# Understanding behaviour and mental health problems

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ABOUT US

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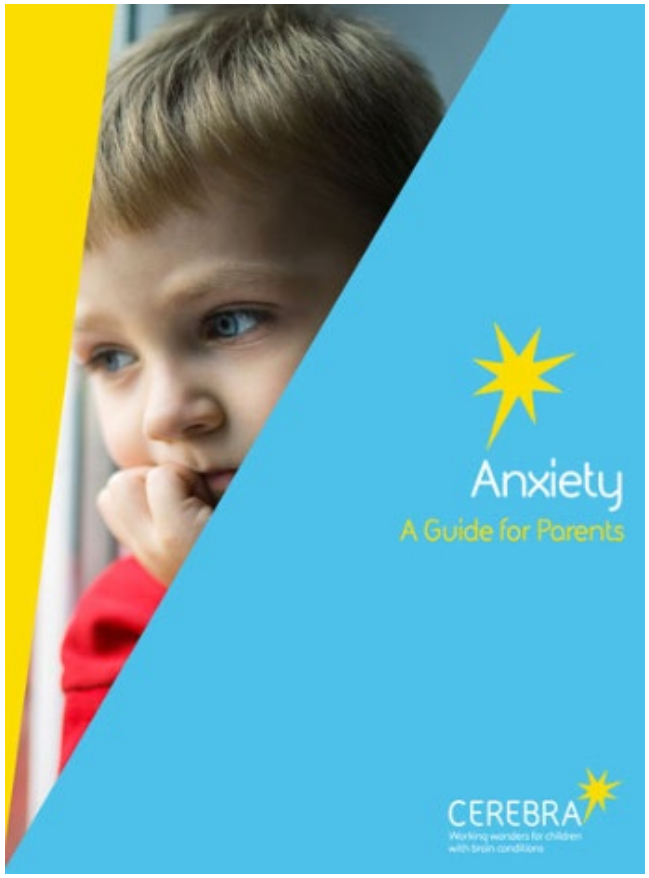


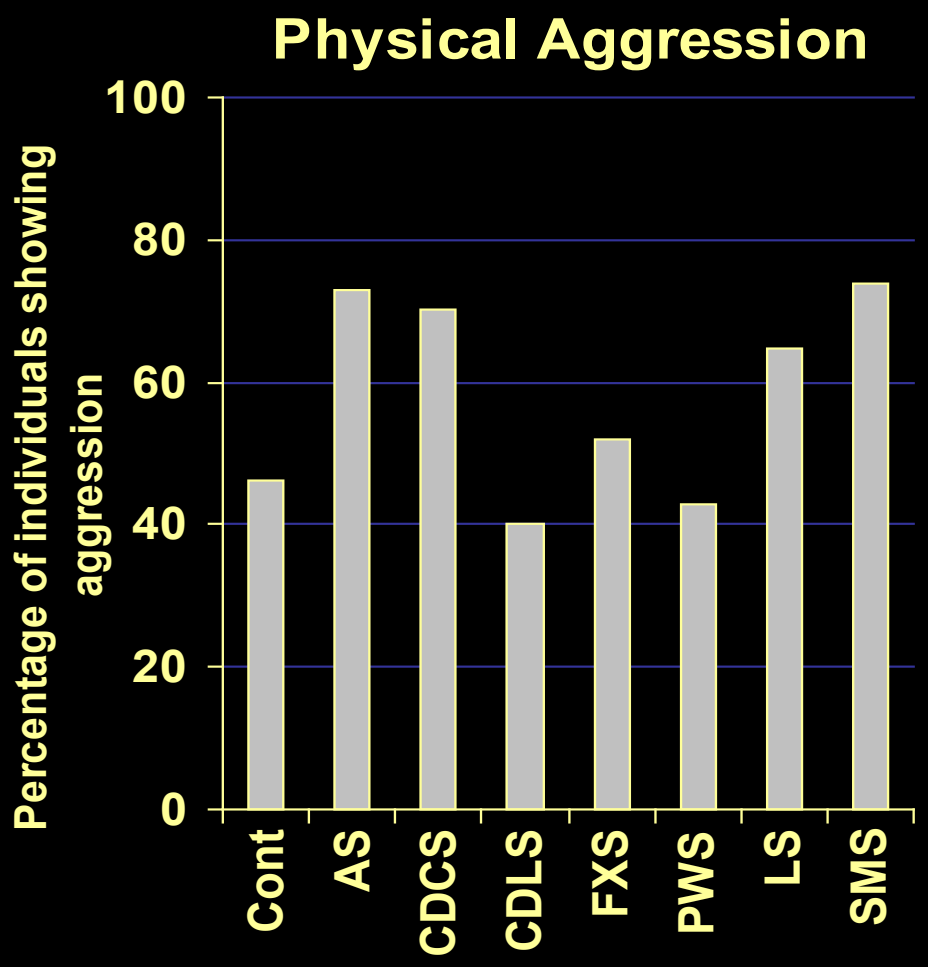

Cerebra: Self-injurious behaviour; Cerebra: Pain; Cerebra: Anxiety

# A definition of challenging behaviour

Aggression towards others

Self-injurious behaviour

Damaging property




What do we do?

CAUSE IS KEY

# Challenging behaviour tends to be related to three things

| Pain and discomfort | Learned behaviour | Difficulties regulating behaviour and emotion |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Independent of environment | Related to broad environment | Poor emotional regulation skills |
| Pain behaviours | Related to communicative behaviours | Compromised behavioural inhibition |
| Common pain conditions | Related to immediate environment | |
| Carer report | | |

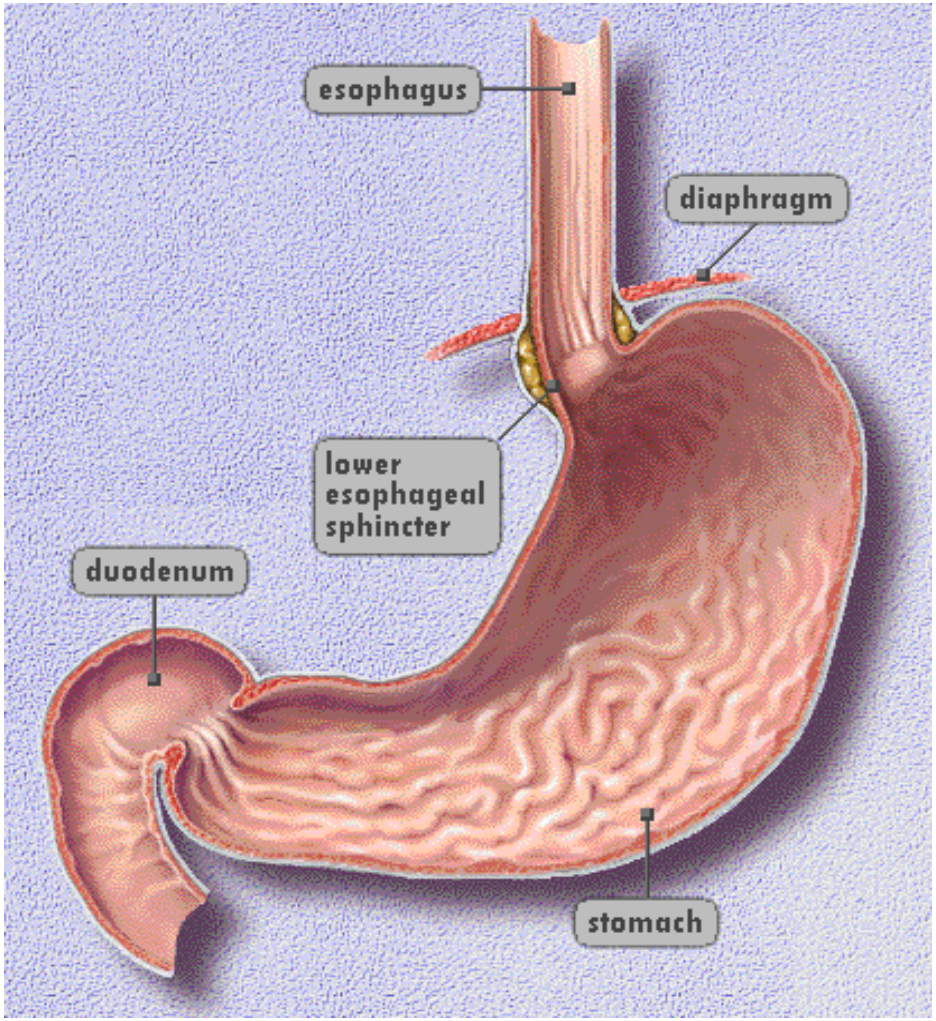
Pain and discomfort

Independent of environment

Pain behaviours

Common pain conditions

Carer report



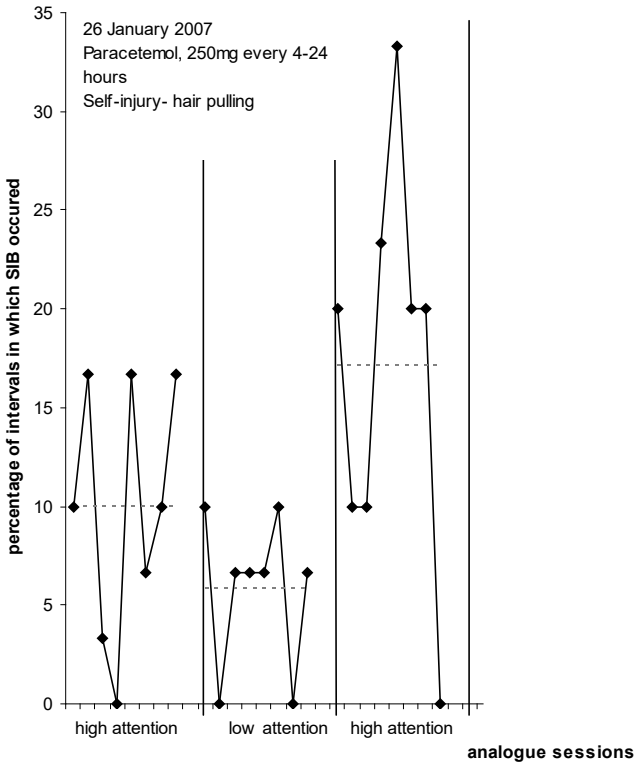
Pain and discomfort

Independent of environment

Pain behaviours

Common pain conditions

Carer report



Pain and discomfort

Pain behaviours

Independent of environment

Common pain conditions

Carer report

# The FLACC Pain Scale

Sometimes it is difficult to assess pain in children who are non-verbal. The FLACC Pain Scale is a system that can help parents and professionals assess pain levels in children who have limited or no expressive communication. The diagram shows the categories for scoring. Zero, one or two points are given to each of the five categories: Face, Legs, Activity, Cry and Consolability.

Interpreting the Behaviour Score
Each category is scored on the 0-2 scale, which results in a total score of 0-10

- 0 relaxed and comfortable
- 1-3 mild discomfort
- 4-6 moderate pain
- 7-10 severe discomfort or pain or both

| Categories | Score Zero | Score One | Score Two |
|---|---|---|---|
| Face F | No particular expression or smile | Occasional grimace or frown, withdrawn, disinterested | Frequent to constant quivering chin, clenched jaw |
| Legs L | Normal position or relaxed | Uneasy, restless, tense | Kicking or legs drawn up |
| Activity A | Lying quietly, normal position, moves easily | Squirming, shifting back and forth, tense | Arched, rigid or jerking |
| Cry C | No crying (awake or asleep) | Moans or whimpers, occasional complaint | Crying steadily, screams or sobs, frequent complaints |
| Consolability C | Content, relaxed | Reassured by occasional touching, hugging or being talked to, distractable | Difficult to console or comfort |

If a child is showing these behaviours, it doesn't necessarily mean that they are in pain, as some of the behaviours measured by the FLACC scale can happen for other reasons. However, parents are advised to follow up high scores with a professional.

CEREBRA

REFERENCE: Merkel, S.I., Voepel-Lewis, T., Shayevitz, J.R., and Malviya, S. (1997). The FLACC: A behavioural scale for scoring postoperative pain in young children. Pediatric Nursing, 23(3), 293-297.

# Conducting A FLACC

Face

Download a FLACC: http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/research/research-papers/self-injurious-behaviour-in-children-with-intellectual-disability/

# Conducting A FLACC

Face
Legs

Download a FLACC: http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/research/research-papers/self-injurious-behaviour-in-children-with-intellectual-disability/

# Conducting A FLACC

Face
Legs
Activity

Download a FLACC: http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/research/research-papers/self-injurious-behaviour-in-children-with-intellectual-disability/

# Conducting A FLACC

Face
Legs
Activity
Crying

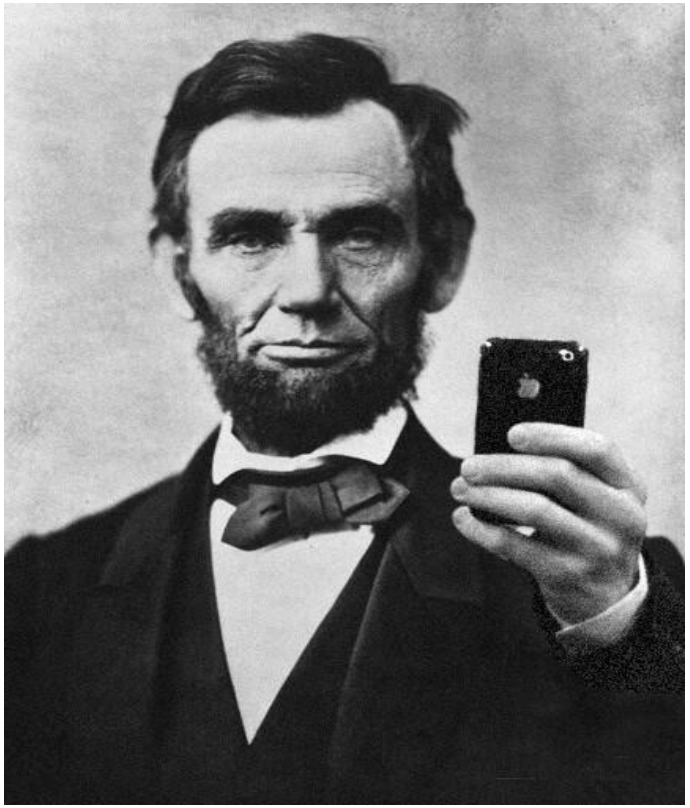
Download a FLACC: http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/research/research-papers/self-injurious-behaviour-in-children-with-intellectual-disability/

# Conducting A FLACC

Face
Legs
Activity
Crying
Consolable

**Unrelated to environmental events, inconsolable, periods (hours, days) of SIB then none.**

Download a FLACC: http://w3.cerebra.org.uk/research/research-papers/self-injurious-behaviour-in-children-with-intellectual-disability/



Other outrageously expensive smartphones are also available

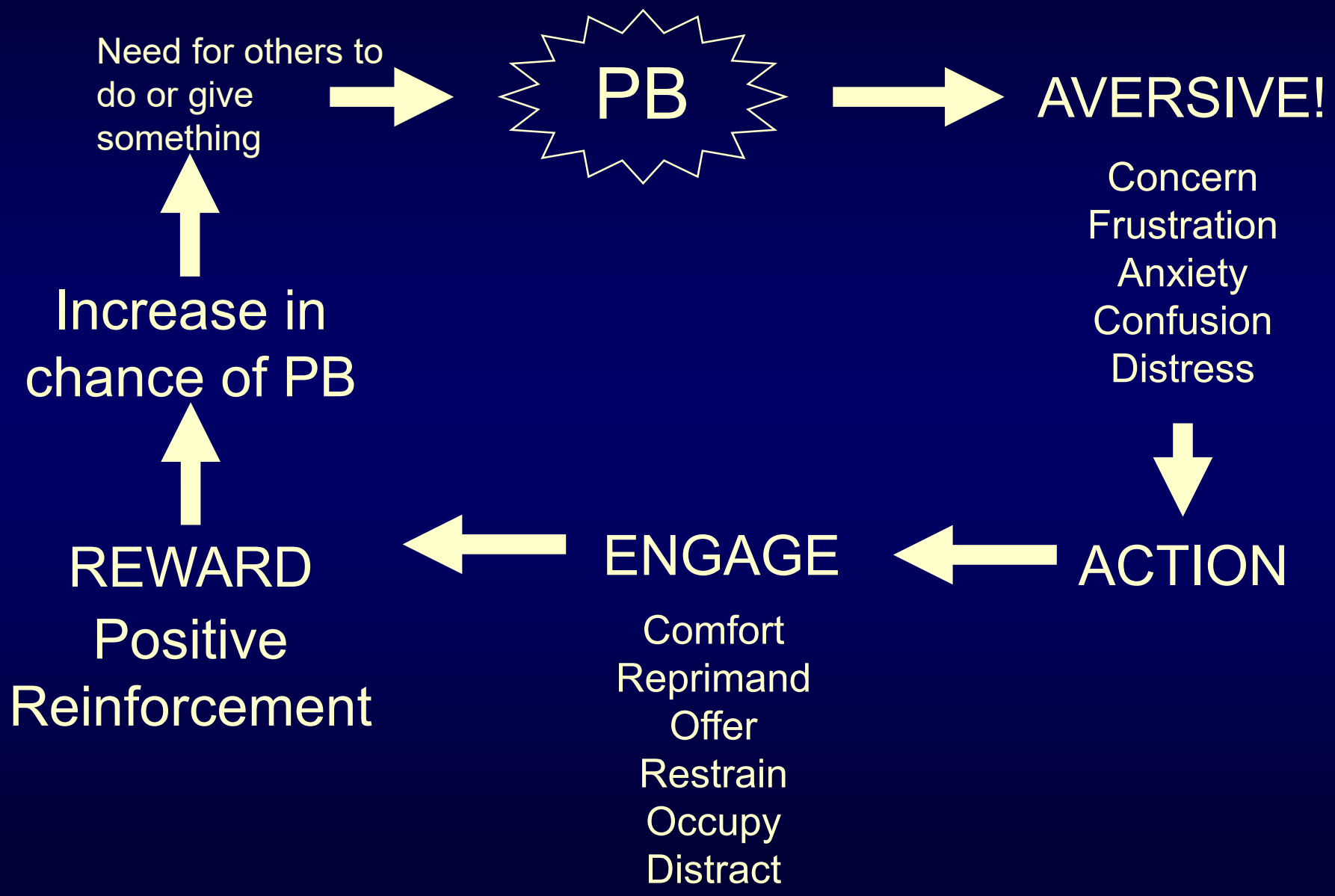
Learned behaviour

Related to broad environment

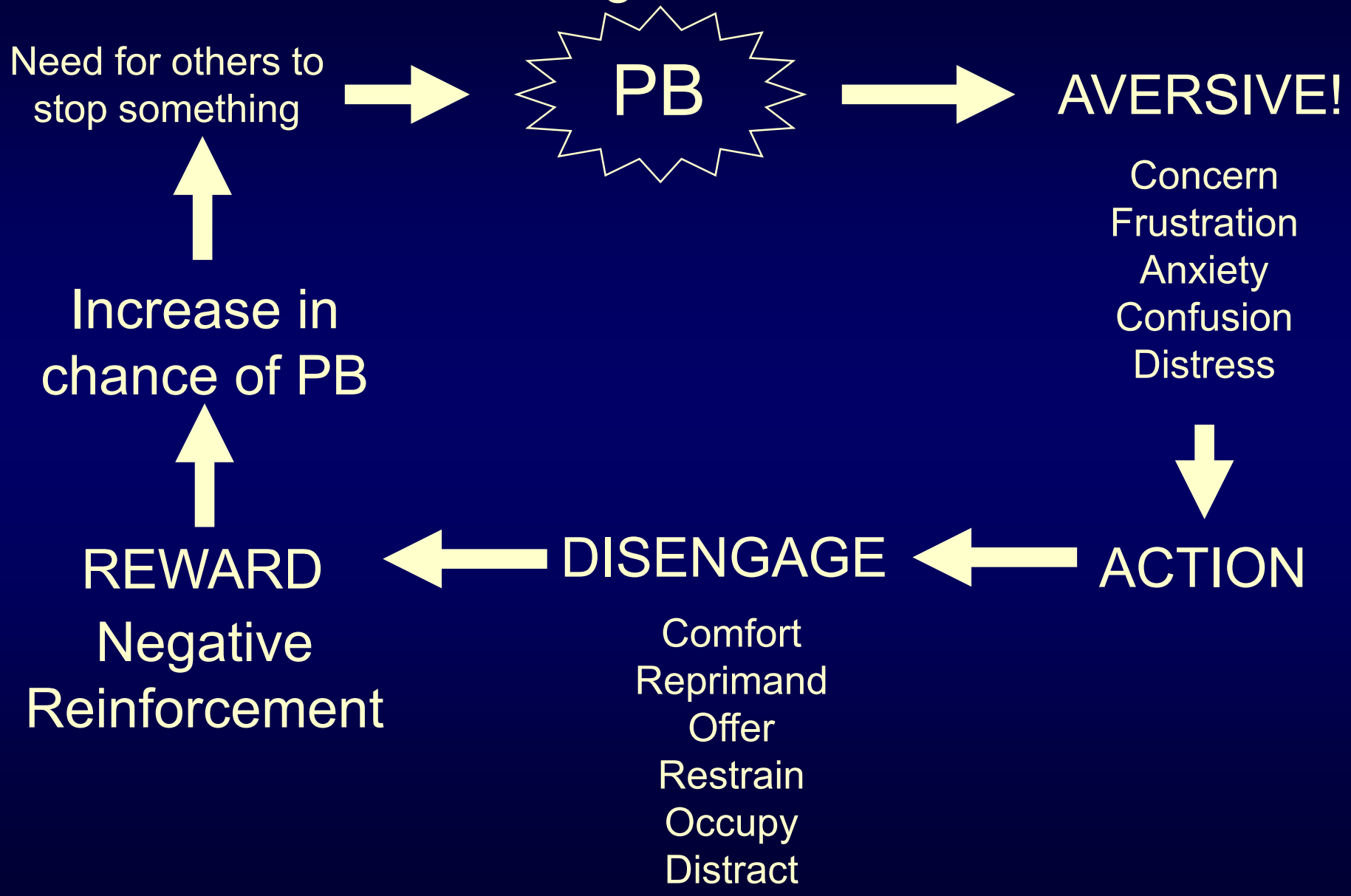
Related to communicative behaviours

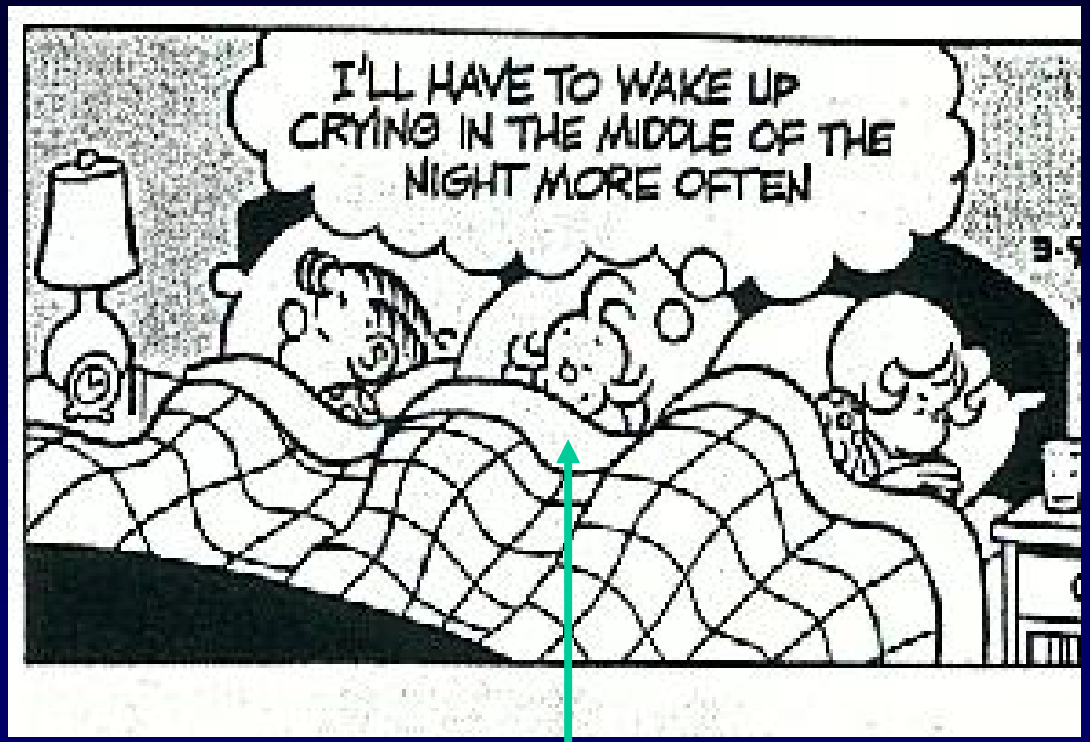
Related to immediate environment

# Social Communicative Function of Problem Behaviour: Positive Reinforcement

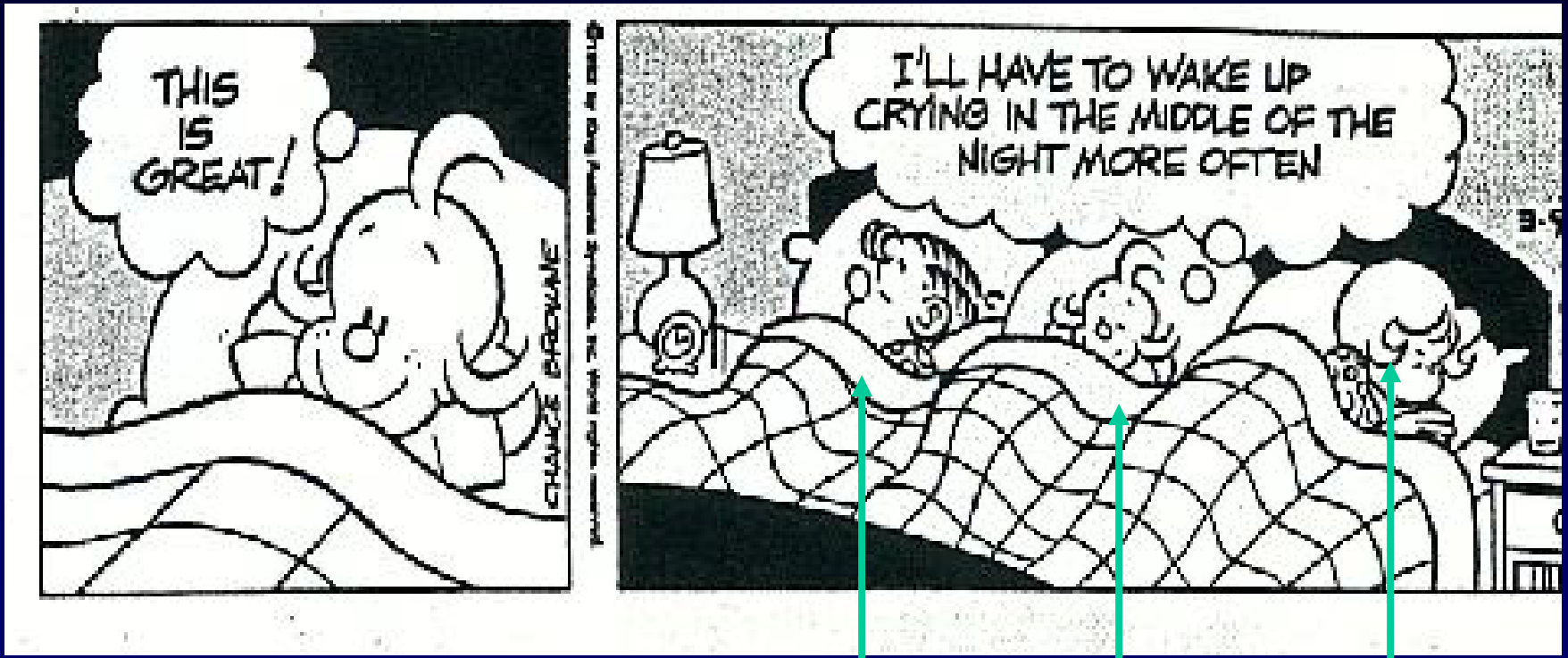


# Social Communicative Function of Challenging Behaviour: Negative Reinforcement




A rewarded person

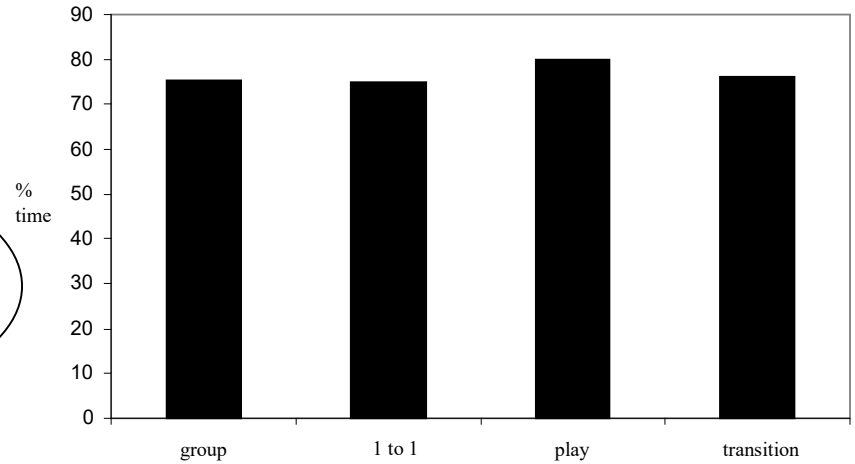



A rewarded person

Two other rewarded people

Learned behaviour

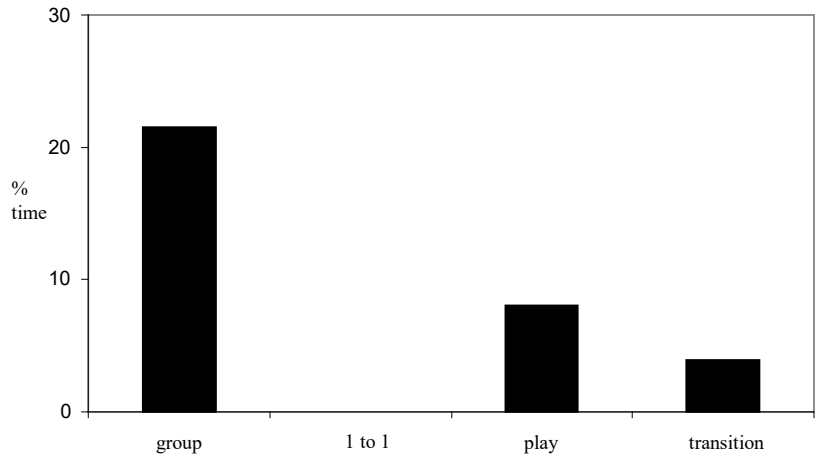
Related to broad environment




8 year old boy, hitting out at other children. Behaviour stable across different environments.

Related to communicative behaviours

Related to immediate environment




6 year old girl, hitting out at other children. Behaviour is very variable across different environments.

Moss, J., Oliver, C., Hall, S., Arron, K., Sloneem, J. and Petty, J. (2005). The association between environmental events and self-injurious behaviour in Cornelia de Lange syndrome. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, **49**, 269-277.

Learned behaviour

Related to broad environment

Related to communicative behaviours

Related to immediate environment

Behaviour stops with environmental or social change, preceded by precursor behaviours (protest, attempts to solicit attention, requests).

Behaviour is 'directed' toward another person (eye contact, facing toward).

# A Repertoire of Functionally Equivalent Behaviours

Waving

Standing and Looking

Shouting

Get Peer Help

Speaking

Hitting

Skirt Tugging

Do Something Else

Hand in Air

Tapping on Shoulder

Throwing Something

Headbanging

Smiling

Screaming

Do it Yourself

Waving

Standing and Looking

Shouting

Get Peer Help

Speaking

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Do Something Else

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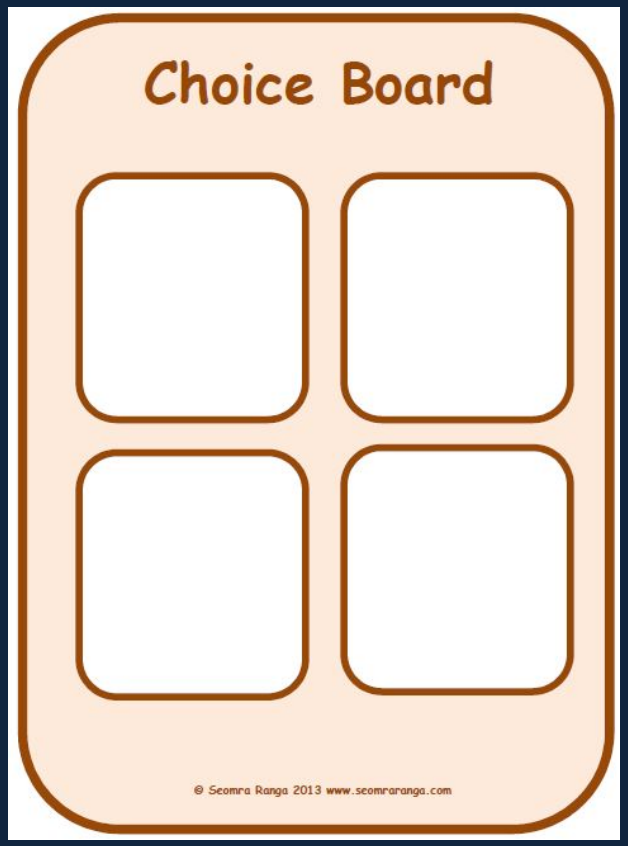
Do it Yourself

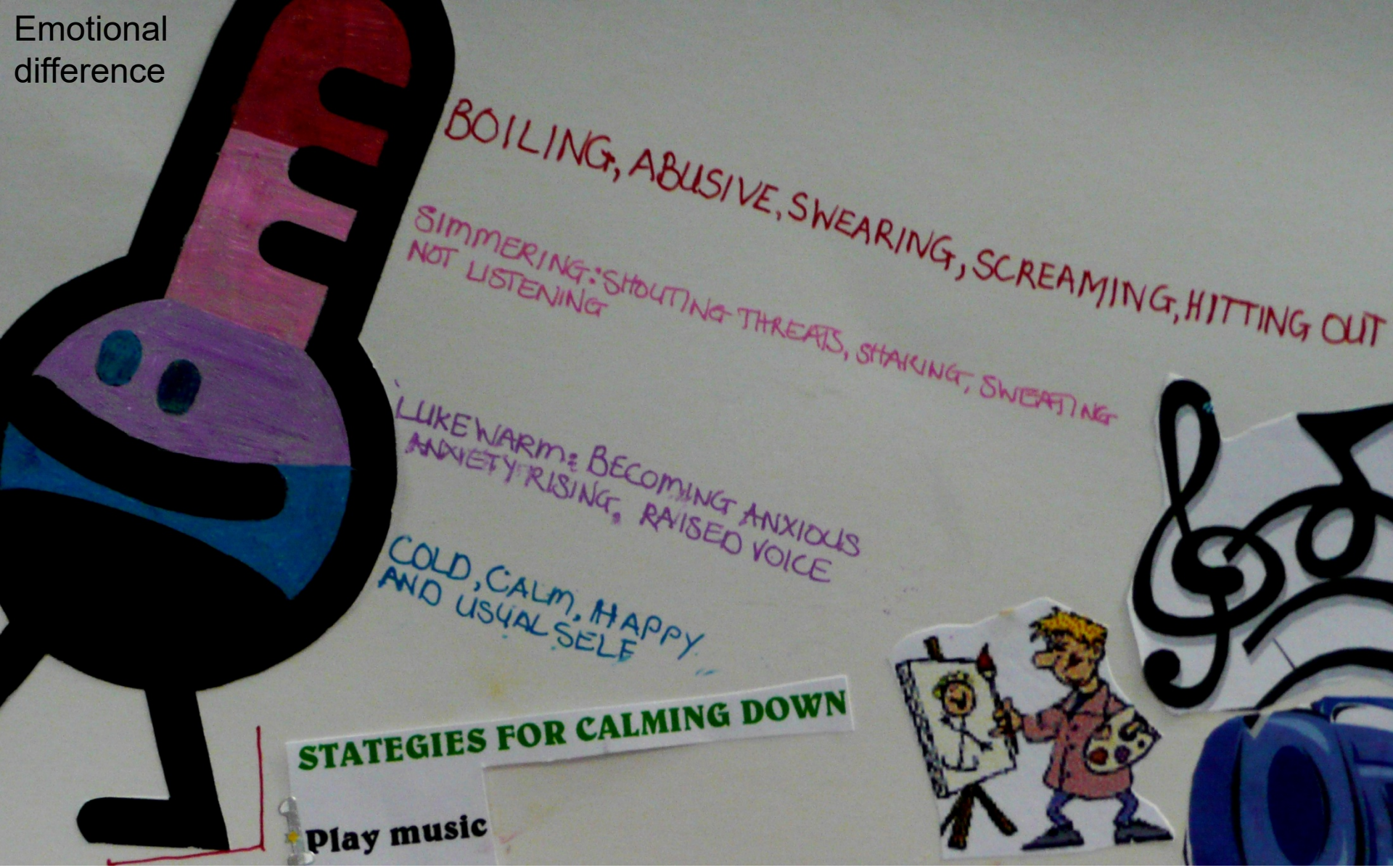
# Focus on communication



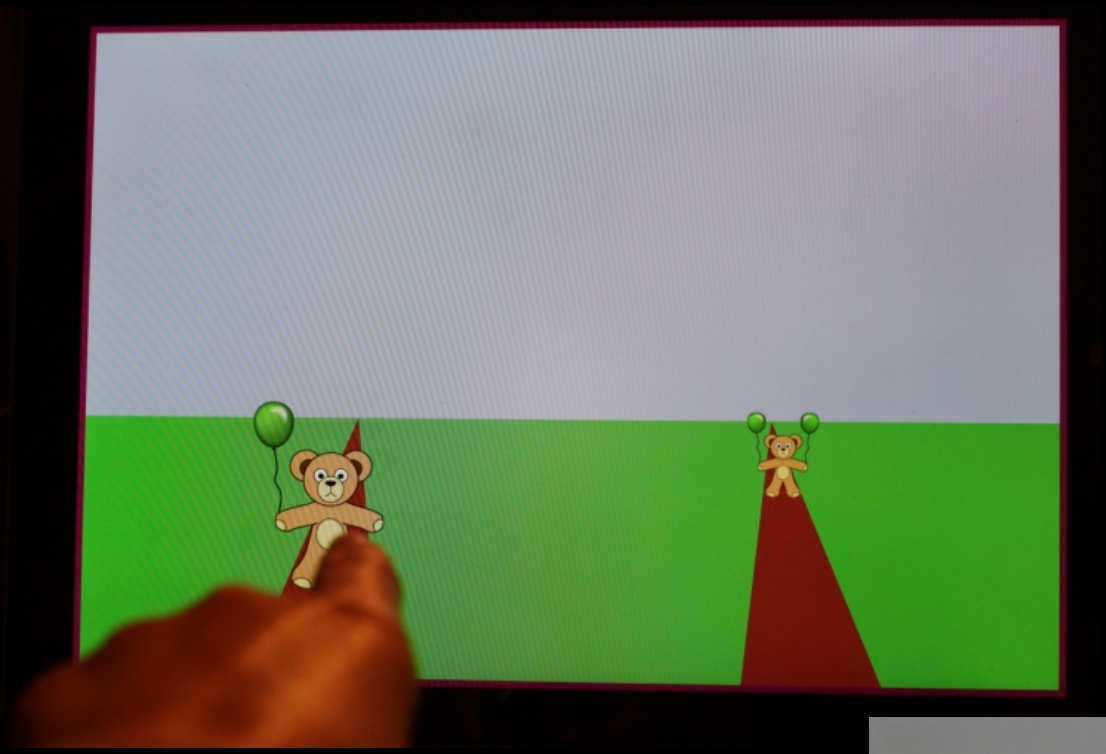


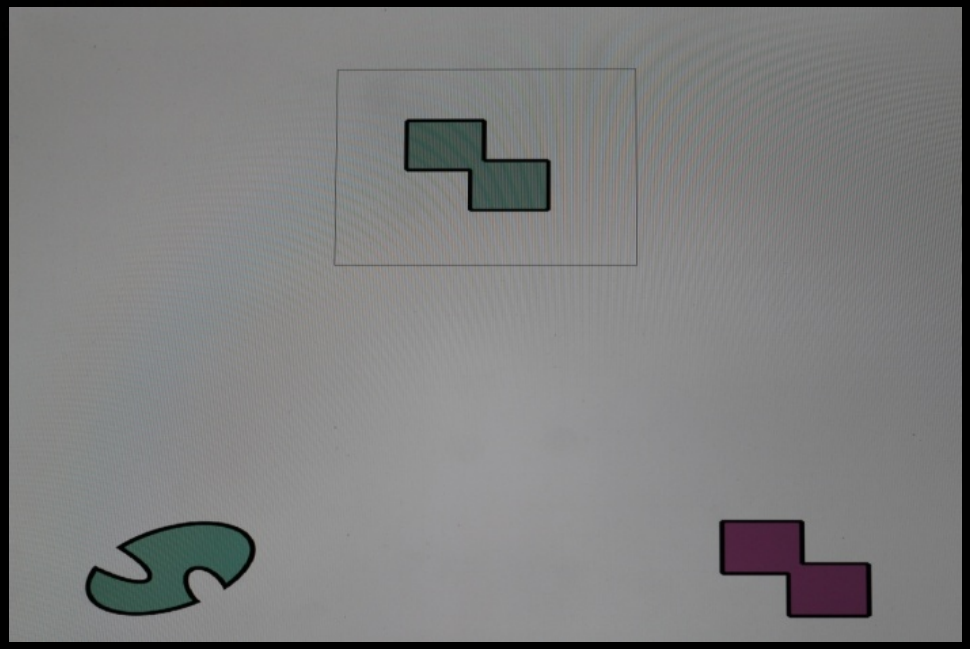
Carr *et al*. (2009)

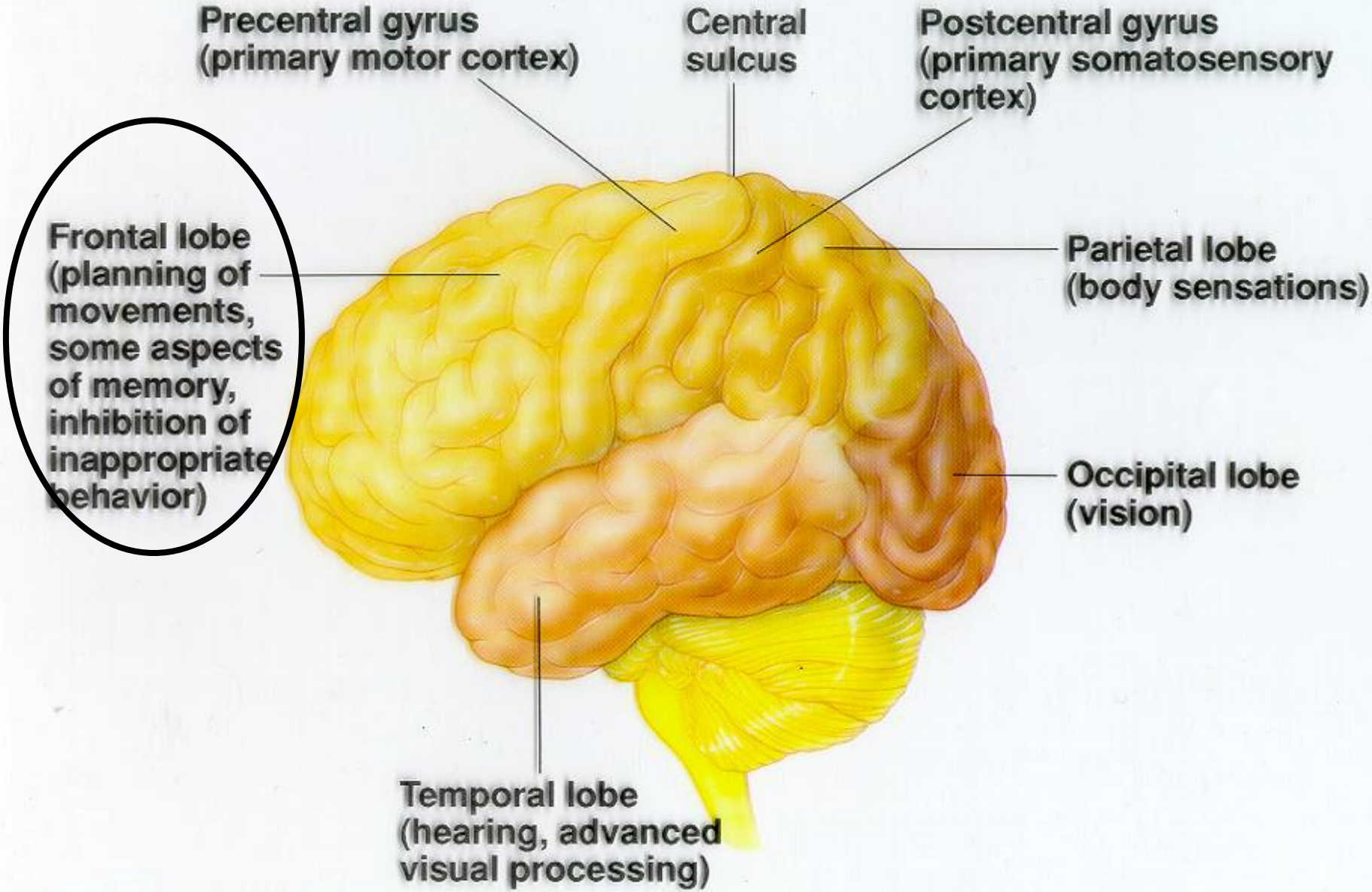
# Emotional difference




Thornton, F. and Matthews, P. (2008). Addressing the balance. 1st Asia Pacific Prader-Willi syndrome conference. Wellington, New Zealand.



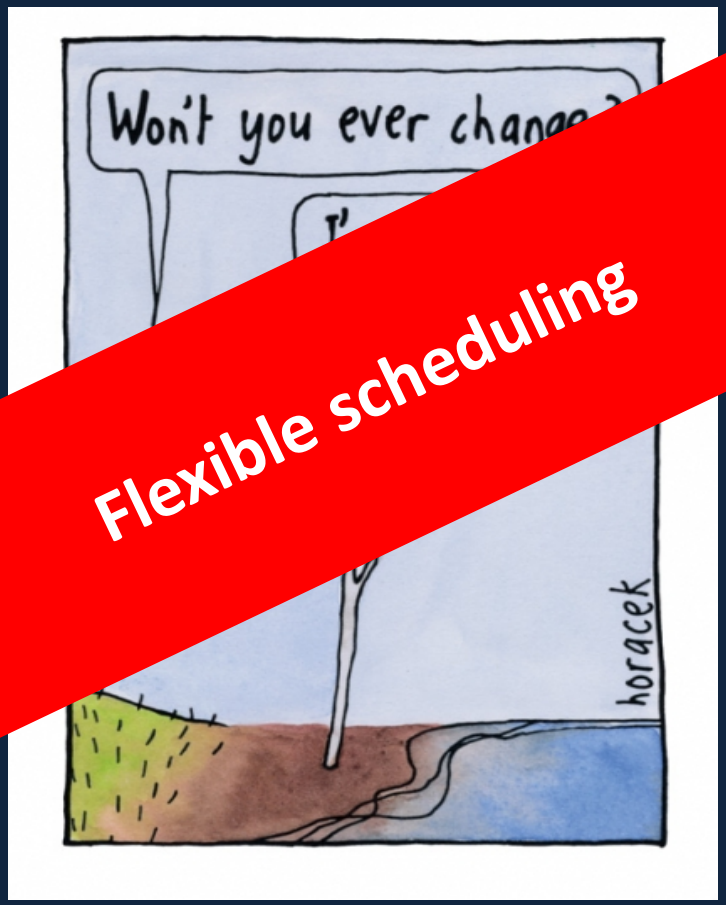





*Parts of cerebral cortex*


**Increasing certainty!**

- Predictable routines
- Visual timetables
- Using a cue card when change occurs

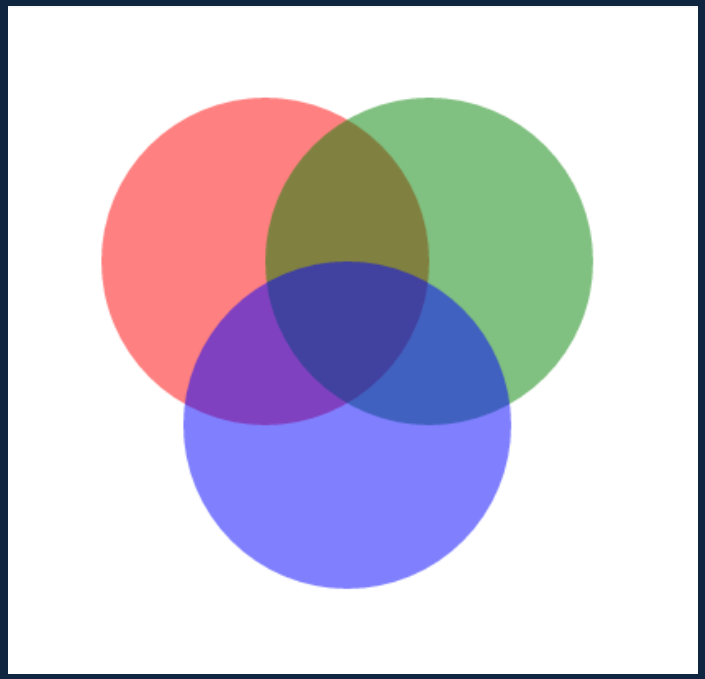



**Flexible scheduling**

**lerance to uilding**

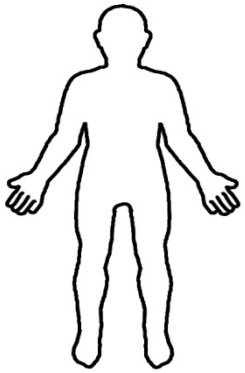
-Scheduling something unpredictable
-Introducing subtle changes
-Skills to cope with stress

# What about mental health?



CHANGE IS KEY

# Anxiety




| Changes to the body: | Changes to thoughts/ thinking patterns: | Changes to emotions | Changes to behaviour |
|---|---|---|---|
| • fast and irregular heartbeat<br>• sweating<br>• tiredness<br>• muscle tension<br>• dizziness<br>• trembling<br>• pale complexion<br>• stomach aches<br>• nausea | • inability to concentrate<br>• repetitive thoughts about perceived threat<br>• concerns about losing control<br>• inability to relax | • irritability<br>• feeling worried<br>• distress<br>• crying | • avoiding situations<br>• fidgeting/ moving more than usual |

# Depression

Activity Levels

Eating

Range of facial expressions

Social engagement

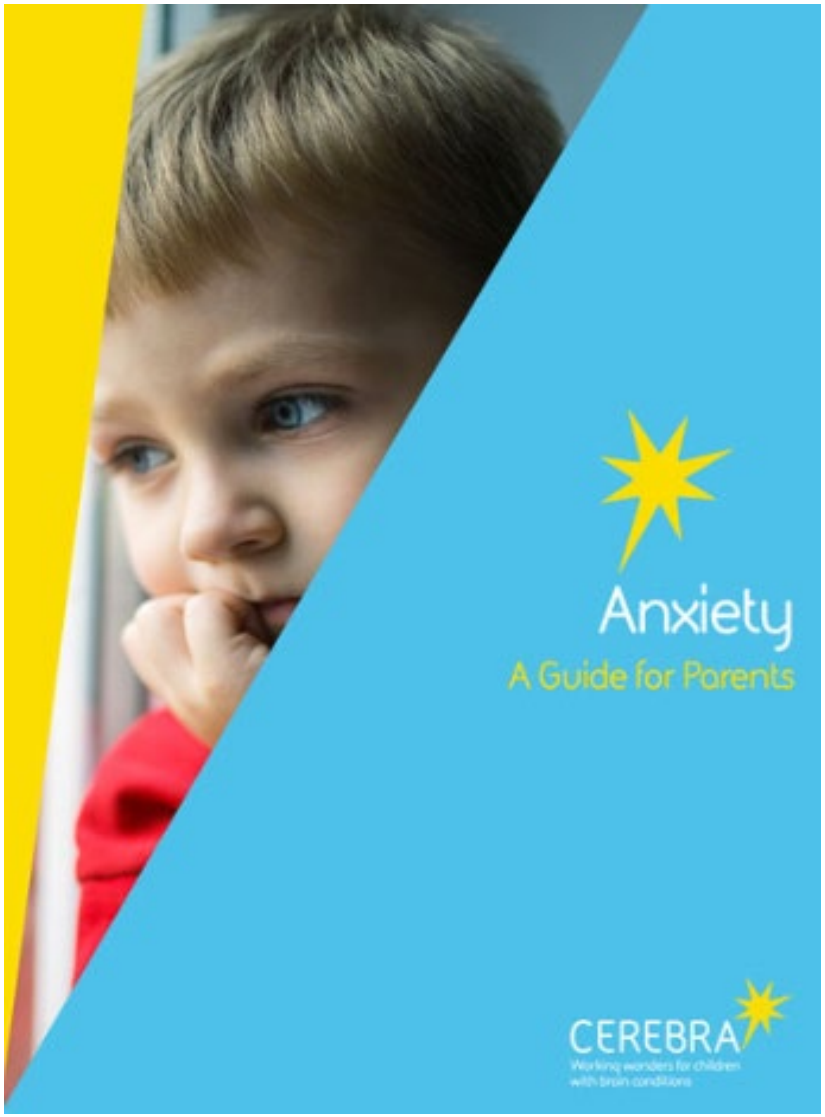
Sleeping

Emotional expression

Interest and pleasure

Self care skills/adaptive skills

Change???



# Anxiety

## A Guide for Parents

CEREBRA

Working wonders for children with brain conditions

# Professionals

Key Professionals

Psychiatrist
Psychologists
Behavioural Support Team

MDT Professionals

Speech and Language
Physiotherapist
Occupational Therapist
Social Worker
Paediatrician

Peripheral Professionals

GP
Audiologist
Optician
Dentist
Podiatrist
Dietician
Hospital based services

# Assessing Services: overcoming barriers

**Gate-keepers do not know about services for behaviour.**

Be informed about service structures and ask for it directly.

**Service will only see individuals with the most severe degree of CB**

Early intervention is essential

**Service will only see individuals with mental health difficulties**

It is not possible to rule out mental health as an underlying cause until an assessment has been conducted.

Behaviour impacts on well-being and quality of life.

**Professionals do not work in a behavioural model**

Evidence based practice
NICE guidelines
BPS guidelines

When dealing with us professionals:

Speak softly and carry a big stick.

(*Theodore Roosevelt)*