

# The Extreme Symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder

Erika Wainwright M. Ed

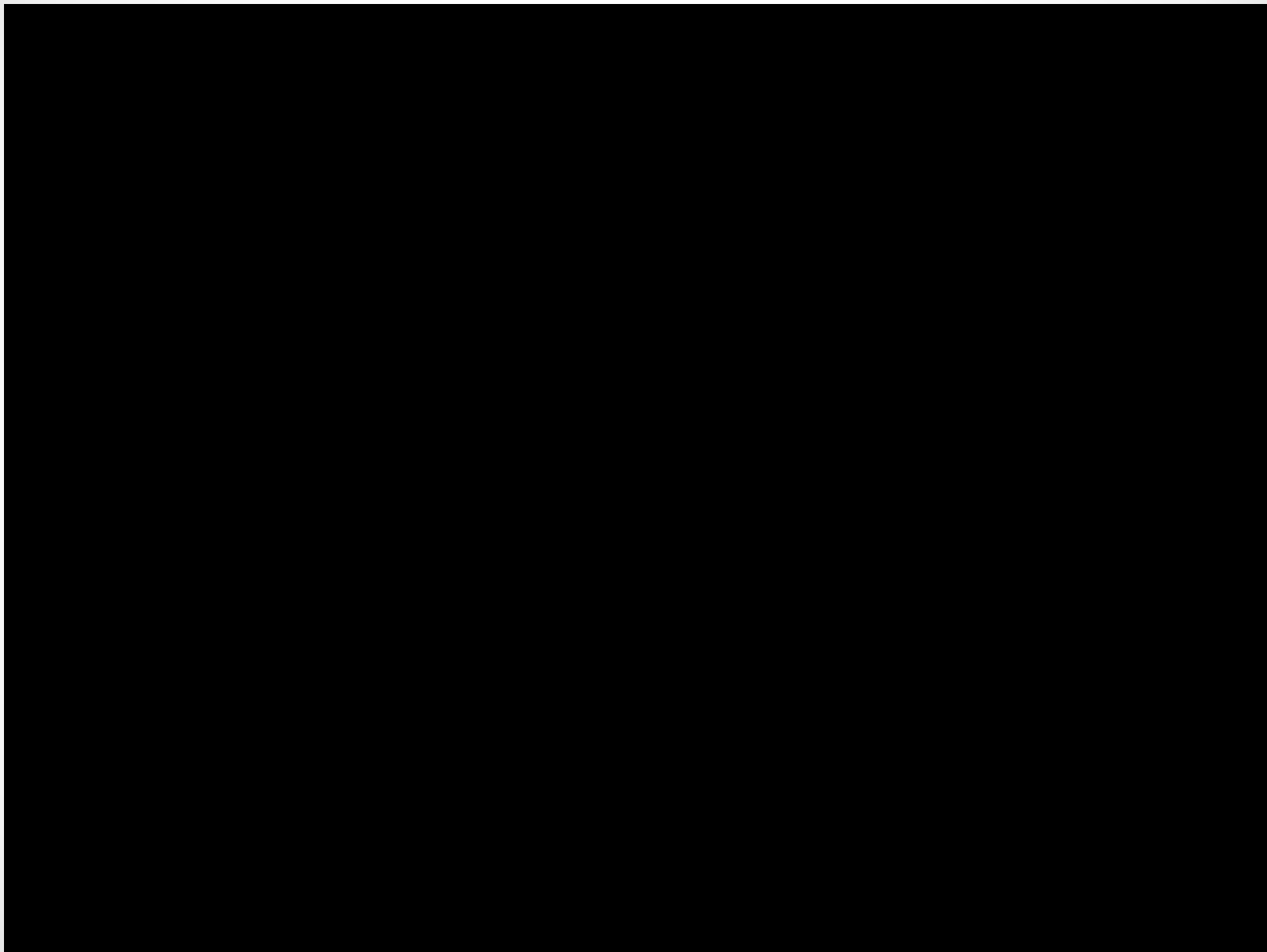
Teacher

MATC Neurodevelopmental Services

# Objectives

Today We will Look At:

- The extreme symptoms of ASD
- Some of the causes of the extreme symptoms
- The Rage Cycle
- Strategies that will help
- Examining behaviour through different perspectives



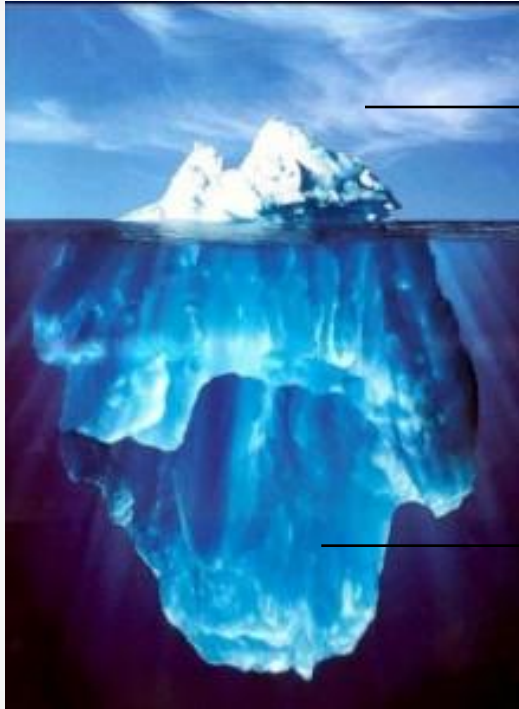
# Understanding Behaviour

## **Myth:**

Children with autism have behaviour problems for no reason.



**“What you see is just the tip of the iceberg”**



**Specific  
Behaviours**

**Underlying  
reasons**

# We have a child who is.....

Confused

Frustrated

Sad

Anxious

Overloaded

Fearful

Hurting

**..... exhibiting behaviours**

# Behaviour IS Communication!

Pat Mirenda (2007):

“Problem behaviors are not just responses that should be either reduced or eliminated; rather, they represent an individual’s best attempt to transmit a message or meet a need.”

# Behaviour IS Communication!

- It is our job to figure out what the triggers are for problem behaviors (sensory issues; getting attention; escape/avoidance of demands; changes in routine, etc.)
- We need to provide them with a means of telling us what the behaviors are really saying (e.g., “It’s too loud; I’m not ready; You’re too close, etc).



# Understanding Behaviour

- Behaviour is highly interpretable (Donnellan, Leary, Hill)
- Behaviour does not happen in a vacuum
- Human interactions are very complex and we tend to simplify the factors contributing to particular behaviours

# Understanding Behaviour

- We need to look at behaviours from as many perspectives as possible
- We tend to make assumptions about behaviour because we are interpreting it through the social lens
- We need to reframe the way we look at behaviour and determine what is the stressor that is causing the behaviour

# Understanding Behaviour

## **What causes challenging behaviour?**

- Who the individual is
- What the individual can do
- Where the individual is
- Other ASD-related needs

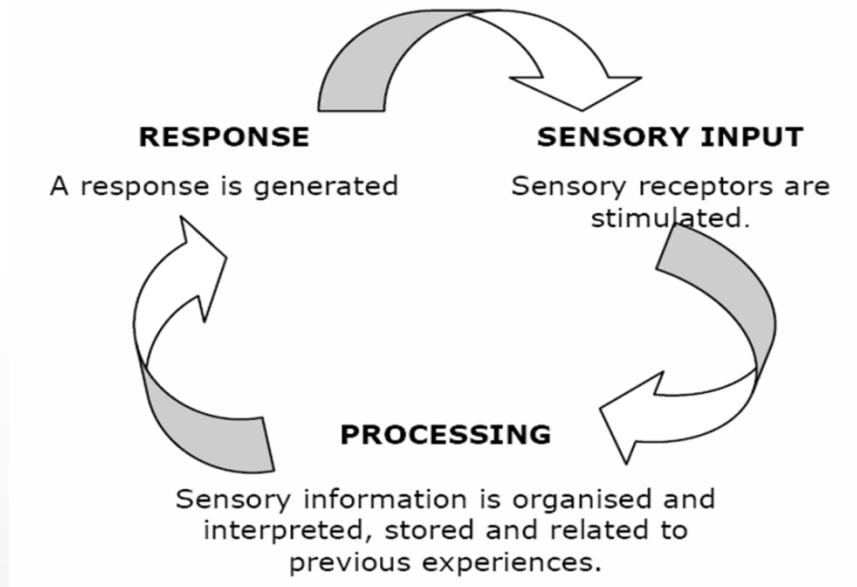
# Understanding Behaviour

Want to examine behaviour and look at:

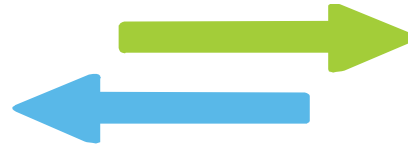
- Sensory processing differences
- Communication (expressive and receptive)
- Developmental level
- Medical Concerns
- Anxiety

# Sensory Integration

- The ability to take in information through our senses, combine this with prior information, memories, and knowledge stored in the brain, and produce a meaningful response. (Murray-Slutsky & Paris, 2005)



# Sensory Processing Continuum



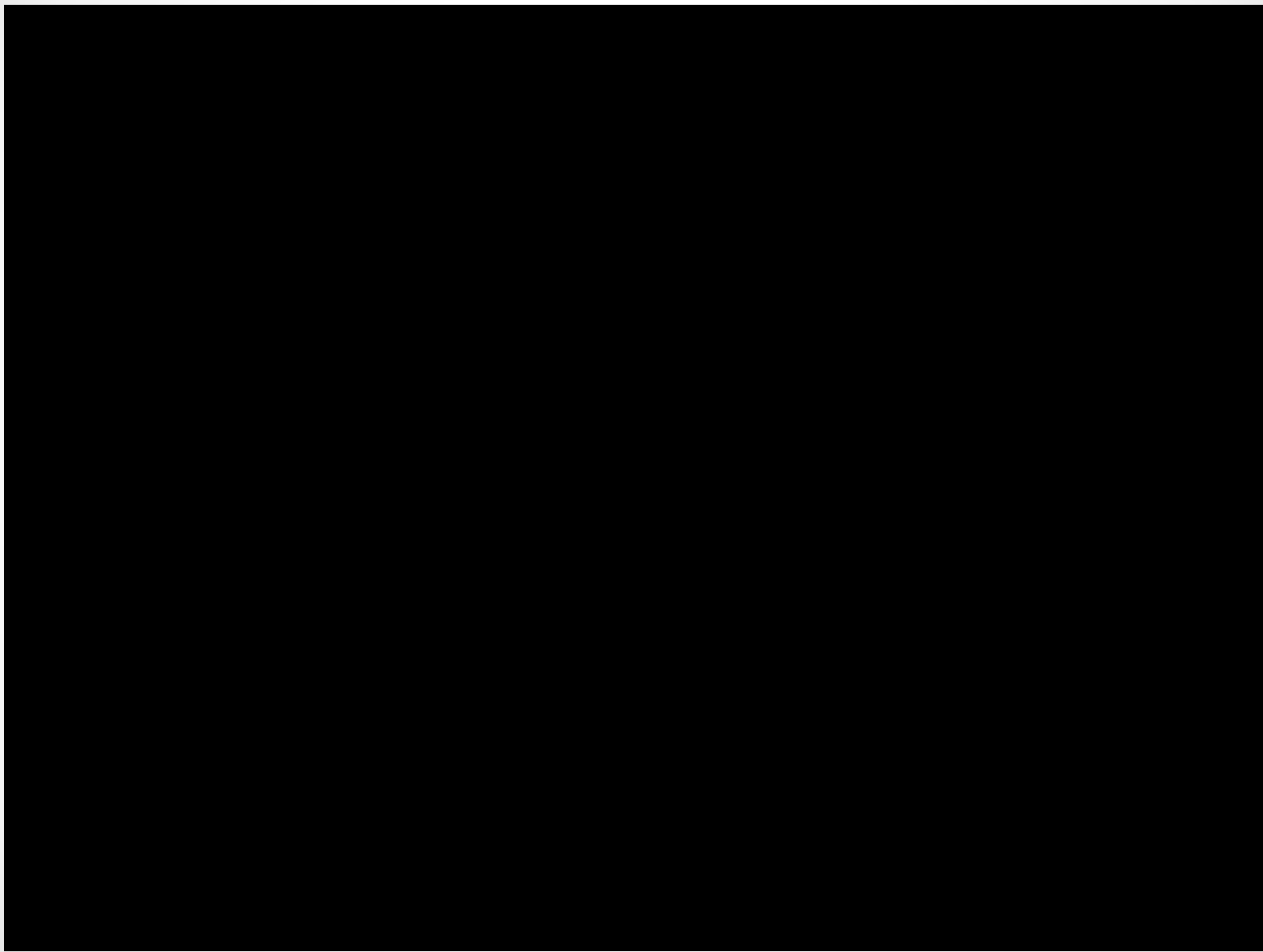
**Hyposensitive**

**Hypersensitive**

**Under-responsive**

**Over-responsive**





# Tips and Tricks

- Consult with OT
- Movement breaks
- Sensory tools
- Deep pressure
- Teach how to ask for sensory tools
- Prior to a work task do a regulating sensory task
- Identify “red flags” of dysregulation



# Tips and Tricks

## What you might try:

- Look for activities or experiences that provide the sensory input being sought
- Modify the environment
- Have a 'tool kit' of sensory toys and activities on hand to redirect and distract from challenging behaviour
- Consult your Occupational Therapist and ask about a sensory profile or diet

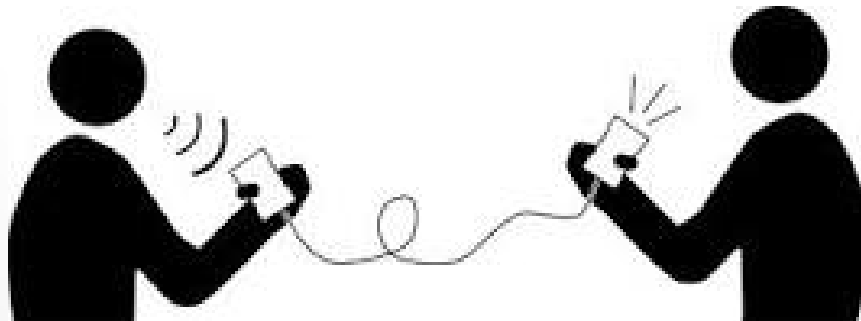
# Communication

“The difference between high-functioning and low-functioning is that high-functioning means your deficits are ignored, and low-functioning means your assets are ignored.”  
(Tisoncik)

# Receptive Language

Common Differences in ASD:

- Don't assume understanding
- Receptive language is inefficient
- Poor understanding of auditory messages
- Atypical processing of auditory information (tone, pitch, prosody, background noise)



# Expressive Language

Common Differences in ASD:

- Pre/non-verbal
- Echolalia and perseverative speech
- Verbal-but prompt dependent
- Verbal- but struggle with social aspects of communication

# Expressive Language

Pre Verbal/Echolalic/Verbal with Prompting/Verbal

- what do they know
- know their communication preference
- communication intent: how do they show communication
- provide opportunities to communicate
- can they communicate with “others”

# Expressive Language

## Core Functions

- 1) request
- 2) seek assistance/help
- 3) completion or “all done”
- 4) protest/reject “saying no”

**We need visuals so they can do these basics!**

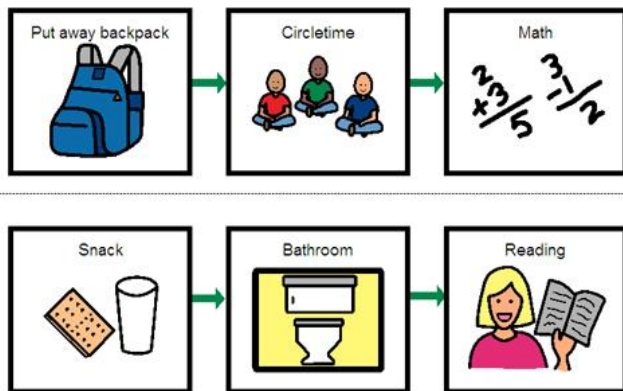
# Myths

- “If only they could talk, everything would be okay”
- “They understand everything I say”
- “But we have a visual schedule”
- “Pictures are only for young children”
- “Using pictures will handicap the child”
- “She/he knows what to do, we don’t need visuals”

# Tips and Tricks for Visual Cueing:

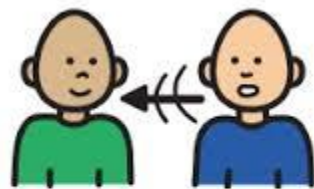


Morning Schedule

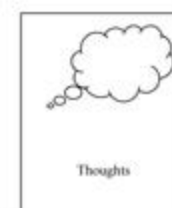
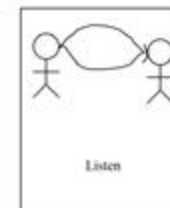
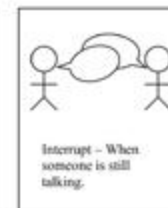




# Tips and Tricks for Explaining:

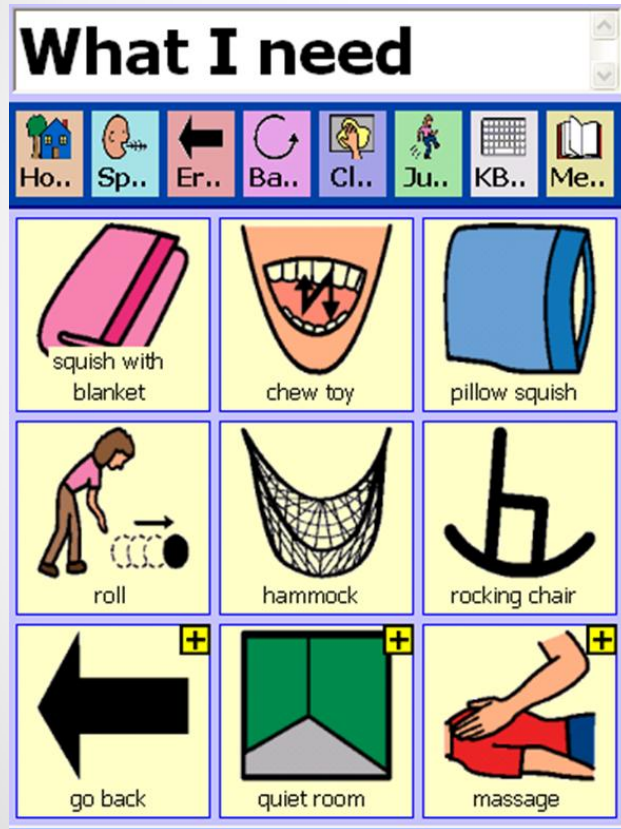


I will tell if someone tries to touch or see my private parts



Social Behavior Map			
Behaviors That Are EXPECTED For Learning as Part of a Group in the Classroom		Behaviors That Are UNEXPECTED For Learning as Part of a Group in the Classroom	
Expected Behaviors	How They Make Others Feel	Consequences You Experience	How You Feel About Yourself
<p>St where the group is sitting.</p> <p>Keep your eyes on the teacher or what she is talking about.</p> <p>Work on tasks the teacher assigns during work time.</p> <p>Ask for help.</p> <p>Touch only your own materials.</p> <p>Use fingers to help keep your body calm.</p> <p>Keep your comments and questions focused on the class topic.</p> <p>Take out your book, pencil, and paper at the start of class.</p> <p>Write down your homework assignment.</p> <p>Put materials away at the end of class.</p> <p>Monitor your talking time so that you participate as a member of the group; not too much nor too little.</p> <p>Monitor your use of humor so that it blends in with the class and does not stand out.</p>	<p>Happy</p> <p>Proud</p> <p>Calm</p> <p>Pleased</p> <p>Successful</p>	<p>Calm voices</p> <p>Pleased look on peoples' faces</p> <p>People compliment or praise your behavior.</p> <p>People may just let you work quietly so that you can work.</p> <p>People might give you special opportunities or special tasks.</p> <p>Students want to work with you.</p> <p>Students may want to hang out or play with you during non-work times.</p> <p>You earn a break time for concentrating, work.</p> <p>People laugh at something you say or do and they want to hang out with you.</p>	<p>Good</p> <p>Calm</p> <p>Happy</p> <p>Relieved</p> <p>Included</p>
Unexpected Behaviors	How They Make Others Feel	Consequences You Experience	How You Feel About Yourself
<p>Your body does not look like it is part of the group (e.g. wandering, body turned away from the group).</p> <p>Your eyes are not focused on the teacher or what she is referencing.</p> <p>Refusing to work, including sleeping.</p> <p>NOT asking for help.</p> <p>Body is not calm and you are doing things that distract yourself or others.</p> <p>Smelling or touching people.</p> <p>Talking about things of interest to you, but your comments do not clearly add to the class topic.</p> <p>Not getting materials out at the start of class.</p> <p>Not writing down your homework assignment.</p> <p>Not putting materials where they belong at the end of class.</p> <p>Cussing, jokes or laughing during work times to the point of drawing to others, the teacher or yourself.</p>	<p>Frustrated</p> <p>Annoyed</p> <p>Irritated</p> <p>Worried you are not learning as part of the group.</p> <p>Tense</p>	<p>Tense faces</p> <p>Angry or solemn sounding voices</p> <p>People tell you what you should be doing they may yell.</p> <p>Students may not want to work with you.</p> <p>Students may not choose to hang out or play with you.</p> <p>You are sent out of the classroom.</p> <p>You do not get any special rewards.</p> <p>People laugh at something you say or do but they do not want to hang out with you.</p>	<p>Sad</p> <p>Anxious</p> <p>Mad</p> <p>Not included</p>

# Communication Systems:



# Developmental Level

- Are the behaviours developmentally appropriate for the child?
- Teach the expected behaviour and replace the unexpected behaviour that is occurring.

# Issues Related to ASD

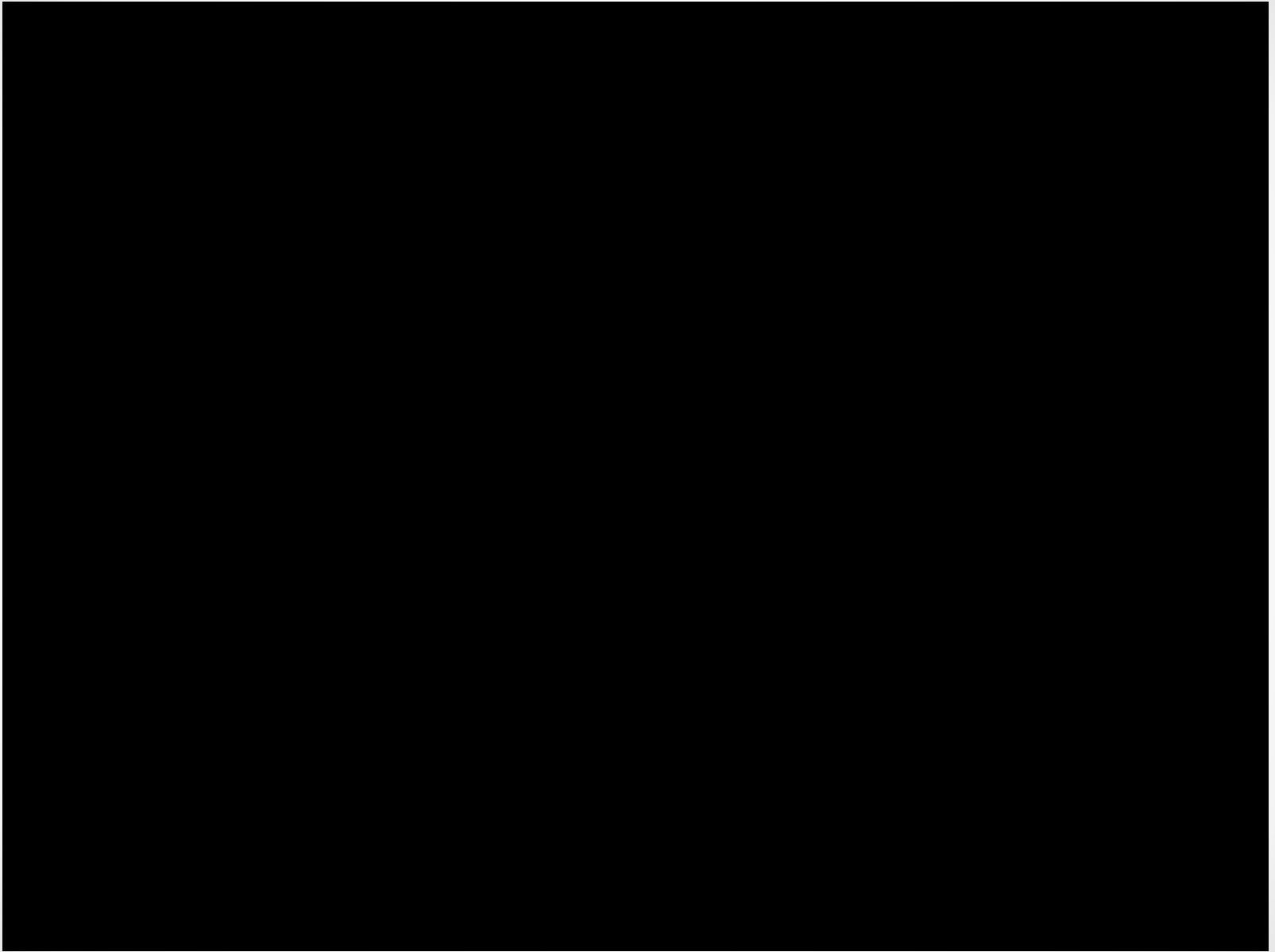
## Anxiety

Tony Attwood: “Autism is anxiety looking for a target”

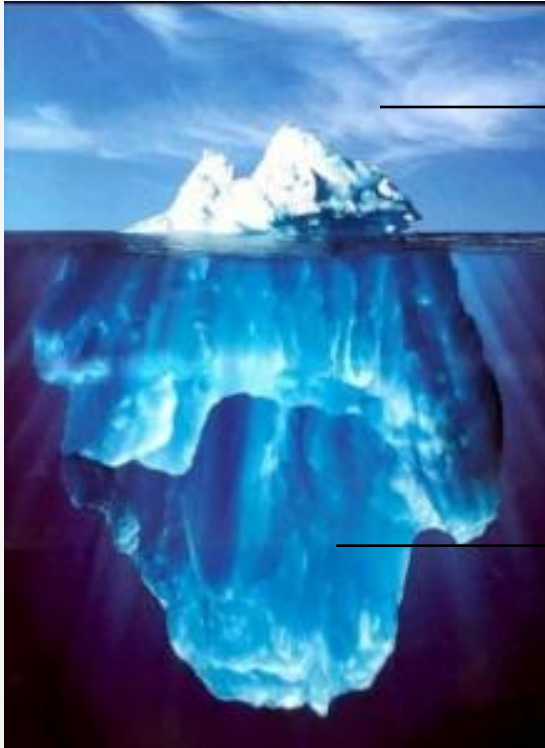


# Tips and Tricks

- Identify stressors that are causing anxiety.
- Learn to recognize rumbling behaviour.
- Use visuals to explain expectations of up coming events that might be causing anxiety.
- Social Stories
- Visual Schedules
- Calendars
- Video Modeling
- Peer Modeling
- 80:20 rule
- Regulating activities
- Introduction of materials



“What you see is just the tip of the iceberg”



**Specific  
Behaviours**

**Underlying  
reasons**

# Understanding Autism



Who the individual is:

- Age
- Developmental Stage
- Health & Medical Issues
- Family Issues
- Personality & Temperament
- Personal Preferences
- Learning Style
- Sensory Issues
- Self-esteem, Sensitivity/awareness about Autism



# The Rage Cycle:

Video by Brenda Smith Myles

3 Stages:

Rumbling

**RAGE**

*RECOVERY*

The moment the rage cycle hits, all opportunities for learning are gone, perhaps for the day

# RUMBLING STAGE

I may be fidgeting, pacing, getting louder, swearing, name-calling, threatening, making noises, ripping paper, grimacing and making faces, making quick and jerky movements, looking for the exit, refusing to cooperate, tensing my muscles or giving verbal warnings that I've had enough



# Rage Cycle

## **Rumbling:** Treat behaviour as communication

- Minimize or eliminate language use
- Use calming strategies
- Be flexible because the child cannot be
- Re-direct
- Distract
- Re-evaluate goals

# RAGE STAGE

I have lost control. I may be disinhibited, impulsive, shouting, screaming, swearing, kicking, hitting, biting, destroying property, displaying extreme emotional, internalizing or explosive behaviour, or engage in self-injury.



# Rage Cycle

## **Rage stage:** Student Interventions

- Keep everyone safe, remove the audience
- Don't talk, don't touch
- Don't discipline

# Rage Cycle

## Have a **rage** response plan

- Who will deal with the child
- Consistent across environments/people
- Maintains dignity
- Allows for debriefing

# Rage Cycle

## **Rage stage:** For the Adults

- Don't take behaviours personally
- Less is more
- Remain calm and quiet
- Be careful of non-verbal cues
- Disengage emotionally

# RECOVERY STAGE

*I may be very tired or sleep for a while. I may not remember what happened during the rage stage, and may deny my behaviour. I may be remorseful and want to apologize. I may want to withdraw into fantasy or comforting activities. I may be fragile, and could easily re-escalate with minor triggers. Being in rage is awful and exhausting for me.*





# Rage Cycle

## When in the **Recovery Stage:**

- Student is still very fragile
- Sometimes does not remember the melt down
- Don't talk about what just happened and what they could have done differently

# Rage Cycle

## When in the **Recovery Stage:**

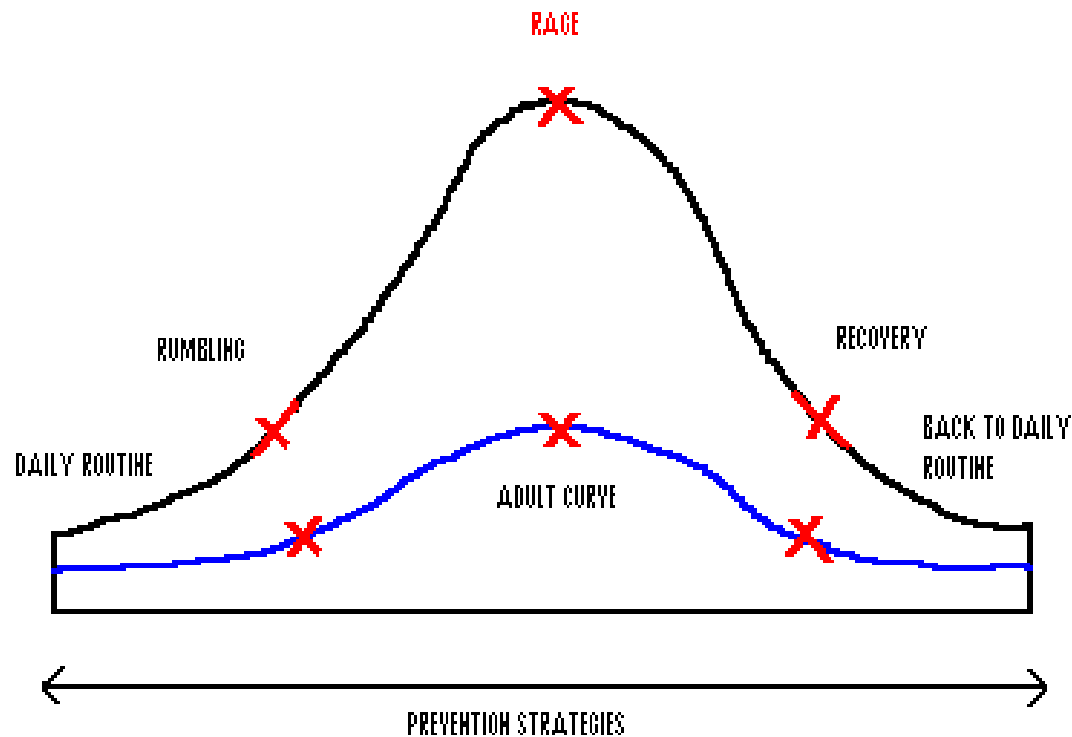
- Initiate demands by redirecting to a successful activity
- Social Story about being a new day or re-do day
- Don't punish the individual

# Rage Cycle

## **Recovery** interventions for Adults:

- Debrief with team
- Take time to regroup

# The Rage Cycle



# Christopher's 5-Point Scale

5	Out of Control	Hitting, throwing, pushing
4	Danger	Yelling, hurting stomach
3	Irritated/Upset	Pacing, rocking, louder voice, face scrunching
2	Okay	Thinking changes, body starts to feel tighter but can't tell by looking at me.
1	Cool	Calm body and mind

## Regulation Plan

Triggers:

Stages	What it looks like	Student Choices	Adult Choices
Rumbling:			
Rage:			
Recovery:			

A Day in the Life of:

Reactive Plan:

.

# Be Proactive

- Research shows that if we are proactive, we can stop behaviours from happening 75%-80% of the time
- Become a detective and develop a regulation plan for the adults to use with the student
- Have Neutral reactions to behaviour
- Look at the type of support that we are providing and adjust accordingly
- Build a relationship with the child

# Analyzing Support

- Is it the right match?
- Develop your own goals on how you can improve your support

## Question Yourself:

- 1) Am I being proactive?
  - 2) Am I focusing on relationships?
  - 3) Is my support truly supportive?
  - 4) Was the task too difficult/easy?
- Be solution driven



# Be Proactive

- Children and youth do not want to engage in rage behaviour
- Teach social skills, communication, self-understanding
- Make academic modifications as needed
- Consider tracking and analyzing behaviour to identify potential triggers
- **Use restraint as a last result**

# What you might do...

School

Behaviour Tracking Sheet

Date

Behav	Looks Like	Time	What happened...			Who helped?
			Before	Dur.	After	
<b>SIB</b>	<b>Head banging</b>					
	<b>Biting back of hand</b>					
	<b>Hitting chin...</b>					

# Learned Behaviour

## Reason:

- Individuals with ASD are good at learning routines; if they do “X” and you always do “Y”, a powerful piece of information is learned
- Some types of challenging behaviour can be distressing or offensive, and may generate prompt and dramatic attention from others
- Positive attention such as hugs or emotional soothing can *reinforce* behaviour and increase its frequency whereas ignoring certain behaviour, although very difficult to do, can decrease frequency

# Learned Behaviour

Please remember:

- Behaviour that has been learned, serves a purpose for the individual, and has been reinforced over time can be very difficult to change. It can take several months of consistent responding before seeing improvement
- When behaviour is no longer achieving the same result, often the behaviour gets worse before it gets better. The child will try harder to get your attention or get the desired result (Extinction burst).



# Learned Behaviour

Please remember:

- If behaviour is reinforced only once in a while, it can send the message that the child simply needs to try harder with behaviour and eventually will get their desired outcome.
- Teamwork and communication is essential to maintain consistency.
- Teach replacement behaviour and ensure you understand the cause of the behaviour.



# Remember...

- View each person as an individual
- Avoid arguments and power struggles. These are not energy or time well-spent.
- Avoid using favorite activities or items only as rewards. Sometimes these preferred things are what's keeping the day successful or helping the child cope e.g. computer time.
- Do not insist on eye contact.
- Involve the individual in solving challenging behaviour whenever possible.

# Remember...

- Behaviour serves a purpose
- All children with ASD are different, and will engage in different behaviours for a variety of reasons. What works for one child will not necessarily work with others.
- Don't get discouraged
- **BE PROACTIVE!**
- Attitude is your most important tool.

# Top 5 Attributes

1. Flexibility
2. Less is more
3. Attitude/Perception
4. Proactive
5. Goal setter

“In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, a child humanized or dehumanized.” (Haim Ginott)



“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the **decisive element in the classroom**. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I **possess a tremendous power** to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, **it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.**”

Haim Ginott

# References:

- Rage Cycle Video. Brenda Smith Myles.
- Autism: Sensory-Movement Differences and Diversity Paperback. M., Leary & A., Donnelan. (2012)
- Accessing the Curriculum for Pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Gary Mesibov & Marie Howley (2003)
- Visual Strategies for Improving Communication. Linda Hodgdon (2011)
- Solving Behaviour Problems in Autism. Linda Hodgdon (1999)
- Teaching Young Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders to learn. Liz Hannah (2001)
- Communication: What Does It Mean to Me? Catherine Faherty (2010)
- Asperger Syndrome and Difficult Moments. Brenda Smith Myles, & Jack Southwick (1999)
- The Incredible 5-Point Scale. Kari Dunn Buron and Mitzi Curtis (2004)
- Calm, Alert and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation. Stuart Shanker
- Social Behaviour Mapping. Michelle Garcia Winner (2005)