Advanced Behavioral Resources

Providing practical, evidence-based solutions to complex social and behavioral issues

ABA FACT SHEET

Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) methodology involves the application of basic behavioral practices (positive reinforcement, repetition, and prompting) to facilitate the development of language, positive skills, and social behavior as well as to help reduce everyday social problems and serious behavior disorders.

Data collected through hundreds of studies currently indicate that ABA is a highly effective method to teach children and adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities.

Tested by research and experience for more than 35 years, ABA practices have been endorsed by the Surgeon General, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Association for Science in Autism Research. The skills and experience of an ABA professional are essential for successful treatment. Continuous and systematic evaluation of effectiveness is a fundamental component of the ABA methodology.

ABA can be used to teach a variety of skills and positive behaviors, including language, reading, social skills, positive peer support, academic engagement, functional living skills, and more. ABA methodology is also effective in decreasing inappropriate behaviors such as noncompliance, tantrums, bed-wetting, feeding problems, aggression, and self-injury.

ABA techniques work across all environments: work, home, school, and the community. Examples of therapy goals for each of these settings could include:

- *Work – Increasing performance output, Improving upon social interactions amongst colleagues or employers, Reducing off -task behavior, Increasing task fluency (speed at which a skill is performed)*
- *Home – Toilet training, Sibling interaction/Social interaction, Communication or Language Training, Chores or Task Completion, Homework Completion*
- *School – Increasing group participation, Reduction of problem behaviors, Functional Behavior Assessments, Reducing off-task instructional behavior*
- *Community – Generalization of skills across settings, Extinguishing wandering or elopement behaviors, Teaching street safety, Stranger Danger*

Ideally, all relevant caregivers or professionals (Teachers, Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Nannies, etc.) should work collaboratively as a team to generalize and implement the treatment plan developed by the ABA professionals. Teamwork can make all the difference in helping children reach their potential.

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Effective ABA intervention for autism is not a "one size fits all" approach and should never be viewed as a "canned" set of programs or drills. On the contrary, a skilled therapist customizes the intervention to each learner's skills, needs, interests, preferences and family situation. For these reasons, an ABA program for one learner will look different than a program for another learner. That said, quality ABA programs for learners with autism have the following in common:

Planning and Ongoing Assessment

* A qualified and trained behavior analyst designs and directly oversees the intervention.
* The analyst's development of treatment goals stems from a detailed assessment of each learner's skills and preferences and may also include family goals.
* Treatment goals and instruction are developmentally appropriate and target a broad range of skill areas such as communication, sociability, self-care, play and leisure, motor development and academic skills.
* Goals emphasize skills that will enable learners to become independent and successful in both the short and long terms.
* The instruction plan breaks down desired skills into manageable steps to be taught from the simplest (e.g. imitating single sounds) to the more complex (e.g. carrying on a conversation).
* The intervention involves ongoing objective measurement of the learner's progress.
* The behavior analyst frequently reviews information on the learner's progress and uses this to adjust procedures and goals as needed.

ABA Techniques and Philosophy

* The instructor uses a variety of behavior analytic procedures, some of which are directed by the instructor and others initiated by the learner.
* The learner's day is structured to provide many opportunities – both planned and naturally occurring - to acquire and practice skills in both structured and unstructured situations.
* The learner receives an abundance of positive reinforcement for demonstrating useful skills and socially appropriate behaviors. The emphasis is on positive social interactions and enjoyable learning.
* The learner receives no reinforcement for behaviors that pose a harm or impede learning

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