

THE FASD ICEBERG: BEHAVIOUR AS COMMUNICATION

What's above the surface – the visible behaviour – is not the true depth of the story.
For people with FASD, understanding what's beneath is key to finding the right solutions.

VISIBLE BEHAVIOURS

- Aggression
- Meltdowns
- Defiance

- Task Avoidance
- Verbal Abuse
- Self-Isolation

Beneath the surface UNDERLYING DRIVERS

DYSREGULATION / SENSORY OVERLOAD

- Sensory processing dysfunction
- Overwhelming auditory input
- Proprioceptive challenges
- Fluctuating nervous system states

DIFFICULTY WITH ABSTRACT CONCEPTS

- Literal thinking patterns
- Impaired generalisation skills
- Gaps in cause-and-effect reasoning
- Struggles with metaphors and analogies

PHYSICAL DISCOMFORT / PAIN

- Undiagnosed chronic health issues
- Impaired generalisation skills
- Headaches or dental pain
- Communication barriers for bodily sensations

MEMORY DEFICITS (→ TASK AVOIDANCE)

- Working memory limitations
- Slow processing speed
- Task-specific sequence recall issues
- Vulnerability to confabulation

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION GAPS

- Planning and organisation difficulties
- Impulse control challenges
- Decision-making struggles

LACK OF FELT SAFETY

- Deep historical trauma
- High ACEs scores
- Chronic stress
- Lack of trusted, consistent relationships
- Developmental insecurity

Image: Marcin Paśnicki

‘He kokona whare ka kitea, he kokona ngākau e kore e kitea.’

The corners of the house can be seen, but the corners of the heart cannot.