

Positive Strategies for Supporting Self-Regulation

**The Autism Professionals
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Ruth Aspy, Ph.D.
The Ziggurat Group



Self-regulation defined:

- The ability to control one's own behavior
- The ability for the mind to organize itself
- The ability to modulate emotions – to soothe oneself when distressed or to express or suppress feelings
- The ability to adapt to new people and new situations
- The ability to match arousal level to the task or situation
- The ability to set a goal and adjust behavior to reach that goal
- The ability to deal with frustration

ASD Factors that lead to self-regulation challenges

- Sensory differences
 - Difficulty modulating emotions.
 - Difficulty with flexibility and change
 - Challenges understanding the social world
 - Catatonia
- 

ABC-Iceberg

Signs of dysregulation

Specific Behaviors

Behavior

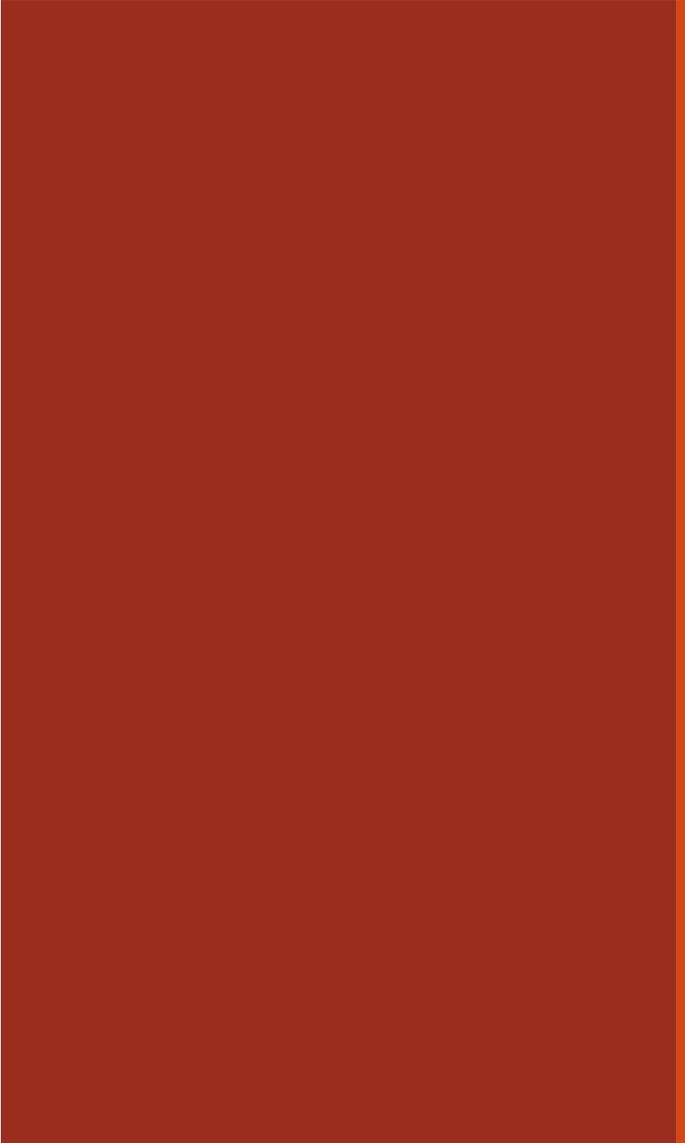
- 👁️ Angry words and affect
- 👁️ Verbal/Physical threats
- 👁️ Pacing
- 👁️ Scrambled explanation of event at school

Underlying Autism

- Sensory differences
- Difficulty modulating emotions
- Difficulty with flexibility and change
- Challenges understanding the social world
- Catatonia

Sensory Differences





Sensory Overload

Sensory input may
lead to ***fight or flight***
response

Sensory Processing and Anxiety

Bright lights, loud noises, unfamiliar surroundings and situations. All of these can create stress—and sensory overload—for kids with sensory processing issues. It can also create anxiety over situations that lie ahead. That's especially true if kids aren't prepared or are worried about unexpected things happening.

Peg Rosen. Understood, 2018

Difficulty Modulating Emotions

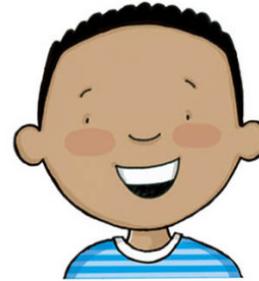




surprised



angry



excited



sad

KE-840022



loving

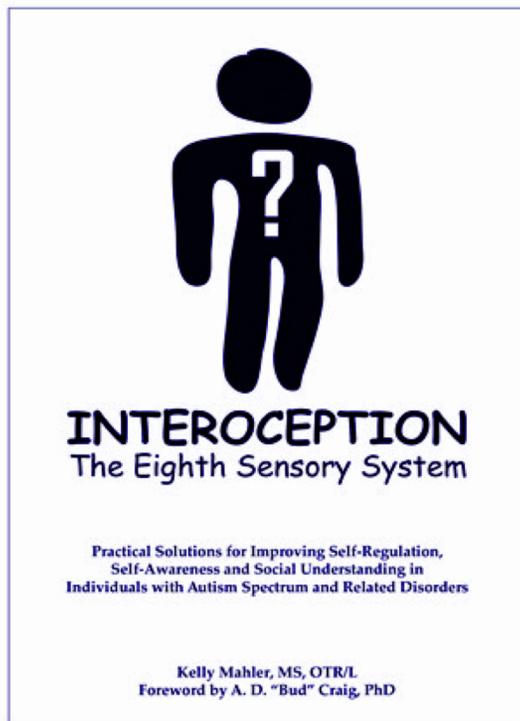


sad

Labeling is not
Understanding

Interoception

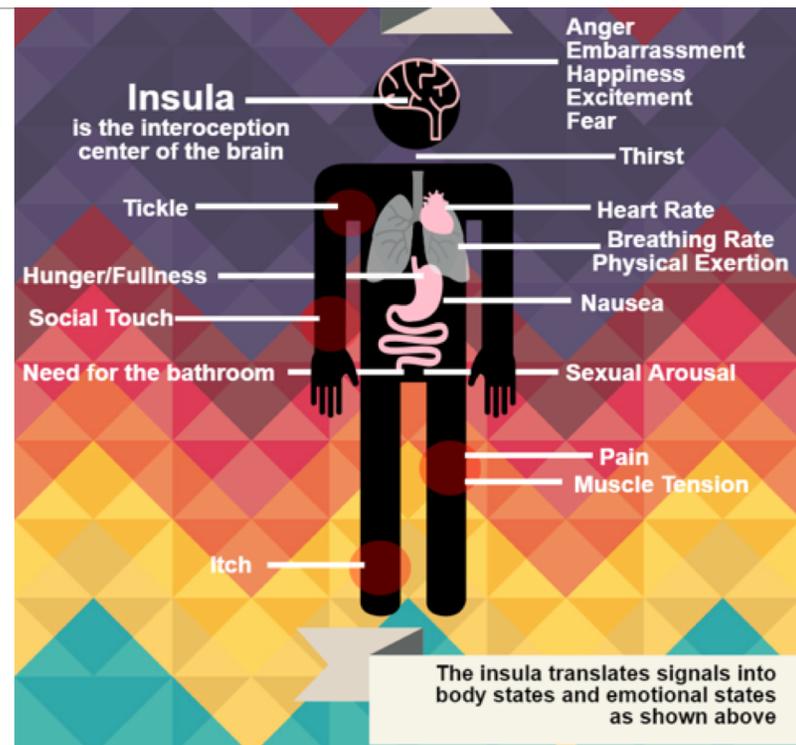
The Eighth Sensory System



- **Self-Regulation**
- Self-Awareness
- Flexibility of Thought
- Problem Solving
- Social Understanding
- Intuition
- Perspective-taking

Interoception and Emotional Awareness

In ASD there is often a failed connection between internal body signals and specific emotions, resulting in poor ability to identify specific emotions.



How is interoception connected to our emotions?

Each emotion feels different in the body

Example nervous about public speaking:

- the heart may race
- the muscles may feel tense
- the breathing may become shallow
- the stomach may feel fluttery

Without clearly feeling these sensations, it is difficult to identify the emotion

Difficulty with Flexibility and Change

Style of Thinking



vagueness

People with autism do not cope well with vagueness and ambiguity. In practice, things not being very clear is the **number-one challenge** for people with autism; they are confused. And that confusion often **results** in cognitive and **emotional breakdowns**, p.108

Vermeulen, [Autism as Context Blindness](#)

Order/Routines



Change Rating Scale

The Social Times
Kari Dunn Buron

A Change Scale

Rating	Example
	A huge change like moving to a new town or changing schools. Your idea:
	A pretty big change, like school being cancelled or moving to the next grade. Your idea:
	A medium change, like the TV schedule or having a substitute teacher. Your idea:
	A little change, like changing your clothes or going from one activity to another in school. Your idea:
	No change.

Change Strategies



- Priming – preview activities or information
- Social Narratives
- Video Priming
- Walkthroughs
- Timers
- Photos
- Preferred items to smell or touch when change occurs
- Incremental change
- Teach skills for coping

Catatonia



Missing Piece



I currently have a student that makes me think each morning "what am I missing?"

I think you have given me the piece I have been missing.

Your info was the piece we were missing- and a HUGE piece!

Prevalence in ASD

12 to 18 Percent

(Wing and Shah, 2000, Billstedt et al., 2005, and Ghaziuddin et al, 2012)

Catatonia

A condition related to posture/movement, speech, mood, & “behavior.”



Autism

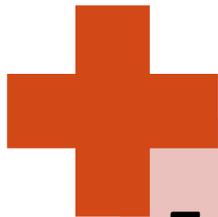
A condition related to posture/movement, speech, mood, & “behavior.”



Onset

- Between 10 and 19 years
- Often gradual

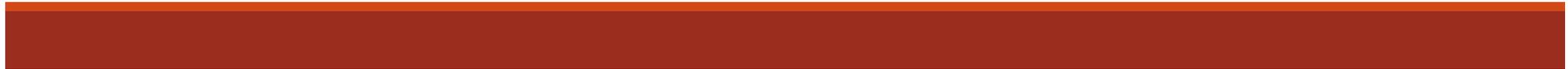
Symptoms of catatonia manifest in two ways:



Excitability
(e.g., agitation,
hyperactivity,
aggression)



Immobility
(e.g., stupor,
catalepsy)



Wachtel's Symptoms of Catatonia in Autism

Immobility/rigidity

Stupor

Mutism

Posturing

Echophenomena

Grimacing

Physical excitement 

(agitation, hyperactivity, aggression)

Combativeness 

Stereotypy

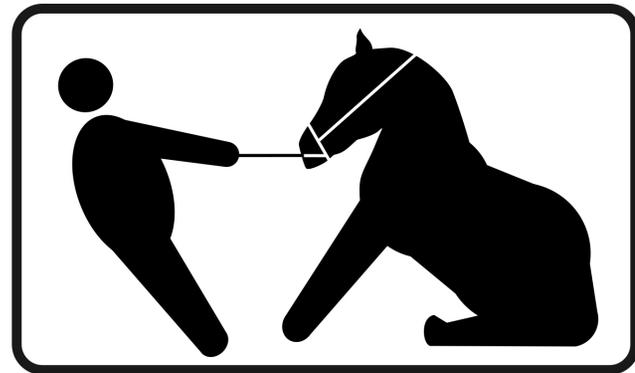
Negativism 

Autonomic instability

Negativism

Motiveless resistance to instructions or attempts to move

- Unplanned
- Without purpose



Alternation

Alternates suddenly from being very still and quiet to excessive motor activity or agitation (e.g., after seeming “frozen” or staring off suddenly leaps up and hits someone or begins to jump; after long period of being quiet, suddenly talks non-stop and then returns to not talking)

Triggered by Stress

- Dance audition
- Sister's wedding
- Bar Mitzvah
- Change in schedule
- Test
- Discipline

Seeing the Underlying Autism

KEY STRATEGY FOR ADDRESSING SELF-REGULATION



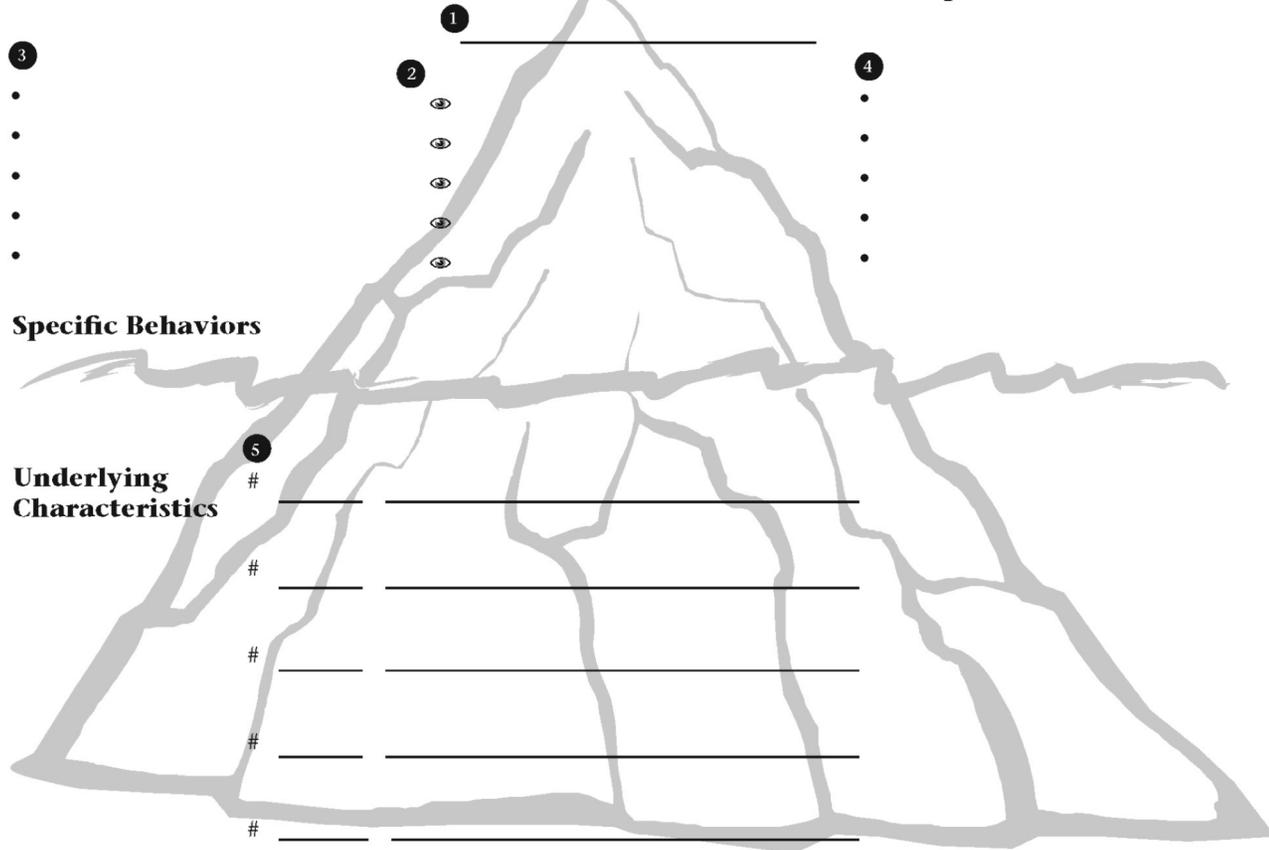
Patterns + Underlying Characteristics

Targeting underlying needs will lead to interventions that are more **proactive**, **fundamental**, and **sustained** than those that fail to consider these needs by simply focusing on the antecedent-behavior-consequence (ABC) patterns in a reductionist manner.

ABC-I

Ruth Aspy, Ph.D., and Barry G. Grossman, Ph.D.

Antecedent(s) → **Behavior** → **Consequence(s)**



Specific Behaviors

Underlying Characteristics



The UCC Areas

Social

Restricted Patterns of Behavior, Interests, and Activities

Communication

Sensory Differences

Cognitive Differences

Motor Differences

Emotional Vulnerability

Known Medical or other Biological Factors

Five versions of the UCC:



The **UCC-HF** (high-functioning) - individuals who are high functioning (Asperger Syndrome-like)



The **UCC-CL** (classic) - more “classic” in presentation



The **UCC-EI** (Early Intervention) - 3 to 72 months across all levels of functioning

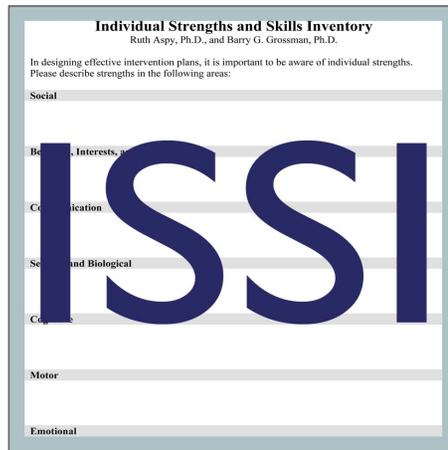


The **UCC-Self-Report-Adolescent (UCC-SR-ADOL)** - 12-18 years of age



The **UCC-Self-Report-Adult (UCC-SR-Adult)** - 18 years and older

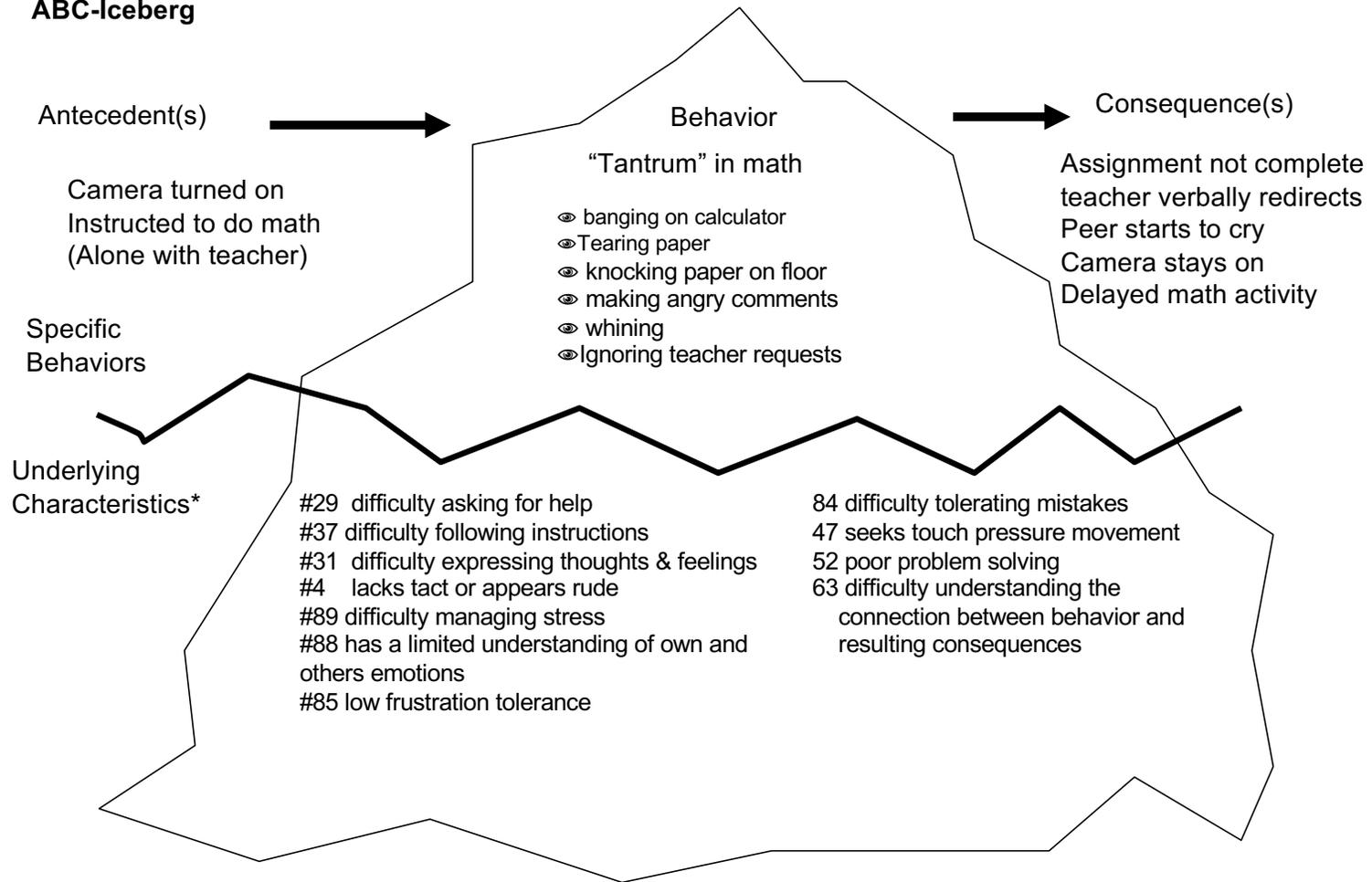
Individual Strengths and Skills Inventory



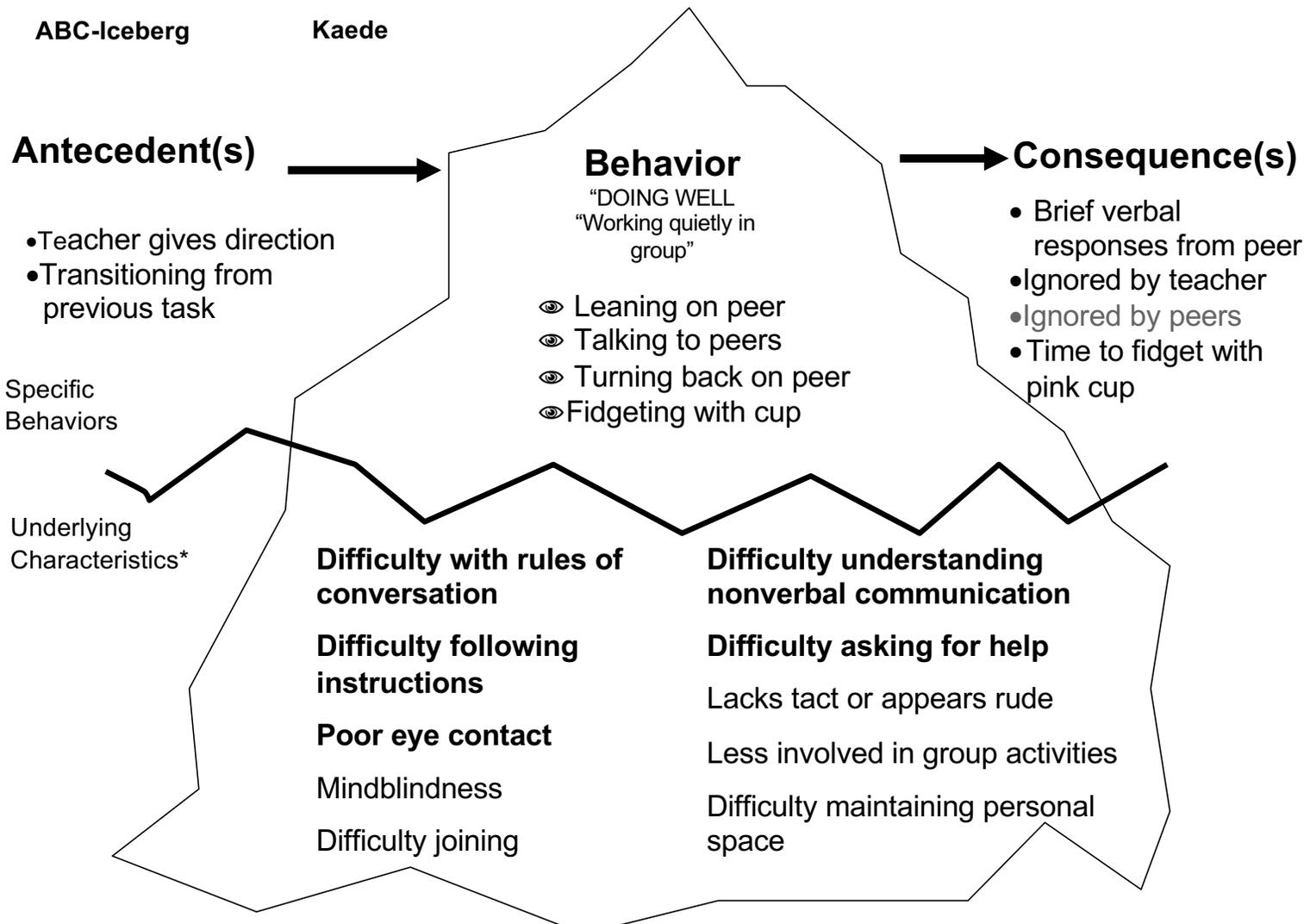
The image shows the cover of the Individual Strengths and Skills Inventory (ISSI) form. The title "Individual Strengths and Skills Inventory" is at the top, followed by the authors "Ruth Aspy, Ph.D., and Barry G. Grossman, Ph.D.". Below this is a brief instruction: "In designing effective intervention plans, it is important to be aware of individual strengths. Please describe strengths in the following areas:". The form is divided into sections for "Social", "Behavior, Interests, and Activities", "Communication", "Sensory and Biological", "Cognitive", "Motor", and "Emotional". The acronym "ISSI" is prominently displayed in large, dark blue letters across the center of the form.

- Social
- Behavior, Interests, and Activities
- Communication
- Sensory
- Cognitive
- Motor
- Emotional

ABC-Iceberg



*As determined through the Underlying Characteristics Checklist



*As determined through the Underlying Characteristics Checklist

“She’s doing fine”

The calm
between
storms may
disguise the
underlying
autism.





Five Levels of Self-Regulation Intervention

The Ziggurat Model

Contact Information

Ruth Aspy, Ph.D.
aspy@texasautism.com



www.texasautism.com