

ABA, or Applied Behavior Analysis, is an evidence-based practice which applies the science of learning to help understand and change social behavior. The field of ABA can be applied to a wide variety of settings and situations, and includes techniques that are based on the understanding of why certain behaviors occur and persist. ABA techniques have been well-researched and shown to be effective in helping children with autism and other developmental disorders minimize concerning behaviors, and learn new skills and desired behaviors. Children with autism typically do not learn in the same manner from their environment and social interactions as do other children. ABA provides a means for understanding what motivates a particular child and uses that to promote and teach desired behavior.

How does ABA work?

In ABA terms, “behavior” is anything we say or do—eating, speaking, moving physically, and so on. People with autism typically have delays in a number of areas that keep them from engaging in appropriate behavior at typical rates of development. ABA intervention can help children, teens, and adults with autism learn specific skills and behaviors needed to function more successfully in their home, school, and work environments.

ABA works by breaking down complex skills and behaviors into small, attainable steps that can be learned more easily. These smaller steps are learned over time and are combined to produce more complex behavior and then apply it in different settings or environments. ABA practitioners are able to be very diligent in teaching skill acquisition because ABA interventions rely on particular measurement and graphing systems that make evaluation of skills easier. Thus, it is clear whether progress is being made, and where and when changes should occur based on present levels of performance.

Ultimately, ABA seeks to help individuals and families learn and use new socially appropriate skills and behaviors across people and environments to create greater independence and more enriched experiences.