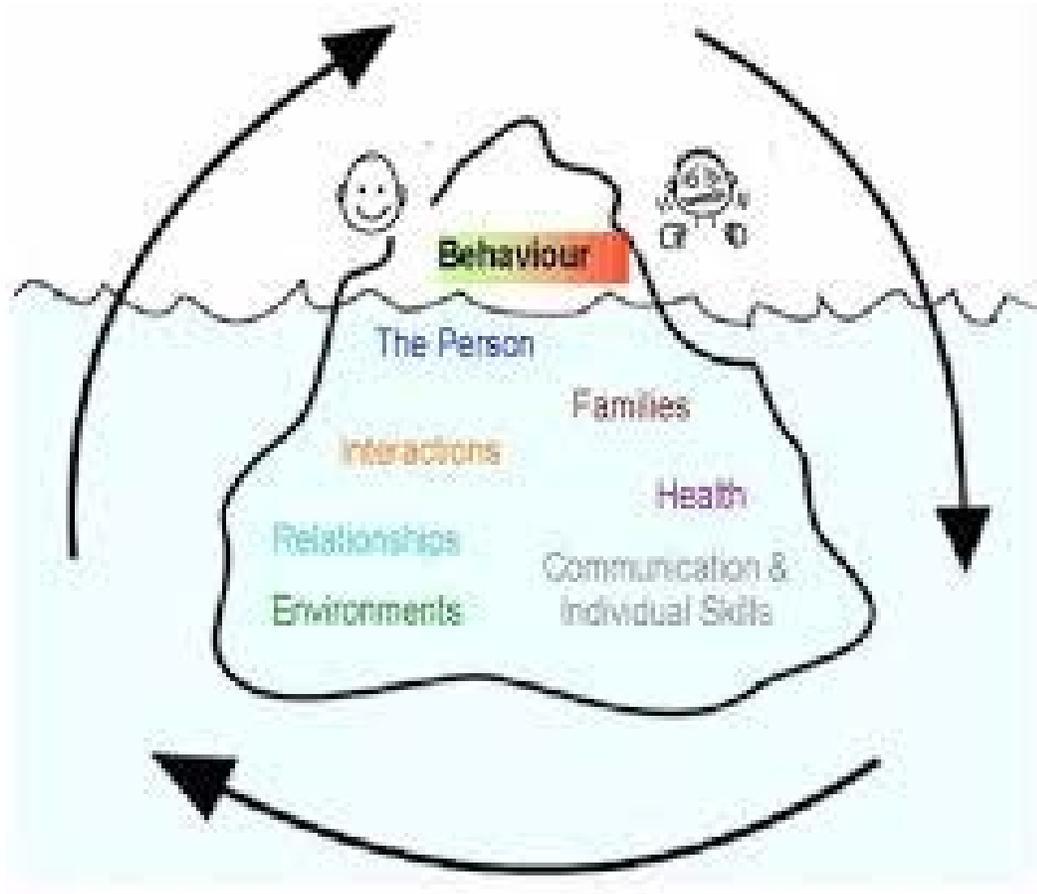
The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. The shapes are primarily triangles and polygons, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The overall composition is clean and modern, with the text centered in the white space.

Behavior Changes and Medical Conditions

Behavior as Communication



All Behavior is
Communication.

Definition of Health Problem

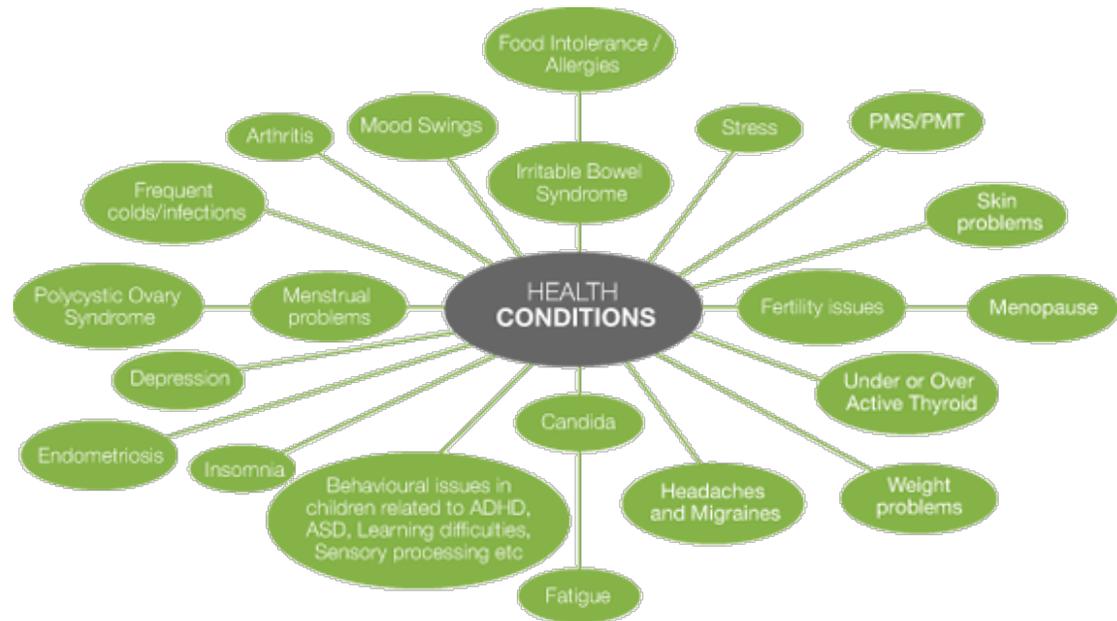
- ▶ Illness
- ▶ Injuries
- ▶ Impairments
- ▶ Physical conditions negatively affecting a person's quality of life.





You cannot always “see”
a health problem. Our
clients cannot always
verbalize a health
problem.

Health Conditions more prevalent in persons with Intellectual Disabilities



- ▶ Motor deficits
- ▶ Epilepsy or seizure disorders
- ▶ Allergies
- ▶ Otitis media
- ▶ Gastroesophageal reflux disease
- ▶ Dysmenorrhea
- ▶ Sleep disturbance
- ▶ Mental illness
- ▶ Vision and hearing impairments
- ▶ Oral health problems
- ▶ Constipation

The more severe the disability the less likely health problems are likely to be diagnosed and treated, because....

- ▶ Client may be non-verbal and unable to describe discomfort.
- ▶ Client may be verbal but still not able to describe discomfort.
- ▶ There may be a lack of systematic monitoring of health problems (excessive sneezing, bowel movements, sleep patterns).
- ▶ Communication (behavior) is typically attributed to attention seeking or manipulation.
- ▶ There is a history of difficult behavior.
- ▶ There is not tracking regarding when the behavior occurs (ie: with GERD there may be heartburn after eating)



Examples of behavior in response to discomfort

- ▶ *Self injury* in response to *middle ear infection* or *headache*
- ▶ *Psychosis* in response to *urinary tract infection*
- ▶ *Fecal smearing* in response to *gastro-intestinal upsets* such as constipation, diarrhea, or colon cancer
- ▶ *Aggression* or *meal refusal* in response to *tooth pain*



Become a detective.....

Become curious about the behavior....

- ▶ When does it happen? (Multiple times a day may indicate heartburn after each meal)
- ▶ How suddenly did the behavior occur? (Constipation may build up over time)
- ▶ Is this a typical behavior, even among other behaviors? (for example, when upset they usually strike out, but now they are smearing fecal matter)
- ▶ Are there health conditions that you know of?
- ▶ Is the person holding any part of the body like their stomach or head?
- ▶ Have there been any medication changes?
- ▶ Are they eating?
- ▶ Are they sleeping?
- ▶ Are they limping?
- ▶ Is there swelling or other changes in skin or body?
- ▶ Has their mobility changed?

What to do?

- ▶ Ditch personality assumptions (she's doing it for attention, he is manipulating)
- ▶ Track behavior, time, meals, bowel habits, sleep.
- ▶ Look for patterns
- ▶ Assess diet changes
- ▶ Look for skin changes (rashes?)
- ▶ Check medication side effects
- ▶ Explore medication changes
- ▶ Check record for past health problems
- ▶ Call your nurse
- ▶ Take to the doctor





“Sufficient sleep,
exercise, healthy
food, friendship,
and peace of mind
are necessities, not
luxuries.” - Mark
Halperin