an intense and uncontrollable resistance to demands. The PDA child experiences an anxiety-driven need to be in control. The purpose of this resource is to explain what declarative language is and how it can be a beneficial tool in communicating with an individual with PDA. The information contained in this resource was derived from the book: *The Declarative Language Handbook* by Linda K. Murphy MS, CCC-SLP

IMPERATIVE VS DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE

An **imperative** is a sentence or a question that demands a response:

- Get in line.
- Say hello to grandma!
- Say please.
- Put on your coat
- What do you need?
- What color is your shirt?

Each of these imperatives has a correct action to perform. You either get in line or you don't. You either say hello or you don't. You either know the color or you don't.

A **declarative** is a comment or a statement. It is usually a statement that **observes**.

WHY DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE MATTERS TO THOSE WITH PDA

By its very definition, an imperative sentence demands a response. The brain of a PDAer might interpret this demand as a threat that can trigger, or activate, the fight/flight/freeze response. These responses can be big or small and can include: yelling, throwing, hitting, kicking, talking back, sarcasm, hiding, changing the subject, bolting, not answering at all, shutting eyes, physical ailments, ignoring, etc.

Declarative language lowers the perceived threat.



DECLARATIVE LANGUAGE FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PDA

Using Declarative Language

Imperative sentences can be turned into non-threatening declarative sentences:

- Get in line **could become** I notice it's time for lunch.
- Say hello to Grandma **could become** Oh look, Grandma's here!
- Put on your coat **could become** I wonder what the weather is like today.

Questions are not declarative sentences. The question might contain a great idea, but for it to be declarative, it must be shaped into a comment:

- *What do you need?* **could become** *It's time to eat. You'll need a fork and plate.*

Questions can easily be turned into a declarative by taking out the question word (what, why, where, etc.) and replacing it with "I wonder":

- *What do you need to do?* **can become** *I wonder if you know what to do.*

When beginning to use declarative language, it is not uncommon to run into trouble spots. Be assured it is normal and expected for declarative language not to work immediately or every time. This is because this is change, and change takes time.

Everyone needs to get used to the new normal.

CONTACT US

- ✉ JourneysWithPDA@gmail.com
- 🌐 JourneysWithPDA.com
- 📘 [Facebook.com/JourneysWithPDA](https://www.facebook.com/JourneysWithPDA)
- 📷 [@Journeys_With_PDA](https://www.instagram.com/@Journeys_With_PDA)

