

VARYING CAPACITY MODEL

1. INTRODUCTION

Neurodivergence shows up uniquely in every individual, and a participant's capacity and needs can change from one week to the next. Because participants' brains and coping mechanisms are always developing, the coaching strategies that work today may need to be adapted tomorrow. To truly support neurodivergent individuals, coaches and leaders must learn to look beyond immediate, surface-level reactions to understand the deeper factors driving a young person's experience.

2. KEY INFORMATION

The Iceberg Model:

What you see as a coach (a participant's behaviour) is only the "tip of the iceberg". Beneath the surface are deep emotional experiences and root causes, which are driven by how a person's underlying traits interact with your environment, the task at hand, and the expectations placed upon them.



Behaviour – What you see

Experience – What they/we feel

Root cause – How a person's underlying traits interact with the world around them

The Bucket Analogy (Understanding Stress):

Imagine every participant has a unique-sized bucket that handles life's stresses. Before they even arrive at your session, their bucket may already be filling up with worries from home, school, or lack of sleep. For neurodivergent people, this bucket might have a wider opening (more stress going in) or fewer ways for the water to drain (fewer coping mechanisms).

When the Bucket Overflows:

Adding session specific worries, like understanding rules or fear of looking silly, can fill the bucket to capacity. When this happens, you will see intense responses that are often misunderstood as intentional misbehaviour, but are actually predictable reactions to an internal build-up of stress.

3. HINTS AND TIPS



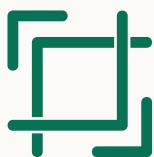
Find the 'Drain':

Work directly with the individual to identify their unique needs and discover what helps them regulate.



Provide Coping Mechanisms:

Allow activities that help "empty the bucket", such as giving them time alone, letting them listen to music, or offering them the choice to do their own thing.



Reframing Behaviour:

Doing these regulating activities will gradually reduce their internal stress, providing them with more capacity to fully participate in your session. When a participant struggles, remember the iceberg and bucket: look for the hidden stresses filling their capacity rather than punishing the visible behaviour.

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