



# Michael

*An ASD diagnosis helped Michael's parents justify their need to parent differently, something they had previously felt blamed for. However Asperger's didn't fully or accurately describe his presentation, whereas PDA fits him 'like a glove'. Michael's Mum had found herself naturally adopting PDA-friendly strategies through her own trial and error. Tailored home-schooling has meant that a differentiated PDA diagnosis hasn't been necessary for Michael.*

From the outset, Michael's behaviour was unusual. He has always been very clingy to me, crying easily, getting upset if routines were changed and being very controlling. It took months to get him to settle at nursery and with the start of primary school he started to get more and more distressed. For instance, he found playtime very difficult, and didn't like it when desks got moved around in class. Michael hardly slept and when he did he would have nightmares; he regularly begged me not to take him to school.

When I discussed my concerns with school they assured me that all was well there and that it must therefore be an issue in our home life/parenting. On my friend's suggestion we went to see an educational psychologist, who immediately suspected autism and referred me to a consultant for a full assessment where he was duly diagnosed with Asperger's. I felt both reassured and freed from blame to have a formal diagnosis which justified to family and friends why we parent the way we do.

However, the Asperger's diagnosis didn't seem to paint the full picture. Michael shows good eye contact, is a great conversationalist with adults and can mimic adult behaviour and mannerisms. He wants me with him at all times, needs to be in control of every situation and cannot cope with the word no. His anxiety is ever-present and he's on the edge at all times.

We only came across PDA from the TV programme 'Born Naughty' and when we researched it further online we found that this diagnosis fitted Michael like a glove. Unbeknown to me I had naturally started adopting PDA-friendly strategies through trial and error. Now that we know more about PDA, my partner also uses the same

techniques and we find it much easier to cope as a result. However it's still very hard work and Michael can be exhausting.

Given that we have chosen to home educate Michael (we abandoned the mainstream state school after a few months and he then attended a Steiner School until the age of 11 where he coped until school became more exam-focussed), we haven't felt the need to pursue a differentiated diagnosis. Home education means we can focus on the things Michael loves, and between us we'll hopefully find something that he can enjoy and make a living from in future.