

ABA with Teens & Adolescents

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The Science

- In ABA, a socially significant behavior is targeted, such as a child learning to make a request (the behavior).
- Then, an environmental alteration is introduced, such as teaching instructions (the antecedent) and a reward for a correct response (the consequence).



- The change in the targeted behavior is objectively measured.



The Evidence

- The research EIBI -- children testing within the normal range on IQ, adaptive skills, and social skills following intervention (ages 2 to 3 ½)
- Over 100 research articles documenting the use of applied behavior analysis principles to teach new skills to children with autism over the age of five.
- Most focused on one issue or skill.
- ABA has been used effectively to address the needs of a variety of populations and diagnoses (e.g., reading, smoking cessation, increasing productivity of a business, etc.).



The Purpose

The objective of an ABA program...

- improve the quality of life of an individual with autism
- increase independence
- enhance ability to access home, school, community supports and resources by improving targeted skills
- can be accomplished in early childhood, adolescence, and even later in life.



The Methods

Some examples of ABA methods include...

- Discrete Trial Training (DTT)
- Incidental Teaching (IT)
- Pivotal Response Training (PRT)
- Verbal Behavior Approach (VB)
- Response Interruption Redirection (RIR)
- Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI)
- Social Stories/Social Scripts
- Social Skills Training (SST)
- Video Modeling



The Similarities

Common intervention strategies with EI include...

- An ABA program is always individually-tailored to the unique needs of the client, with respect to social significance across environments
- A variety of intervention methods are included within a “treatment package”
- All behaviors are assessed and treated with a “functional” intervention



The Differences

Differences in the approach to teens and adolescents compared to EI may be...

- Uniquely developed, but tend to be more reliant on naturalistic, or contextualized, interventions
- Tend to require a greater deal of flexibility and creativity
- Greater difficulty in training staff for programs that are less “discrete” or decontextualized
- Range of learning targets may expand significantly



Behavior

Behavior intervention approaches may differ from EI in that...

- Behaviors are likely to be “bigger,” as the subjects emitting the behaviors are typically bigger
- Greater reliance on differential reinforcement as opposed to extinction or punishment procedures
- Full-physical prompting (hand-over-hand) avoided for escape-motivated behaviors (may be appropriate in cases or motoric skill deficit)
- Direct removal of a preferred item (negative punishment) avoided for access behaviors
- Developmental appropriateness must be considered with regard to reinforcement and contingencies



Instruction

A number of interventions have demonstrated that adolescents or adults with autism can be taught...

- purchasing skills
- community living skills
- daily living skills such as mealtime behaviors
- vocational skills
- self-management
- executive skills
- social skills



Collaboration

Collaboration with other relevant persons/parties in the life of an adolescent is critical, and may include some of the following...

- Immediate/Extended family & friends
- Teachers, school psychologists, other school staff
- Other health providers (counselors/therapists, wraparound, etc.)
- Coaches, Scouts, Church Groups, etc.



Data

Effective ways to collect valid data may include...

- Selecting a recording method that is “doable” and will reflect a good representation of the behavior targeted for change
- Interval recording (whole/partial)
- Time sampling (momentary)
- Frequency
- Trial Data



Home

Home programs may focus on...

- Increasing independence with self-care and/or functional routines
- Improving functional communication that is age and/or developmentally appropriate
- Self-management programs



School

School programs may focus on...

- Emphasis in navigating increasingly complex social communicative events
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Increasing independence with routines
- Other executive skill targets
- Vocational Targets



Community

Community-based programming may focus on...

- Teaching skills in accessing community supports/resources
- Job skills
- Relationships/Boundaries
- Any target skill that will support independent functioning moving toward adulthood



Summary

ABA programs for teens and adolescents...

- are flexible and creative
- individually-based and unique, like all ABA programs
- expansive range of target skills of social significance to the client
- remain based on foundational principles of behaviorism



Thank You for Attending!

Contact Information

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