

What is a 'Low-demand' approach?

I often talk to parents about adopting a low demand approach. Masking, Autistic burnout, depression, demand avoidance, high anxiety, PDA profile.....there are so many Neurodivergent children who can be adversely affected by an overly demanding and direct approach.

So what does it actually mean?

1) Adjusting your communication. Using more declarative language. Saying 'I and we' more and 'you' less. If certain words are associated with demands, such as bed, sleep and dinner, find other words to use. Questions demand processing and may not be helpful at certain times.

2) Trusting your instincts and responding to what the child is showing you. Remember sometimes it's a case of 'can't' not 'won't.' Pushing when someone 'can't' causes distress. Backing off is not backing down. You can find another way at a better time. Even if it is a few minutes later.

3) Environment - adjusting as much of the sensory world your child spends their time in as possible. Find what suits them. What relaxes and stimulates. Give more choice and control in areas where they need to be able to relax and feel safe. If the settings they are being sent to are too much, start to look for alternatives.

It's not about having no boundaries at all. It's about how you maintain them and communicate them in the least distressing way and shift any that can be flexible until someone is ready to manage them. Better to role model a supportive and empathetic presence than a confrontational and belligerent one.

There is lots more and none of it is easy to do.