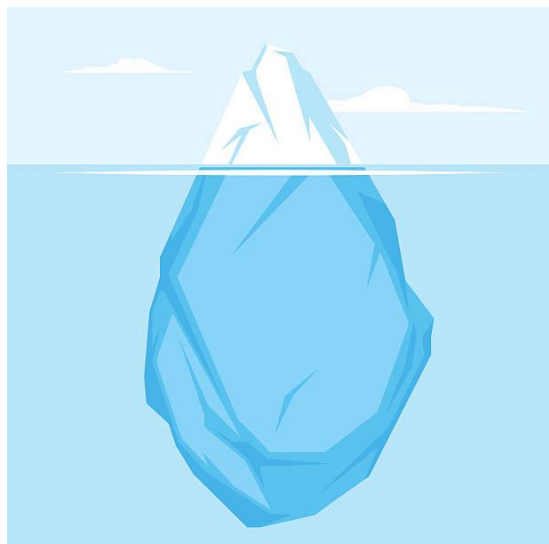


Understanding and responding to your child’s behaviour

Children’s behaviour is a way of communicating their needs and emotions. At times, it can be difficult to spot triggers to the behaviours we see and know how to respond to these behaviours. Using an ‘iceberg’ analogy can help us to consider what might be going on ‘underneath the surface’ for children and what their behaviours may be communicating.



Up here on ‘the surface’ are the **behaviours we see**. For example, this might be kicking, screaming, biting, hitting and/or shouting.

Below the surface are the underlying factors that **we don’t see**. For example; tiredness, hunger, sensory needs, different emotions (anger, sadness, and fear), a need for connection...

Let’s look at some examples of the behaviours we may see at home and what these behaviours may be communicating...

| What might we see? | What might this mean? | What might we do? |
|---|---|---|
| Refusal to follow instructions | I’m feeling worried as I feel that I have no control | Provide a choice of two options, e.g. “Do you want to walk to the bathroom or skip?” “Would you like bath first or dinner?” |
| Clingy behaviours | I feel as though I’m not getting enough attention | Plan in some quality time together; go for a walk, to the park, read a book. |
| Not wanting to go to school (This may look like refusal, crying, saying “I don’t want to go.”) | I don’t want to leave you I’m worried/scared about this change | Reassure your child and talk through any worries they may have – even if you don’t have the answer. Prepare them for their new routine, use visuals to help and even role play. |
| Emotional outbursts (This may include kicking, screaming, crying, throwing) | I am feeling angry/sad/worried and I don’t know how to communicate this | Reassure your child, all of these are normal feelings. ‘Wonder aloud’ with your child “I’m wondering if you might be feeling...” Use calming activities and/or provide a ‘safe space.’ |