



Managing Tantrums and Challenging Behaviors

PRINCIPLES, STRATEGIES AND TIPS ON EFFECTIVELY USING ABA

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Who am I and why am I here talking to you?

- ▶ Wife and mother of two boys – 14-year-old with autism and neurotypical 7-year-old
- ▶ Undergraduate degree in Psychology
- ▶ Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA)
- ▶ Worked in consulting
- ▶ Master's degree in Psychology specializing in Applied Behavior Analysis
- ▶ Founder/BCBA of Stepping Stones Consulting Services



What is ABA?

- ▶ What is ABA?
 - ▶ Definition
 - ▶ How does ABA help?
- ▶ Key principles of ABA
 - ▶ Reinforcement vs. Punishment
 - ▶ Functions of behavior
- ▶ Home strategies
- ▶ Questions

What is Applied Behavior Analysis?

- ▶ *Applied behavior analysis is the science in which the principles of the analysis of behavior are applied systematically to improve socially significant behavior*
- ▶ *In simpler terms, ABA:*
 - ▶ Uses the principles of:
 - ▶ Reinforcement and punishment
 - ▶ Functions of behavior
 - ▶ Increases preferred behaviors
 - ▶ Decreases undesirable behaviors
 - ▶ Improves socially significant behavior
 - ▶ Any behavior that improves the life of an individual or his/her family
 - ▶ DATA-DRIVEN
 - ▶ GOALS MUST BE MEASURABLE AND OBSERVABLE

ABA is always data-driven!



How does ABA help?

- INCREASE DESIRED BEHAVIORS
 - Increase communication skills
 - Appropriate social interaction
 - Teach new skills
 - Learn colors, letters, numbers
 - Learn independent life skills such as brushing teeth, dressing oneself, etc.
 - Learn to do chores – load dishwasher, take out trash
 - Learn appropriate interactions in various community settings, i.e. restaurants, grocery stores, airports
 - Generalize skills so they can be done outside of a class/clinical setting
 - Child learns letters at school and can now read letters at home
 - Child eats a new food at home and starts eating it at school and restaurants

How does ABA help?

- REDUCE UNDESIRE BEHAVIORS
 - Reduce aggression / tantrums
 - Keeping hands to self
 - Staying quiet
 - Maintain self-control
 - Reduce escaping/eloping
 - Learn to accept “No”

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Reinforcement and punishment

- ▶ Positive reinforcement – INCREASE a desirable behavior by GIVING something valuable
- ▶ Negative reinforcement – INCREASE a desirable behavior by REMOVING something aversive/undesirable
- ▶ Positive punishment – DECREASE a problem behavior by GIVING something aversive/undesirable
- ▶ Negative punishment – DECREASE a problem behavior by REMOVING something valuable/preferred

	Reinforcement	Punishment
Positive	INCREASE behavior GIVE preferred item	DECREASE behavior PRESENTING an undesirable item
Negative	INCREASE behavior REMOVE undesirable item	DECREASE behavior REMOVE desirable item

Examples of reinforcement and punishment

- ▶ Positive reinforcement
 - ▶ Student complies with directions, provide verbal praise
 - ▶ Child waits nicely, he gets a treat
- ▶ Negative reinforcement
 - ▶ Student cleans up desk without asking, teacher takes away demerit
- ▶ Positive punishment
 - ▶ Student runs out of the room and is yelled at in front of the class
 - ▶ Child hits another student and gets “demerit”
- ▶ Negative punishment
 - ▶ Child pushes sibling and Ipad is taken away
 - ▶ Child is talking in class and gets a time-out

How do we use these principles to manage challenging behaviors?

- **IDENTIFY A REPLACEMENT BEHAVIOR FOR THE UNDESIRE BEHAVIOR**

- Reinforce a replacement behavior instead of punishing an undesired behavior

- Examples

- Singing in front of Shawn

- Example of negative reinforcement

- Sitting at the table vs. running away

- Reinforce sitting in gradually increasing intervals

- Keeping hands to oneself vs. touching others

- Reinforce hands to self in gradually increasing intervals

- Use of punishment when reinforcement is not effective

- Potty training

- Injurious behavior to others or self

Functions of behavior

- ▶ **ESCAPE** – from a person, place or activity
- ▶ **ATTENTION** – desire for attention from peers or adults
- ▶ **TANGIBLE** – desire for thing or activity
- ▶ **SENSORY** – meets a sensory need or feels good

How do we use these principles with kids with special needs?

- ▶ **First, identify the function of the behavior**

- ▶ Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)

- ▶ If the function of the behavior is...

- ▶ Attention – Ignore the behavior

- ▶ Escape – Ignore the behavior and **continue following through with your demand**

- ▶ Tangible – Do not provide the tangible while the child is engaging in the undesired behavior. Try to find an appropriate replacement behavior.

- ▶ Sensory – The most challenging – try to find an appropriate replacement behavior

Important to correctly identify and manage the function of the behavior!



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Using ABA strategies at home – reducing or eliminating undesired behaviors

- ▶ Behavior extinction – trying to eliminate an undesired behavior that is attention-maintained
 - ▶ Ignore the behavior and provide no reaction
 - ▶ This can be very challenging for parents/family
 - ▶ **May see an increase in the undesired behavior – extinction burst**
 - ▶ **Consistency is key!!**

Using ABA strategies at home – reducing or eliminating undesired behaviors

- ▶ Behavior extinction can be very challenging for the individual and the family, especially if the behavior has been reinforced for a long time



ABA strategies to use at home

- ▶ First...., then.....
 - ▶ First unload the dishwasher, then Ipad
 - ▶ First finish your task, then break
 - ▶ Use visuals, if necessary
- ▶ Token economy
 - ▶ Provide stars to child; child finishes a task, he puts a star on a board. After five stars, child gets a break/Ipad/treat.
 - ▶ Simply use a sheet of paper with 1 2 3 4 5

ABA strategies to use at home

- ▶ Identify and frequently reinforce a replacement behavior
 - ▶ Examples
 - ▶ Frequently reinforce waiting nicely with verbal praise (do this often with Shawn)
 - ▶ Frequently reinforce keeping hands to oneself
 - ▶ Frequently reinforce sitting quietly/no singing (this has improved, however the function of this behavior is often self-stimulatory)
 - ▶ Frequently reinforce staying on-task
- ▶ After a certain period of time, one can increase the intervals between reinforcement
- ▶ A time may come where no reinforcement is needed and the replacement behavior becomes the norm

Managing challenging behavior by teaching communication skills

In many cases, the reason for tantrums or other challenging behaviors is difficulty for a child to communicate his/her wants, needs or thoughts

- ▶ Work to create an approach for a child to communicate more easily and effectively
 - ▶ Teaching yes/no
 - ▶ Teaching non-verbal children to communicate through ipad or pictures
 - ▶ Teaching basic sentences for kids to use
 - ▶ “I need a break”
 - ▶ “Please stop”

Managing challenging behavior

- ▶ While these ABA strategies can be very effective, there are instances where different strategies and approaches have been tried to manage a behavior and no progress is made
- ▶ Reasons
 - ▶ Child not yet ready/mature
 - ▶ Potty trained at night
 - ▶ Behavior is too rewarding for a child with self-stimulation as the function
 - ▶ Hand flapping
 - ▶ Jumping from heights
- ▶ Need to manage environment

Managing challenging behavior

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Final thoughts

- ▶ Lots of potential opportunities to implement ABA in the home for managing challenging behaviors or acquiring new skills
- ▶ Can use this approach on anyone, any environment, for lots of behaviors!
- ▶ Questions

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