

THE EMOTIONAL ICEBERG

Looking beneath visible reactions with curiosity

AT A GLANCE



What others see is often only a small part of an emotional experience. More vulnerable feelings, needs and meanings may sit beneath the surface.

KEY IDEAS

VISIBLE

Anger, irritability, withdrawal, frustration or control.

BENEATH

Fear, hurt, shame, loneliness, exhaustion or insecurity.

NEEDS

Safety, rest, respect, reassurance, space or connection.

CONTEXT

History, stress, relationships and the present situation all matter.

WHY IT MATTERS



Exploring what lies underneath can reduce shame, improve communication and lead to responses that meet the real need.

PUTTING THE IDEA INTO PRACTICE

1

SLOW DOWN

Describe what happened without judgement.

2

NAME LAYERS

What is visible, and what may be underneath?

3

FIND THE NEED

What would feel supportive or protective?

4

COMMUNICATE

Share the deeper feeling when it is safe to do so.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

1

What do others see?

2

What feeling is harder to show?

3

What need deserves attention?

Use this resource as a starting point for reflection, not as a test or diagnosis.

Different experiences, cultures and circumstances may require different understandings.