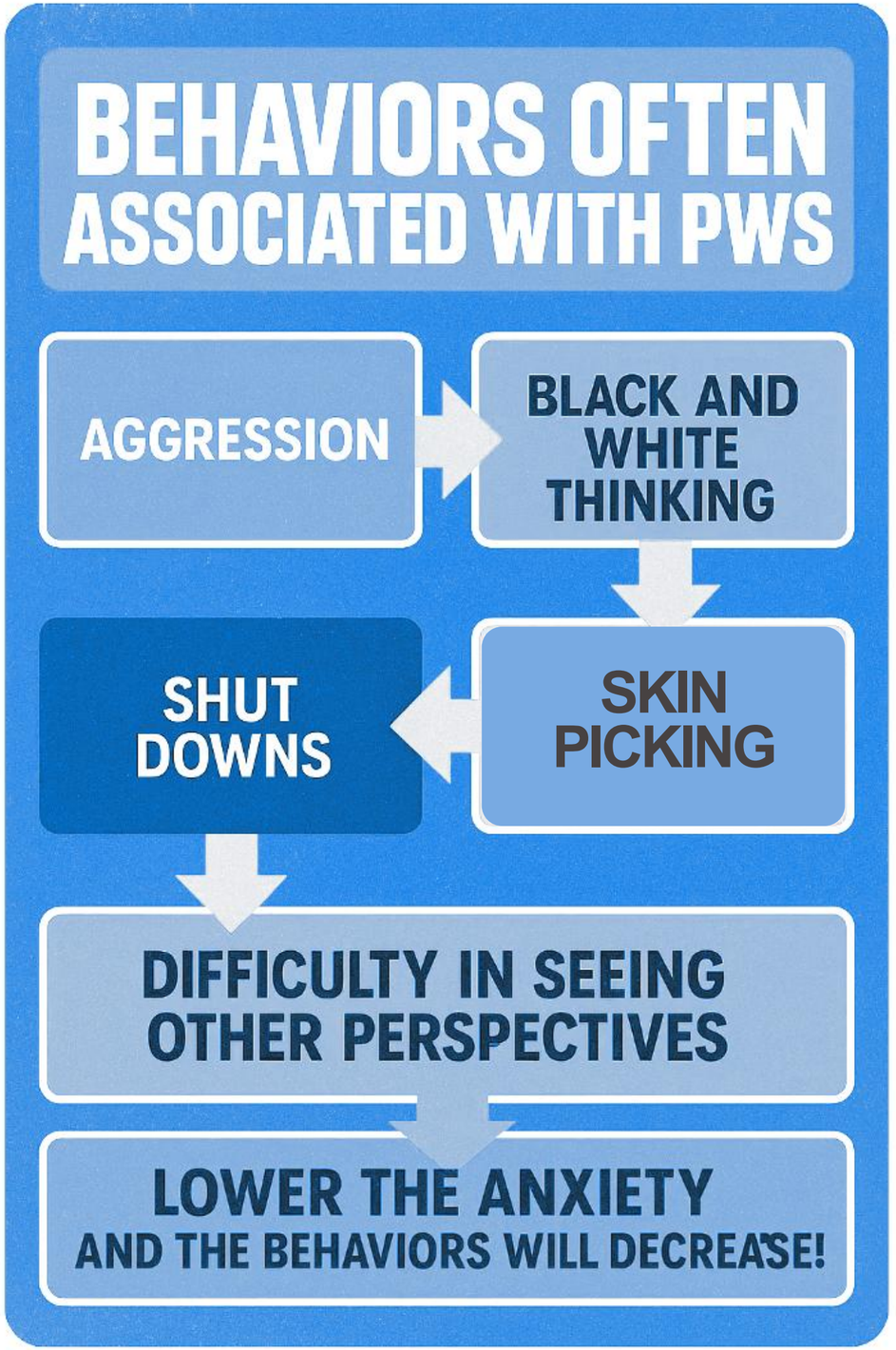
Understanding and Decreasing Behaviors in PWS

by Patrice Carroll and Brittni Kliment



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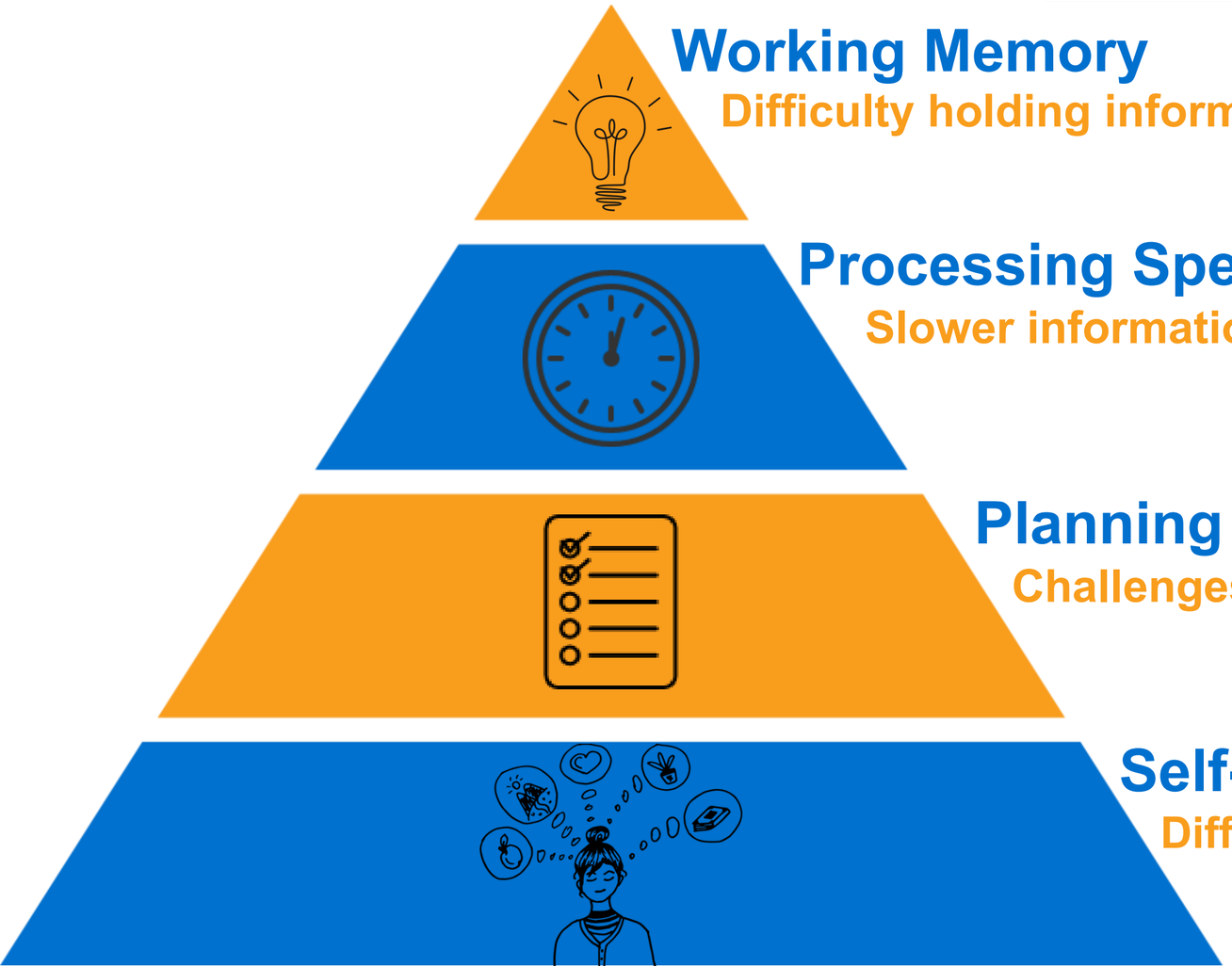
EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING DISORDER IN PWS



Working Memory

Difficulty holding information while using it

Processing Speed

Slower information processing and response time

Planning & Organization

Challenges with sequencing tasks and organizing thoughts

Self-Regulation

Difficulty with impulse control and emotional regulation

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SLOW PROCESSING SPEED

A Deeper Look

INFORMATION INPUT

Person receives verbal or visual information

EXTENDED PROCESSING TIME

Brain takes longer to interpret meaning and context

FORMULATION RESPONSE

Additional time needed to organize thoughts

DELAYED RESPONSE

Response comes after a longer than expected pause

Sensory Processing Disorder

Environmental Supports

- Creating sensory-friendly environments is crucial for individuals with PWS. This includes managing noise levels, lighting, temperature, and other environmental factors that may trigger discomfort or distress.
- Proactive environmental modifications can prevent behavioral changes before they occur.

Physical and Mental Discomfort

- Individuals with PWS often experience heightened sensitivity to physical sensations and mental discomfort but may struggle to identify or communicate these feelings appropriately.
- This disconnect between sensation and communication can lead to behavioral expressions of discomfort that may seem disproportionate or unexpected.

Communication Challenges

- Many sensory-related behaviors stem from an inability to effectively communicate needs and discomforts. Teaching alternative communication strategies is essential for reducing frustration and behavioral outbursts.

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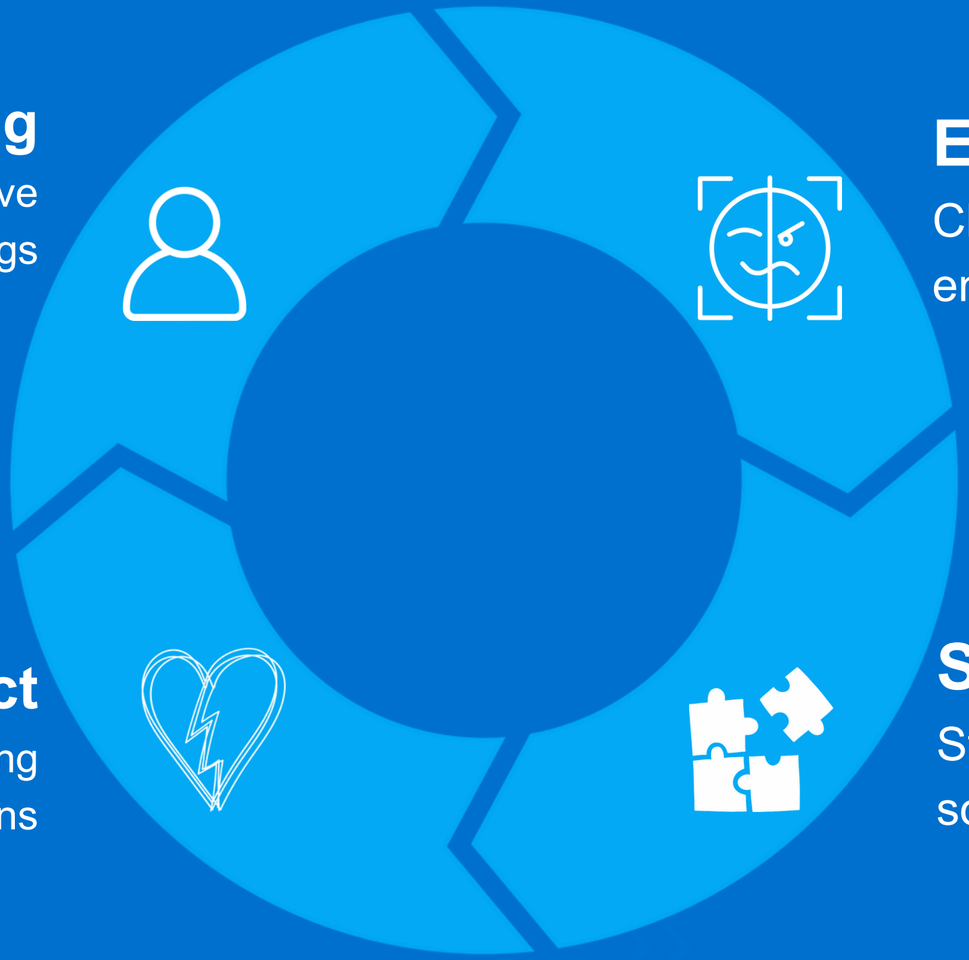
THEORY OF MIND AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Perspective Taking

Difficulty understanding others have different thoughts/feelings

Emotional Regulation

Challenges identifying other emotional states



Relationship Impact

Difficulty forming/maintaining social connections

Social Puzzles

Struggles with implied meanings and social nuance

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CHALLENGES WITH FACIAL AND SOCIAL CUES

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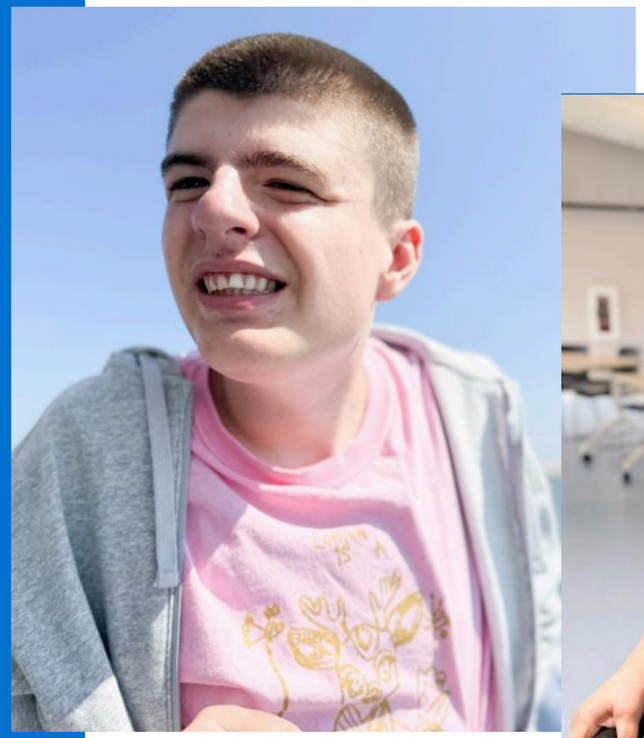

VOICE TONE INTERPRETATION

Sarcasm, humor, and emotional inflections may be missed or misinterpreted. Literal interpretation is common.

- Difficulty with non-literal language
- Challenges reading emotional tones
- Missing conversational subtext

FACIAL EXPRESSION RECOGNITION

Individuals with PWS often struggle to differentiate between subtle facial expressions. They may miss important emotional signals.

Communication Characteristics in PWS

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Conversation Skills

- Difficulty initiating interactions
- Challenges with topic maintenance
- Struggles with turn-taking

Language Development

- Limited vocabulary range
- Delayed speech milestones
- Simple sentence structures

Non-Verbal Communication

- Inconsistent eye contact
- Atypical body language
- Personal space challenges

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Effective Communication STRATEGIES

Simplify Language

Use concrete terms and avoid abstract concepts or idioms

Extend Wait Time

Allow 10-15 seconds for processing before repeating or rephrasing

Visual Supports

Supplement verbal information with pictures, schedules, or written instructions

Be Explicit

Directly state expectations, feelings, and social rules without assuming understanding

Action Steps for Implementation

Assess Individual Needs

Identify specific communication strengthes and challenges for each person

Create Support Tools

Develop visual aids, communication cards, and social scripts tailored to common situations.

Practice Patience

Build team awareness about extended processing time and the importance of wait time.

Ongoing Training

Schedule regular staff refreshers on PWS communication strategies.

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THANK YOU

QUESTIONS?