

Aggression, Hitting, and Self-Injury

Safe Strategies for Home, School, and
Public Settings

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Aggression and Self-Injury Strategies

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Welcome & Introduction

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Purpose:

Equip parents with practical tools to manage aggressive behaviors and self-injury in children and young adults.

Message:

This is a safe space—no judgment, only community and support.



Understanding Aggression & Self-Injury

- Aggression and self-injury are **communication** tools, often emerging when verbal or social communication is impaired.
- **Common causes:**
frustration from not being understood, sensory overload, and unmet emotional or physical needs.
- **Clinical insight:**
Behaviors may be linked to anxiety, transitions, pain, or even medical conditions.





Common Triggers and Prevention

- Triggers can be environmental (such as noise or crowds), physical (like hunger or sleep deprivation), or emotional (like anxiety or changes in routine).
- Prevention starts with predictability—use calendars, visual schedules, and first/then boards to help individuals anticipate and manage their tasks.
- Build in sensory breaks, prepare for transitions, and have 'calm corners' ready at home.

The ABC Model of Behavior

- **Antecedent:**

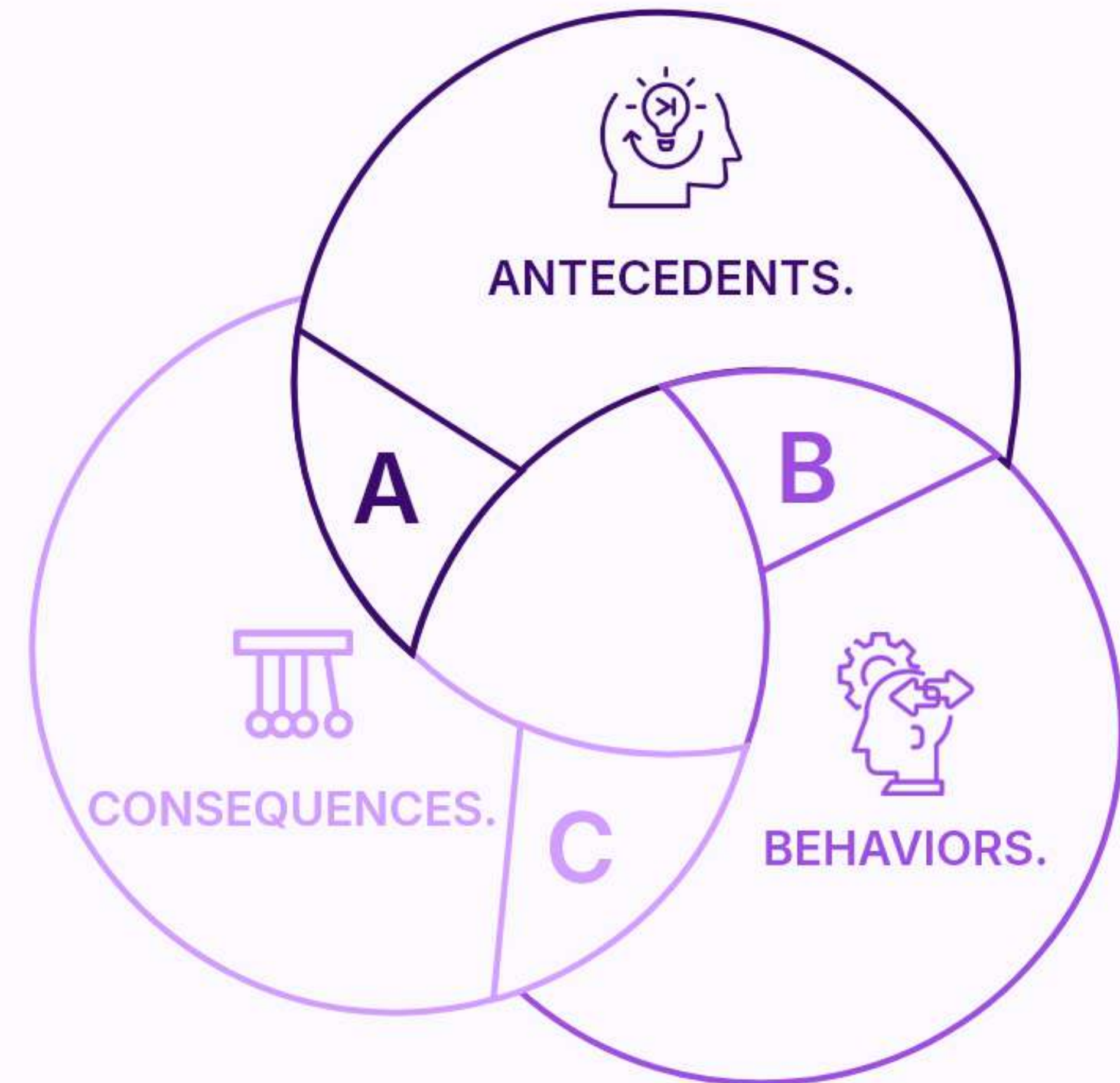
The event or condition before the behavior—look for patterns.

- **Behavior:**

Be specific—what exactly did the child do? Not just 'acted out'.

- **Consequence:**

What followed the behavior? Did the child get attention, escape a task, or receive something preferred?





De-escalation Strategies

- Stay calm: Your nervous system can regulate your child's (co-regulation).
- Speak softly, use fewer words—less is more when the child is dysregulated.
- Distraction and redirection: offer a preferred item or sensory tool.

Safety First – Managing Physical Episodes

- Prioritize the safety of all family members.
- Remove objects that could cause harm, and block self-injury with safe, soft barriers.
- Avoid restraining unless you are trained and it's necessary.



Tips by Setting – Home

- Create visual schedules and routine charts.
- Use 'first-then' language: "First homework, then iPad."
- Have a sensory toolkit available, including fidget toys, a weighted blanket, and calming music.





Tips by Setting – School

- Requesting FBA (Functional BehaviorAssessment) if needed.
- Collaborate with the IEP (Individualized Education Program) team to develop a BIP (Behavior Intervention Plan).
- Use break cards or sensory passes for overstimulation.



Handling Triggers in Public Settings

- Stay calm and speak in a soft, steady voice
- Reduce sensory input: use headphones, sunglasses, or step away
- Use visual cues or hand gestures: "break," "go," "breathe"
- Offer a calming item from your go-bag
- Gently guide your child to a quieter or familiar space
- Praise efforts afterward—progress matters, not perfection

Handling Public Reaction & Judgment

- Focus on your child—your priority is their safety and comfort
- Respond briefly if needed:
“We’re having a moment—thanks for understanding.”
“He/she has sensory sensitivities.”
- Walk away if needed—protect your energy.
- Reassure your child: “You’re doing your best, and I’m proud of you.”





Tips by Setting – Public Setting

- Prepare your child ahead of time using social stories or role-playing.
- Visit places during off-peak hours to reduce sensory overwhelm.



When to Seek Help

- Frequency, intensity, or danger as criteria: If aggression or self-injury is frequent, intense, or causes harm to others or the child.
- **Team support:**
Consult your pediatrician, child/adolescent psychiatrist for potential medication or mood stabilization.
- A behavioral specialist or therapist (ABA therapists, psychologists) to develop a personalized Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP).

Resources for Parents

- **Websites:**

Autism Speaks

www.autismspeaks.org



Understood.org

www.understood.org



National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org



Wrightslaw

www.wrightslaw.com



- **Books:**

The Explosive Child by Ross Greene, Uniquely Human by Barry Prizant.

- **Podcasts:**

Two Sides of the Spectrum, Tilt Parenting.



Key Takeaways & Encouragement

- **Track behavior:**
Keep a behavior journal—note time, triggers, setting, and what worked.
- **Praise effort:**
Reinforce the positive - 'I love how you used words to ask for help'.
- **Prioritize self-care:**
You can't pour from an empty cup. Prioritize small breaks, mindfulness practices, and self-care to support your mental health.



Q&A

Do you have any questions?

The background of the slide is a deep purple color with a dynamic, wavy pattern that resembles liquid or flowing fabric. The waves are concentric and radiate from the center, creating a sense of movement and depth. The lighting is soft, with subtle gradients of purple and magenta throughout the design.

Thank You!

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