

UNDERSTANDING APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS

GOAL

Create a foundational understanding of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and the types of behaviors and skills that can be taught through ABA therapy.

BACKGROUND

There are a lot of misconceptions and fear about ABA and how it has been traditionally used in the past. ABA is a science and can be used in a variety of different ways.

At its core, ABA is a way to understand behavior and should be used to teach individuals what they need to learn to reach their full potential. It should never be used to change who a person is, or to modify behaviors that are necessary for the well-being of the individual.

WHAT'S THE DEBATE ABOUT ABA?

ABA is the study of behavior and these concepts exist whether we engage in them consciously or unconsciously.

Historically ABA was used to eliminate "autistic traits" such as stereotypies so that these individuals appear "normal."

Rightfully, the autistic community opposes this use.

But it's not ABA that is a problem, just the way it is sometimes used. Like gravity, it can be used in an appropriate way such as using a paperweight to hold down paper. Or it can be used in an inappropriate way, like pushing someone off a cliff.

This training will focus on the appropriate use of ABA.

THE REAL DEAL ABOUT ABA

ABA is:

- ✓ A scientifically driven method of teaching skills and reducing problem behavior.
- ✓ An understanding and application of the basic universal laws of behavior which apply no matter who you are and are as reliable as the law of gravity.
- ✓ Highly individualized with motivation at its core.
- ✓ Used to understand why behavior continues and identifies the root "cause" of behavior.

ABA is NOT:

- ✗ Only for individuals with autism.
- ✗ A tool to help autistics look "normal."
- ✗ A way to manipulate and control.
- ✗ Abuse.

NOTES:

THE RIGHT WAY TO USE ABA

Not just for autism

Although commonly associated with children with autism, the principles of ABA apply to everyone.

Not a way to manipulate and control

Learning ABA will help you understand behavior in a new way. With this knowledge comes a responsibility to use it in the best interest of the individual. Can you use ABA to manipulate your spouse into doing the dishes every night? Yes. Should you? Well, maybe. 😊

But you should not use these strategies to teach your child to do things that are of no benefit to him.

A tool to help autistics look "normal."

Early on in the field, ABA was used to help individuals with autism appear "normal," and while there are still some therapists who target stereotypies, eye contact and other autistic traits, these behaviors are critical to the well-being of the individual and should not be targeted for change unless they are harmful (such as self-injurious behaviors) or significantly interfere with their daily activities.

Not abuse

If you haven't heard someone refer to ABA as abuse yet, it's important for you to know that this is common. Many adults with autism are speaking out against ABA. It's important that we all listen and respond to their concerns. Many have valid points and can help guide us in using ABA in a way that respects the individual. We aren't trying to change who they are. When used ethically, ABA is the most effective way to teach individuals with autism the important life skills they need to learn.

NOTES:

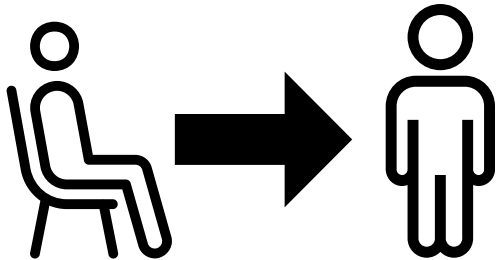
TYPES OF BEHAVIOR

ABA is the science of behavior, and while the science applies to all behaviors, let's get clear on the behaviors we'll focus on with the training.

OVERT

Observable by others.

Going from a sitting to a standing position is an overt behavior.



COVERT

Not observable by others

Thinking about what to make for dinner is a covert behavior.



Typically, the goals of ABA target overt behavior. However there are some exceptions such as sensory issues. The key is that all goals should benefit the individual.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER OVERT BEHAVIORS?

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER COVERT BEHAVIORS?

ABA GOALS

ABA can be used in a variety of ways to help your child. Often parents seek out ABA therapy to reduce challenging behaviors, however its equally important to teach your child new skills. The introduction of important skills, such as functional communication, can ultimately lead to reducing the behaviors that are disruptive.

BEHAVIOR REDUCTION

Reduce challenging behaviors.

ABA can be used to reduce challenging behaviors such as:

- Yelling or screaming at inappropriate times
- Hitting and aggressive behaviors
- Tantrums and
- Jumping on furniture

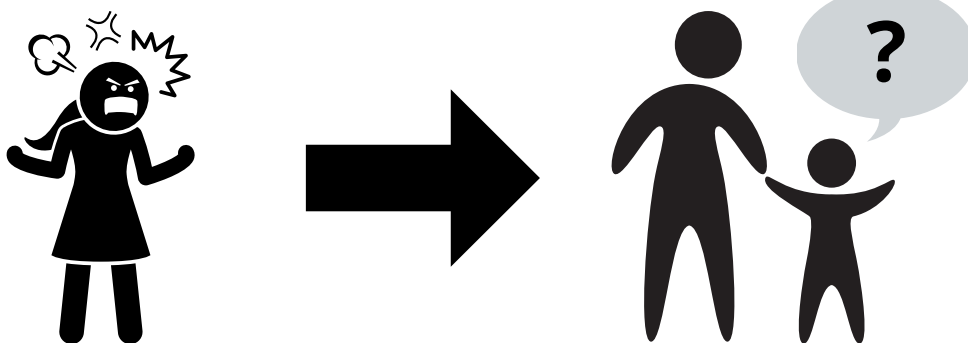
SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Teach replacement behaviors.

But ABA is also used to teach new skills. In fact, the challenging behaviors listed earlier can often be reduced by teaching functional communication. Other skills taught might include:

- Play skills
- Social skills and
- Academic skills

EXAMPLE



Using ABA you can teach your child to use communication (either verbal or non verbal) to get their needs met instead of getting angry, hitting, punching or having a tantrum.

HOW DOES ABA WORK?

Applying these principles does not control the behavior of others. By controlling the conditions surrounding behavior, you make behavior more or less likely to occur. In other words, changing your behavior changes the behavior of others.

IDENTIFYING BEHAVIORS

It's best not to identify a behavior as either good or bad, but rather consider the context within which it occurs. A desirable behavior is appropriate to the context of a given situation. An undesirable behavior does not fit the context of a situation.

IN CONTEXT

Appropriate to the context

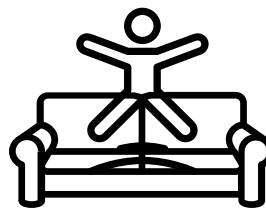
Going from a sitting to a standing position is an overt behavior.

OUT OF CONTEXT

Not appropriate to the context

Thinking about what to make for dinner is a covert behavior.

EXAMPLE



Look at jumping as an example. Jumping on a trampoline is in context. It's good exercise, it expends excess energy and it may be a social experience. Jumping on a chair in the living room is out of context and may be problematic.

For the purposes of this training, when we talk about reducing behaviors we will be focused on reducing behaviors that are out of context.

NOTES:

MOTIVATION OF BEHAVIOR

So, how can we use ABA to reduce behavior that's out of context? By understanding the motivation behind it.

Just about all behavior continues because the person either gets something good or avoids something bad.



ACCESS

Access to something the child wants such as:

- Attention
- An item or activity
- Sensory experience



ESCAPE

Avoids something the child doesn't want such as:

- Attention
- A task that is too difficult or too long
- Sensory experience

It's critical to learn more about why the behavior is occurring. Before determining how best to respond to a specific behavior, you need more information. You need to know the "function" of the behavior. That is, you ask the question "why is it continuing?" to determine the appropriate intervention.

What they "get" from the behavior may not be obvious. But together we will learn what motivates your child and help him learn better.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOUR CHILD MIGHT WANT TO ACCESS?

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOUR CHILD MIGHT WANT TO ESCAPE?