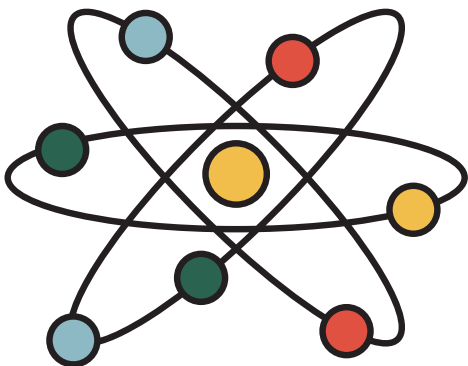


# Julia Ryan Psychology

EMPOWERING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



*"It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning." — Claude Bernard, French physiologist and the father of modern experimental medicine.*



## JULY, 2025



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# CLIENT-CENTERED CARE



For several newsletters now you have seen our thoughts and messages about neurodiversity, inclusion and affirming individual strengths and experiences. While this mindset is gaining popularity, it's not yet universal in all practices. This gap often stems from a tension in how we approach knowledge itself. Historically, medicine relied heavily on tradition, authority, and the clinician's intuition. Knowledge was passed down through apprenticeships and ancient texts, not forged in the lab or on spreadsheets. The Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment introduced the radical idea of testing claims with evidence, leading to the "evidence-based practice" we know today. This method uses rigorous scientific testing, like randomized controlled trials (RCTs), to improve our understanding of medicine and guide practitioners with selecting suitable treatments that have a solid scientific backing.

Today, "evidence-based practice" has become the dominant approach, a paradigm built upon the tremendous power of the scientific method to bring order to the complexities of health, disease and human experience. In our pursuit of this deductive, outcome-oriented science, we sometimes lose sight of the power of inductive reasoning – the information that flows from the lived experience of the individual patient and the astute observations of the clinician. Every hypothesis tested in a multi-million-dollar RCT, begins first as an inductive spark - a clinician noticing a subtle,

unexpected pattern across several patients, a patient describing a peculiar side effect or voicing a lack of response to typical treatment, or a researcher observing an anomaly in the data. This is the "bottom-up" process of discovery: using real-world observations to guide scientific discovery.

In practice, this means integrating the patient's story—their subjective experience of their illness, their treatment priorities and experience of prior treatments—and the clinician's judgment, honed over years of observing countless individual cases, when applying evidence-based tools.

This balanced approach is reflected in our recognition of Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), also known as a Pervasive Drive for Autonomy. Although not yet well-understood through large-scale deductive research, it is a profile that many of our clients and families identify with, bringing their lived experience into the clinic when seeking better outcomes for themselves and their loved ones. By remaining curious and open to these clinical presentations, we centre client experiences in our approach to care, ensuring that our practice is responsive to the real-world needs of the people it is meant to serve.

With this in mind, we invite you to peruse the different materials in this newsletter to learn more about PDA and other neurodivergent-informed topics and resources.

*The team at Julia Ryan Psychology*

# TEAM UPDATES: WELCOME!

## INTRODUCING: ERIN SHAHEEN, M.Ed, RSSW



*With over twenty-five years of experience supporting families, Erin brings a wealth of knowledge from diverse roles in mental health and most recently as an Accessibility Counsellor for post-secondary students. With a Masters in Education and a Social Service Worker Diploma, Erin has sought numerous additional training, such as childbirth, infant sleep, managing childhood anxiety, and menopause, reflecting her deep commitment to lifelong learning. Erin's practice is built on a foundation of compassion, viewing behavior as communication and believing that individuals thrive when the environment supports their unique needs. She offers individual and group counselling for youth (17+) and adults, with special familiarity in alternative education pathways and concepts such as Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA). Grounded in her own lived experience as a parent to neurodivergent children and a late-identified ADHDer herself, Erin provides a client-centered approach that is both professionally informed and deeply personal.*

[More about Erin](#)

# SERVICE UPDATES

## THERAPY

 REGISTER NOW

**Immediate availability** in person or virtual ages 16+

## ASSESSMENT

We are **closed** for new requests for all ages while we work to serve clients on the waitlist and re-open with a shorter wait time and more efficient intake procedures.

We are honored that those in our community consistently trust us with the care of their loved ones, friends and clients. Please consider seeking services with one of our colleagues or checking back in the fall, as we anticipate reopening for new assessment requests in September.



### ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- [CAFCO-CEAFO \(child, adolescent, adult\)](#)
- [Connections Psychology \(child, adolescent, adult\)](#)
- [Jeremy Doucette \(child, adolescent, adults\)](#)
- [CFIR \(child, adolescents, adults\)](#)
- [Mary Ann Coulter \(child, adolescent, adults\)](#)
- [Anchor Psychology \(child, adolescent\)](#)
- [Dr. Lyndsay Evraire \(child, adolescent\)](#)
- [Sherwood Psychology \(child, adolescent\)](#)
- [Ivanova and Associates \(adults\)](#)
- [Centre Dimensions \(adults\)](#)
- [Dr. Melodie Lemay-Gaulin \(adults, virtual\)](#)

# SERVICE UPDATES

## OUR GROUPS

**Register Now:** Fall Empower Parent Groups (Ages 11-19)

LEARN MORE

**Register Now:** Summer Workshops for Parents of Neurodivergent Post-Secondary Students

LEARN MORE

**Register Now:** Summer Workshops for Parents of Neurodivergent Post-Secondary Age Youth Navigating Alternative Pathways

LEARN MORE

## GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY

See posters at the end for summer groups our colleagues are offering for social connections, academic readiness and life skills.

LEARN MORE

## COMING SOON: FALL

***We are all stronger with a community behind us.***

**Are you a parent looking to connect with other parents navigating neurodiversity in their family? Processing a new diagnosis for yourself or your child, or navigating new chapters in life?** This fall, we are rolling out a full program of parent support group opportunities to help YOU connect with other parents who get it.

**ADD YOUR NAME TO OUR MAILING LIST FOR THESE GROUPS: [CLICK HERE](#)**

# FEATURED RESOURCES

## WHAT IS PDA? LEARN MORE!

**PDA SOCIETY (UK)**

**CLICK HERE**

**PDA NORTH AMERICA (USA)**

**CLICK HERE**

**NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY (UK)**

**CLICK HERE**

**AUTISM BC PDA EXPLAINED (CANADA)**

**CLICK HERE**

## PDA RESOURCES

**AMANDA DIEKMAN (PARENTS)**

**CLICK HERE**

**DONNA HENDERSON (ALL AGES)**

**CLICK HERE**

**TILT PARENTING PODCAST (PARENTS)**

**CLICK HERE**

**WHAT HELPS GUIDES (ALL AGES)**

**CLICK HERE**

## PDA RESOURCES FOR ADULTS

**NATIONAL AUTISTIC SOCIETY (UK)**

**CLICK HERE**

**AUTISM BC PDA EXPLAINED (CANADA)**

**CLICK HERE**



# How Pathological Demand Avoidance Impacts Children's Sleep & How to Support It

## Insights from Suzanne Gunn's Webinar

PDA (Pathological Demand Avoidance) is a profile of autism characterized by:

- **strong need for autonomy**
- **highly sensitive nervous system**

This can make every day demands, including sleep, feel overwhelming.

### Why is Sleep so Hard?

Sleep depends on a **calm, regulated** nervous system. But PDA children (and often other neurodivergent children) often stay in **high-alert** mode during the day.

This makes it hard for the body to shift into rest mode.

Many Children with PDA struggle with:

Getting to bed

Falling and staying asleep

Waking in the morning

Sleep difficulties can often begin from birth and intensify during puberty.

Neurodivergent children and those with PDA may also produce melatonin at different times or have unusual circadian rhythms.



Sleep is **developmental**, not behavioral. Traditional sleep strategies often assume the child is already calm and regulated. For PDA/neurodivergent children, that is often not the case.

**When the nervous system is overwhelmed by:**

- ★ Sensory input
- ★ Emotional stress
- ★ Social demands

...the brain prioritizes **survival**, not sleep.

Even when a child (or adult) feels tired, their body may not feel safe enough to relax.

**This Might Look Like:**

- ★ Needing a caregiver close by to fall asleep
- ★ Staying "wired" even after the lights are out
- ★ Waking often and feeling unrested
- ★ Sleep routines triggering anxiety or refusal
- ★ Increased resistance during transitions to bed

## Steps to Support Sleep

### 1 Recognize Unique Needs

PDA children often have different sleep patterns, preferences, and timelines. What helps one child might overwhelm another. Support their unique **timing, environment, place of sleep and connection needs**.

### 3 Collaborate

Involve your child in the bedtime process.

- ☾ Let them have choices about where and how they wind down
- ☾ Build calming rituals together instead of enforcing a routine
- ☾ Ask what feels good or safe in the moment

### 2 Observe

Watch for patterns in behavior and regulation.

- ☾ Look for signs like restlessness, irritability, or being "wired but tired"
- ☾ Track when sleep is easier and when it's harder
- ☾ Notice what environmental cues help or hinder rest

### 4 Co-Regulate

Provide a **calm** and **connected** presence.

- ☾ Sit with them, breathe together, or offer quiet company
- ☾ If emotions rise, slow down and reconnect **before** moving forward
- ☾ Your nervous system helps shape theirs, stay grounded when they can't

Prepared by: Marwa Ibrahim based on:  
PDA North America. (2025, June 19). PDA & Sleep with  
Suzanne Gunn! [Webinar]. <https://pdanorthamerica.org>

### To Learn More:

[Letting Sleep Unfold Article](#)

[PDA Sleep Article](#)

### For individual support:

Our new team member, **Erin Shaheen**, provides individual support to parents with navigating sleep challenges with their child



# FEATURED RESEARCH

## CARLETON UNIVERSITY

**RESULTS:** Professional perspectives on the barriers to Autistic adult mental health in Ottawa, Canada

[CLICK HERE](#)

**RECRUITMENT:** Are you a parent who is also autistic?

[CLICK HERE](#)

## UQO

**RECRUITMENT:** Are you a parent of a child with ADHD and interested in sharing your experience to guide research initiatives?

[CLICK HERE](#)

## AUTISTIC RESEARCHERS

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA: DR. HEATHER BROWN

[CLICK HERE](#)

UNIVERSITY OF LETHBRIDGE: DR. CHRIS DABBS

[CLICK HERE](#)

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY: DR. BRADLEY IRISH

[CLICK HERE](#)

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC: AMANDINE CATALA

[CLICK HERE](#)

## PDA RESEARCH

HISTORY OF PDA RESEARCH AND RESEARCH OVERVIEWS

[CLICK HERE](#)

# FEATURED VOICES

## SPEAKING UP ABOUT NEURODIVERSITY

WHAT WOMEN WITH AUTISM WANT YOU TO KNOW

[CLICK HERE](#)

FAILING AT NORMAL: AN ADHD SUCCESS STORY

[CLICK HERE](#)

MY LEARNING DISORDER: A LOVE STORY

[CLICK HERE](#)


NEURODIVERGENCE AND ATHLETIC SUCCES (STORY 6)


[CLICK HERE](#)

THE WORLD NEEDS ALL KINDS OF MINDS

[CLICK HERE](#)

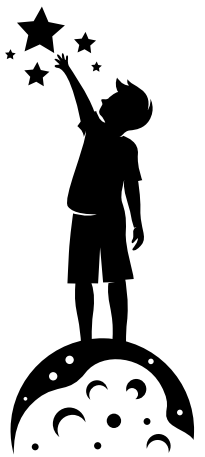
## AUDIENCE SUBMISSIONS

 *"My favorite part of the day is sitting outside with my dogs, listening to the wind or birds" - Caboolia (code name) AuDHDer*

 *"If I could redesign the world, I would make schools more fun and less strict" - Anonymous*

Have your own ideas, thoughts, or successes to share?

[SUBMIT](#)



# FEATURED COMMUNITY GROUPS

## It's Not Too Late! Summer Day Program Openings Available

Looking for a last-minute way to add connection, creativity, and fun to your child's summer? You're in luck! Due to last-minute cancellations, we now have a handful of spots available in our Summer Day Program – and we'd love for your child to join in the fun!

Here's when space is available:

- Week of July 7 (Morning Session: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM)
- Week of July 14 (Morning Session: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM)
- Week of July 21 (Afternoon Session: 1:00 PM – 4:30 PM)
- Week of August 11 (Morning Session: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM)
- Week of August 18 (Morning Session: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM)
- Week of August 25 (Morning Session: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM)

Our day program offers a supportive, engaging, and fun environment tailored to each child's unique needs and interests. This is a great opportunity to plug into a program where kids can feel safe, seen, and supported while having an amazing time!

**REGISTER ONLINE**

[www.centre-dimensions.ca](http://www.centre-dimensions.ca)



CENTRE  
**dimensions**  
CENTRE

# FEATURED COMMUNITY GROUPS



## Nature Walks for Neurodivergent Young Adults

Ages 17-23, join us as we explore our community and get outside together. Whether you're autistic, sensory-sensitive, have ADHD, or if you just experience the world differently, this is a space where you can be yourself and enjoy our natural surroundings.

Scan the QR code or email us at [admin@anchorpsychology.ca](mailto:admin@anchorpsychology.ca) to register! *Spots are limited*



SCAN HERE

# FEATURED COMMUNITY GROUPS



## TEEN SOCIAL CLUB SUMMER 2025

*Facilitated by Julie McIsaac, Ph.D.  
Learning and Mental Health Consultant*

### WHO?

If you identify as Autistic, Neurodivergent, as having ADHD, or other, and are between the ages of 12 and 16, this is for you.

### WHAT?

This is a neuro-affirming group created to provide opportunities to connect, relate, and learn with peers.

### HOW?

Small group, building on shared interests and incorporating movement, nature and outings in the community.



**JULY 14<sup>TH</sup>-18<sup>TH</sup>**  
10:00AM - 12:00PM



**1350 WELLINGTON ST. W.**



**\$495**



**ANCHOR**  
Psychological  
Services

**FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER,  
PLEASE EMAIL  
[ADMIN@ANCHORPSYCHOLOGY.CA](mailto:ADMIN@ANCHORPSYCHOLOGY.CA)**



# FEATURED COMMUNITY GROUPS



*DO YOU LIKE TAKING THINGS APART?*

*JOIN THIS SMALL GROUP AS WE DISMANTLE AND TINKER WITH TECH.  
WEEK OF JULY 14<sup>TH</sup>, 1:00-3:00PM, \$330.*

*SPOTS VERY LIMITED--GROUP OF 3-4 KIDS, AGES 9-12.*

*CONTACT [ADMIN@ANCHORPSYCHOLOGY.CA](mailto:ADMIN@ANCHORPSYCHOLOGY.CA) TO REGISTER!*



# FEATURED COMMUNITY GROUPS



## BACK TO SCHOOL EXECUTIVE SKILLS COACHING WORKSHOP

Back to school time can be stressful.  
Find systems to reduce your stress and  
manage your schoolwork.

**August 25th, 27th, & 29th, 2025  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

 **When?** We will meet 3 times in August.

 **What?** Build executive skills from the bottom up and top down.

 **How?** Activities, games, reflection and discussion.

 **Why?** To help make things easier at home and school.

**\*\*Plus a pre and post-15-minute consult**



<b>PRICE:</b> \$495	<b>LOCATION:</b>
	1350 Wellington St West

For more information or to register, please  
email [admin@anchorpsychology.ca](mailto:admin@anchorpsychology.ca)



# Are you a Parent who is also Autistic?

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**Autistic fathers are particularly encouraged to participate!**

The **CARE Lab** at **Carleton University** is interested in hearing from Autistic adults about their experience with parenting and seeking a diagnosis.

## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

- Adults 18+ who recently received an autism diagnosis or self-identify as Autistic
- Diagnosis or identified as Autistic after seeking a dx for their child

## WHAT IS INVOLVED?

- Complete a questionnaire (~20-30 minutes)
- Participate in a one-on-one interview (~45-60 minutes)

## WHAT DO I GET?

You can receive up to \$25 in eGift Cards for your participation

## INTERESTED?

To participate, please contact:  
**AutismLab@carleton.ca**

or scan the QR Code below:

