

UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOUR - SEEING BEYOND BEHAVIOUR FOR EDUCATION STAFF



Behaviour is often a way of communicating

Children, and adults, often communicate what they are thinking and feeling through their actions. This may not always be in the most helpful way, but if we want to help learners to communicate better, we first need to understand what they are trying to tell us. They may not always be aware of the reason themselves; as adults we will need to make a best guess at what we think this could be.

Sometimes we might just wonder to ourselves. But if you and the learner have time for reflective conversations (when you are both in your Window of Tolerance), you can also 'wonder aloud' guesses to check them out.

"I wonder if you shouting at me is your way of saying 'please give me 10 minutes, I just need some space'? ... but it's hard to find those words in the moment"

"I imagine it's pretty overwhelmed coming back to school. You might have all sorts of feelings going on inside"

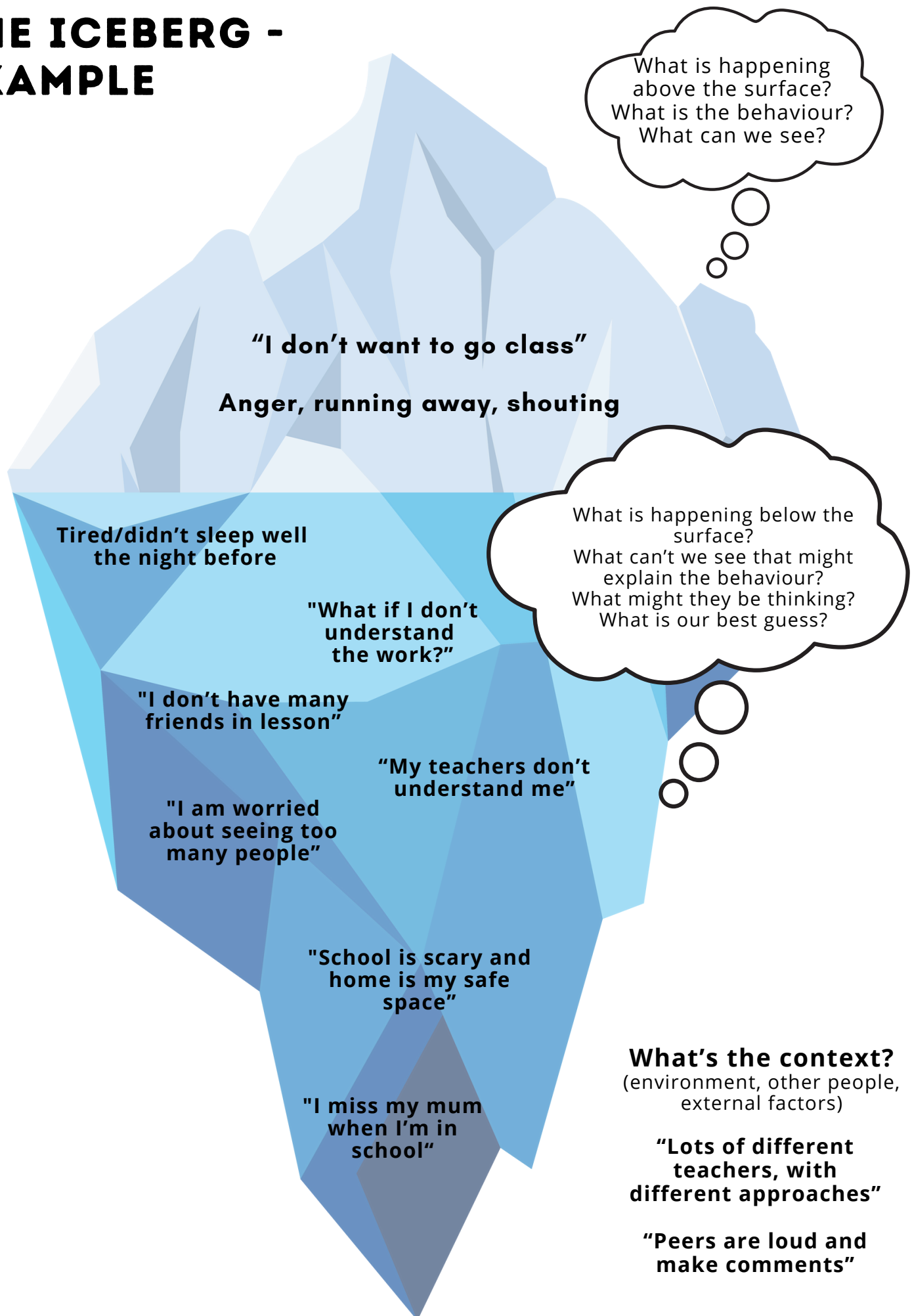
It's okay if we get this wrong!

You can always explore this again, or it gives children an opening to tell us what they think is the reason, *"I think I got it wrong earlier. Would you help me to understand what's going on for you?"*

Remember that learners may not be fully aware of the reasons themselves and may not be able to respond. Wondering aloud with them (when appropriate), without expecting a response, can help them to make the association between feelings and actions in the future.

To help us get a better understanding of a learner's behaviour, we can use the 'iceberg model'. Like icebergs, we can only see what is above the surface, e.g., the behaviours. But, we cannot see underneath the surface, which is often much bigger and can explain why learners (and adults!) behave in certain ways.

THE ICEBERG - EXAMPLE



THE ICEBERG

What do we see on the surface?

**What might be going on
beneath the surface?**

What's the context?
(environment, other people,
external factors)

A RELATIONAL APPROACH

A relational and trauma informed approach to education places importance on building relationships, and encourages us to see behaviour as communication. By taking this perspective, we can address what learners are trying to tell us about their internal world, not just the behaviour itself.

TOP TIPS



- Focus on the relationship with learners to **build connection, trust and safety**. This can provide a foundation where conversations about behaviour and underlying experiences can be built upon
- **Be curious about the underlying needs** that the behaviour is communicating. When you are both in an emotionally regulated state, you can 'wonder aloud' with them
- We can be **firm on boundaries** (around harmful or unsafe behaviour) **whilst still remaining compassionate and kind** with learners
- If consequences are necessary, ensure they are directly linked to the behaviour where possible. **Logical consequences** (offered without shame or anger) can help to develop cause and effect (see our 'Consequences' resource)
- **Solving problems together rather than imposing solutions** can be a way forward. Giving time for the learner's perspective to be heard and understood, before offering yours. Brainstorm possible solutions together (see our 'Solving Problems Together' resource)
- A **PACEful (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy)** way of being – before, during and after conversation around behaviour (see our 'PACE' resource)

Visit www.cavyoungwellbeing.wales for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health information and resources for children, young people, parents and professionals.

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This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg