



An Overview of ABA Therapy

What is ABA Therapy?

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a therapy based on the science of behavior and learning.
- It is useful in teaching new skills and in decreasing undesired behaviors.
- ABA therapy has been extensively researched and is widely accepted as the best treatment for people diagnosed with autism and related developmental disorders.
- It is considered an evidence-based best practice treatment by the U.S. Surgeon General and the American Psychological Association.

Unlike other branches of psychology, ABA does not look at mental states or traits. When using the principles of ABA, you investigate why a behavior occurs by looking at interactions between a person and the environment and then making environmental changes to alter the probability of a behavior occurring in the future.

When to Use ABA Therapy

The principles of behavior analysis can be seen throughout society, from using a fitness tracker to increase exercise behaviors or the dingy sound your car makes to remind you to put on your seatbelt. Some common ways ABA therapy is used include:

- Increasing functional communication
- Building independence with daily living tasks, such as toilet training, dressing, sleeping, and general hygiene
- Teaching friendship skills
 - For example, understanding perspectives, engaging in conversations, knowing how to initiate social interactions, and maintaining friendships over time
- Decreasing behaviors that are dangerous or harmful to the individual
 - For example, self-injurious or self-harming behaviors, aggression, or personal safety in the community

✦ It is important to remember that ABA is a science and not one specific program or technique. ABA is a broad field that includes a wide range of tactics and methods.

History of ABA

In the 1960s, Dr. O. Ivaar Lovaas pioneered ABA for children with autism by using behavioral principles to teach them new skills. Lovaas used Discrete Trial Training (DTT)—high levels of repetition, prompting, modeling, and reinforcement—to achieve results. However, Lovaas' methods used not only reinforcement but also punishment, which proved counterproductive for the children whose lives the therapy was meant to improve.

Today's ABA Therapy

Over time, ABA has shifted away from the DTT approach to play-based, naturalistic therapy. ABA therapists now rely on reinforcement-based procedures, and the field has moved away from exclusively adult-directed tasks to therapy sessions that involve a more natural back-and-forth between the therapist and the child.

Therapists and children share control over the direction of activities, and clinicians design treatment based on the natural course of skills progression that occurs in child development. These more naturalistic, developmental models of therapy teach children to say “big truck,” or “red truck,” before “I want truck please.” This is in keeping with how children naturally learn to communicate.

In a traditional DTT approach to therapy, a child might be taught to identify colors by touching flashcards placed in front of them on a table. In Kyo's child-centered therapy model, a kid who loves balloons might be presented with different colored balloons to identify by color, with the therapist blowing up the balloon or letting it zip around the room, once the child responds correctly. Another child who is fascinated by vehicles might learn to identify colors when the therapist presents different colored matchbox cars.

We believe naturalistic, child-centered ABA therapy is one of the most effective ways to teach children with autism and other developmental disabilities.

Families can learn more at: kyocare.com/faq