



Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)



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DEFINITION

“Applied behavior analysis is a discipline devoted to the understanding and improvement of human behavior...” ABA “focuses on objectively defined observable behavior of social significance; it seeks to improve the behavior under study while demonstrating a reliable relationship between the procedures employed and the behavioral improvement; and it uses the methods of science—description, quantification, and analysis.” (Cooper, Heron, Heward 1987)

WHAT IS A BCBA

A Board Certified Behavior Analyst is a person who has completed the requirements and specializes in the principals of behavior. Certification is provided through the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). This organization was established in 1998 to meet professional credentialing needs identified by behavior analysts, governments, and consumers of behavior analysis services. The program of study is rigorous, requiring specific college coursework emphasis, supervision of practice, and successful performance on the Board Certified Behavior Analyst Examination. Most third party payers require certification for their providers. However, many professionals utilize the principles of ABA within the scope of their practices. Psychologists, speech-language pathologists, special education teachers, researchers and others often implement treatment strategies falling under the wide umbrella of ABA.



MODERN PRACTICES

The application of ABA principles to individuals along the autism spectrum has evolved over time. Initially, discrete trial teaching in one-on-one settings was widely implemented. Criticism of use of this method to exclusion of other learning opportunities included concerns that the strategy was contrived and did not promote generalization of learned skills to natural environments. Most practitioners, while continuing to focus on teaching skills, also treat in natural environment settings with naturalist teaching practices and reinforcement based procedures. The methods of behavior analysis have been used and studied for decades. They have helped many kinds of learners gain different skills – from healthier lifestyles to learning a new language. Therapists have used ABA to help children with autism and related developmental disorders since the 1960s.

ABA HELPS US UNDERSTAND

- How behavior works
- How behavior is affected by the environment
- How learning takes place

ABA therapy applies our understanding of how behavior works to real situations. The goal is to increase behaviors that are helpful and decrease behaviors that are harmful or affect learning.

ABA THERAPY CAN HELP

- Increase language and communication skills
- Improve attention, focus, social skills, memory, and academics
- Decrease problem behaviors

ABA STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES

Click to read our Fact Sheets about each of these categories!

- Positive Reinforcement
- Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence
- Discrete Trial Teaching
- Pivotal Response Therapy
- Token Economy
- Video Modeling
- Prompting and Fading
- Natural Environment Teaching
- Behavior Chain
- Generalization
- Behavior Contracts

7 Dimensions of ABA

A ppplied	→ Teach meaningful behaviour
B ehavioural	→ Focus on what we can observe and measure
A nalytic	→ Record and analyse data
E ffective	→ Our programmes work! If not, change them up
G enerality	→ Skills generalise to naturally occurring situations
T echnological	→ Described clearly - easy to understand
C onceptually systematic	→ Evidence-based strategies

ANALYSIS VS. MODIFICATION

Applied behavior analysis is more rigorously defined than behavior modification. Behavior can be changed or modified without meeting the criterion of analysis. There must be clear evidence that the intervention caused the change in the behavior it to be applied behavior analysis.

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