

Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)

What is Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA)?

Applied behaviour analysis is an applied science that is based on the principles of learning and behaviour. It uses basic strategies to teach skills that are individualized, meaningful and relevant to the student.

What are the basic principles of ABA?

Antecedents: This is what happens before a behaviour or response. Examples include; a parent saying “no” to their child / youth’s request, a peer pushing the child / youth, or a child / youth who makes a request and isn’t heard.

Behaviour: This is everything that we do that others can see and measure. Examples include; asking peers to play, using utensils when eating, walking next to a parent / caregiver and asking for help are all behaviours.

Consequence: This is what happens after the behaviour or response. Examples include; a parent responding to their child / youth’s request, a child / youth hitting a peer after their toy was taken away, a child / youth tearing up a worksheet when told to do their work.

Reinforcement: This is when a behaviour is followed by something that is valued (a reward), a person is more likely to repeat their behaviour in similar, future circumstances. Over time, this is likely to encourage positive behaviour change.

Generalization: This is the process of teaching the new skill in a variety of locations, with different people, using different instructions and materials. This ensures that new skills are able to be maintained over time.

Maintenance: This is the process of using the skills that have been taught in daily life. Examples include; asking for help when needed, sharing toys with siblings, or using coping / calming strategies when needed.

What types of skills can be taught using ABA?

ABA can be used to teach any skill that the child / youth may require. Examples include; playing games with peers, following street safety, toileting or hygiene skills, academic skills, or communication skills. Some skills may require additional skills taught first; we call these prerequisite skills. ABA can also be used to reduce problem behaviours that your child / youth may be demonstrating. Examples include; not cooperating with requests, hitting others, throwing objects, eating non-edible, or running away.

What is involved in ABA?

An assessment is the first step in ABA. This helps us understand why behaviour occurs. We call this function of behaviour. It also helps us understand when behaviour is more or less likely to occur (times of day), and where the behaviour is more or less likely to occur (where). An assessment also looks at other skills that child / youth has, their strengths and challenges, medical needs, structure of their day and social interactions.

Once an assessment is complete, a program plan is written. This is a detailed plan of how to teach the identified skill, and / or reduce the problem behaviours. Qualified behaviour therapists and behaviour analysts work with parents / caregivers and/or children / youth to directly teach these skills using the basic principles outlined above.

Ongoing review of data allows the team to determine if gains are being made, and if necessary, to make revisions to enhance learning.

Is ABA the best strategy for teaching my child/ youth?

ABA is based on the science of learning and behaviour. Assessment and treatment plans are individualized, and based on a unique assessment of each child / youth's needs. Over 60 years of research and evidence, suggests that ABA can be used to teach skills in across varied ages, developmental levels and skills.

Cooper, J. O., Heron, & T. E., Heward, W. L. (2007). *Applied Behavior Analysis* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.