

What is ABA?

Applied Behavior Analysis (or ABA) is a scientific approach to effecting socially significant behavior change. It is based on learning theory and built upon the discipline of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior. Over many decades of research, behavior analysts have discovered that making planned and systematic changes to the environment in which a behavior occurs has a dramatic effect upon the future occurrence of that behavior. The behavioral environment includes the things that happen immediately before a behavior (antecedents) and the things that immediately follow the behavior (consequences). As a result of this extensive research base, behavior analysts have become known as experts in the area of challenging behavior and are often called in to help caregivers and teachers develop plans to address these behaviors. In addition, as a result of in-depth study of the learning process, behavior analysts have discovered how to shape new behaviors that an individual has previously been unable to master, how to teach complex sequences of behavior, how to teach conceptual understanding to those who have not learned through conventional methods, how to motivate people to learn and to maintain that motivation over time. They have developed a wealth of highly effective procedures for teaching new skills, even to the most challenged learners. These procedures are reinforcement based and have themselves been subjected to scientific study, yielding a wealth of conceptually sound, evidence-based practices that can be applied to a wide range of human problems. Intervention programs that are based on the principles and procedures of Applied Behavior Analysis draw on this strong and ever expanding knowledge base.

In the field of Autism, the following methods have their basis in Applied Behavior Analysis.

-  Discrete Trial Instruction (DTI or DTT)
-  Incidental Teaching
-  Pivotal Response Training
-  Verbal Behavior programs
-  Mileu Teaching
-  Natural Environment Training
-  Fluency Based Instruction
-  Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS)

Characteristics of Early Intervention Programs with a Basis in ABA

- 📄 Everything an individual says or does is considered to be a form of behavior
- 📄 All behavior is considered functional (i.e. has a meaningful effect on the individual's immediate environment)
- 📄 There is a focus on observable, measurable changes in behavior as an outcome of intervention
- 📄 Initial assessments identify the child's current skill levels and areas of need as well as the characteristics of the behavioral environment
- 📄 Key skills required to address the areas of need are specified in addition to changes in the behavioral environment
- 📄 Each skill is broken down into components that can be successfully taught over a short period of time
- 📄 Skill components are gradually built upon until the target skill is acquired
- 📄 Specific, clearly defined methods to teach the skills are implemented many times throughout the child's day by as many of the key interaction partners in the child's life as possible
- 📄 Parents, teachers and therapists are taught to carefully arrange the child's environment to optimize opportunities for learning and minimize problem behaviors
- 📄 Well established, research based methods are used to strengthen the new skill so that the child uses it across all important environments (e.g. at home, at school, at grandma's)
- 📄 Ongoing data collection and analysis is conducted to monitor progress towards the treatment goals
- 📄 Treatment program decisions are based upon the results of the collected data