Systems Thinking in Early Childhood: *Thinking Below the Surface*

USING THE ICEBERG VISUAL

MENTAL MODELS are beliefs or assumptions we hold about the world around us. We have mental models about our families, our workplaces, and our communities.

RELATIONSHIPS, or systems structures, refer to the interpersonal and environmental factors that influence—and are influenced by—the situation.

PATTERNS OR TRENDS show us that behavior and situations do change over time.

Practice using the iceberg visual to uncover the mental models, relationships, and patterns that lie below the surface of a situation. Use these case examples for your reflection:

CASE EXAMPLE #1

Event: Several children in your program are getting ready to transition to kindergarten. You've begun to notice a few of them teasing the younger children in the group. You stopped the teasing behavior when you observed it, but you want to have a better understanding about this new behavior.

PATTERNS - What patterns or trends would you look for in this example?

RELATIONSHIPS - What relationships or environmental factors may be influencing the children's behavior?

MENTAL MODELS - What are two mental models you have about this situation?

ACTION
BELIEF
PERCEPTION

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USING THE ICEBERG VISUAL *Continued*

CASE EXAMPLE #2

Event: Margo, a parent in your program, is concerned about her parenting skills. She insists that she isn't able to set boundaries with her children. She says that they manipulate her to get what they want, and she hasn't been able to figure out what works.

PATTERNS - What patterns or trends would you look for in order to understand this situation more fully?

RELATIONSHIPS - What relationships or environmental factors may be influencing this family's dynamic?

A B

MENTAL MODELS - What are two mental models you have about this situation?

ACTION
BELIEF
PERCEPTION
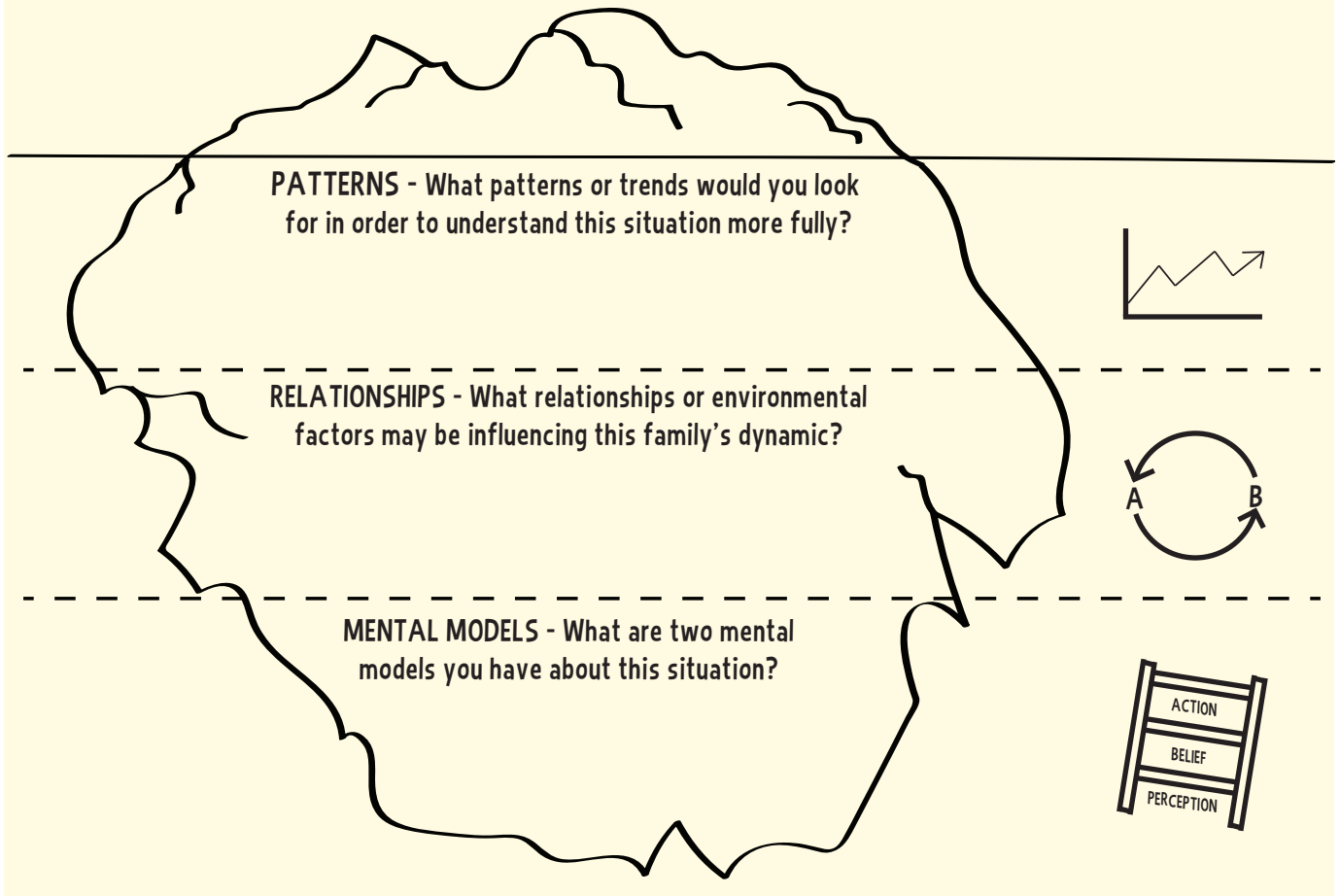
The iceberg visual is adapted from the work of the Waters Foundation.
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