

ABA's Role in Feeding 101

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1

Disclosures

Financial Disclosures

I worked for One Bite at a Time ABA until August 1, 2023 in which One Bite was merged into Jade Behavioral Consultants and receive a salary from them as of August 1, 2023.

Non-Financial Disclosures

I am currently a member of the Southern California Chapter Counsel for Feeding Matters.

I have no other financial or non-financial disclosures at this time.

2

Learning Objectives

- Summarize the science and research of ABA interventions in feeding relations
- Apply principles to develop feeding interventions, enhance client dignity and promote positive outcomes
- Identify two ABA strategies that can foster effective support aligned with the child's development

3

Who Am I?

I'm a BCBA & a mom of child who would have been diagnosed with PFD

I was told, "he's just a picky eater."



4

What is ABA?

The science in which tactics derived from the principles of behavior are applied to improve socially significant behavior and experimentation is used to identify the variables responsible for the improvement in behavior.

(Cooper, Heward & Heron 2019)

5

BUSTING THE ABA



6

ABA is only effective for children with autism

ABA is a powerful tool for helping individuals across a variety of diagnoses. This includes but is not limited to traumatic brain injury, sports psychology, fitness and treating gambling and substance abuse.

(Pepperdine University, 2022)

7

ABA therapy encourages people to bribe children

People often confuse the word "bribe" with the concept of reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is delivered after a behavior occurs to increase the chances the behavior will happen in the future.

- Example: "You practiced active listening during story time, now you can have 5 minutes of free time."

Bribing, is associated with a negative behavior and typically occurs before the behavior happens.

- Example: "If you are quiet during story time, I'll give you a cookie."

(Pepperdine University, 2022)

8

ABA therapy encourages punishing children

While many often think children acting out by hitting, yelling, or screaming, ABA defines behavior as any action a person does. While ABA can target less desirable behaviors it also focuses on reinforcing desirable behaviors.

(Pepperdine University, 2022)

9

Review of Evidence

Past
&
Present

10

Behavioral Interventions in Feeding

Historical Look
(Williams & Seiverling, 2023)

- For over 50 years behavioral interventions have yielded positive results for treating pediatric feeding problems.
 - Escape extinction, has historically been a highly used intervention in the treatment of feeding disorders due to the large amounts of research regarding its effectiveness
- Recent research, recent research is evaluating other interventions due to the concerns raised with the use of escape extinction:
 - Short term increase in problem behaviors
 - Extinction induced emotional dependency

11

Possible Barriers

Although there is an abundance of empirical support for interventions that are behavior based, many clinicians opt to use non-behavior analytic approaches

(YuQ Li E., Li L, et al., 2020)

12

Escape Extinction

Escape extinction purposefully withhold reinforcement of a challenging behavior and continue to present the instruction until the child complies

(Turner, V.R., et al, 2020)

PARENT: "Eat the broccoli"
CHILD: Refuses food & cries
PARENT: "Eat the broccoli"
CHILD: Eats the broccoli

13

Escape Extinction

- Can result in session much longer than a typical meal
- Might restrict the child's ability to leave the table.
- Cause an increase in other behaviors or new behaviors.
- Is considered more intrusive- it might not be feasible or acceptable specially if other less intrusive interventions are effective.
- Requires a functional analysis to confirm function and a qualified specially trained clinician to implement

(Turner, V.R., et al, 2020)

14

Behavior Interventions are more than you think

By utilizing behavior techniques, ABA interventions can systematically desensitize individuals to aversive textures, tastes, or smells and gradually expand their food repertoires (Addison, L., Piazza, C., et al., 2012).

15

De Los Santos & Silbaugh (2020)

- **Used differential reinforcement to improve food acceptance**
 - Differential reinforcement is the process of only delivering reinforcement for those responses that meet a specific criteria and placing all other responses on extinction.
- **The goal of this study was to demonstrate that differential reinforcement could be used along with using a high preferred food without using escape extinction.**
 - **RESULTS:**
 - Demonstrated that differential reinforcement access to preferred foods increased consumption of non-preferred foods.
 - By conducting a formal preference assessment, an edible reinforcer was identified, resulting in increased food acceptance for target food.
 - This was important because more intrusive interventions, like escape extinction was not necessary.

16

Trejo, M.J., & Fryling, M. (2018)

- **Used the high probability (high-p) to improve food acceptance**
 - High-p is the process of using a series of 3-5 instructions that the individual has history of complying with and pair those with a low probability (low-p) behavior they do not comply with.
 - **The goal of this study was to identify if there was difference in responding when:**
 - The high-p target was similar to the low-p behavior
 - Example: Water(high-p) and non preferred food (low-p)
 - The high-p target was dissimilar to the low-p behavior
 - Example: Simple instructions "touch head", "clap" and the non-preferred food (low-p)
- **RESULTS:**
 - Consumption of non-preferred foods continued in the absence of mealtime behaviors regardless of what high-p sequence was used.

17

ABA

Research Design
How we know what works
& what doesn't work

18

Single Case Design

- Method that uses a small sample size to test the success of a treatment or intervention
- Also known as:
 - Single-subject design
 - Within-subject design
 - Intra-subject design

(Cooper, Heward & Heron 2019)

19

Single Case Design

Why ABA uses more single case design methods over group designs:

- Show the performance of an individual person
- Show individual variability
- Show a relationship between an intervention and a change in behavior
- Allows for attempts of replication

(Cooper, Heward & Heron 2019)

20

Single Case Design

There are multiple experimental designs that can be used in single case research:

- Multiple baseline designs
- Component analysis
- ABA Design

(Cooper, Heward & Heron 2019)

21

All BCBA's
are not the same

22

Practicing within our Scope

Behavior analysts, like many professions here today are expected to practice only within their identified scope of competence. BCBA's engage in new areas only after accessing & documenting appropriate study, training, supervised experience, consultation, and/or co-treatment from professionals competent in the new area. Otherwise, they refer or transition services to an appropriate professional.

Tereshko, L., Weiss, M.J., & Olive, M.L. (2021).

23

Practicing within our Scope

As feeding is a complex and multisystemic challenge, providing services for this presenting issue requires substantial additional study, training, and supervision and necessitates the expertise and input of several other disciplines.

- In addition, the clinician while not an expert, should have clinical knowledge in fields that are directly related to feeding:
 - Various medical conditions directly related to feeding issues
 - Sensory diagnosis that related to feeding
 - Diet & nutritional knowledge
 - Behavior momentum

Tereshko, L., Weiss, M.J., & Olive, M.L. (2021)

24

What ABA can do for the Assessment & Treatment of Feeding?

25

Assessment

- BCBA's focus on observing the environmental events that occur before & after the target behavior & can then help identify interventions through treatment plans and consultations. These assessments include but are not limited to ecological assessments, indirect and direct assessments.
- No, intervention or recommendation should occur without seeking a medical consultation if there is any reasonable possibility that a referred behavior is influenced by a medical or biological variable or assessment.

(Tereshko, L., et al, 2021)

26

Where can I find a trained ABA therapist?

- Visit the Behavior Analyst Certification Board website and Click on "Find a Certificant" <https://www.bacb.com/>
- Make sure they have these credentials after their name: BCBA

27



Questions to ask your Clinical Team

28

Would my child/client benefit from having a BCBA consult?

What training does the BCBA have in feeding & did that include direct supervision?

29

What methods do you use to treat feeding issues ?

Will you consult with my clinical team?

30

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31

THANK YOU

32