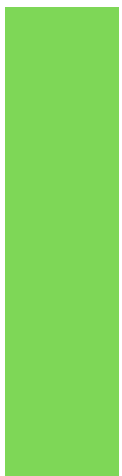




BOUNDLESS ABA

ABA AND AUTISM

Family Resource



UNDERSTANDING YOUR AMAZING CHILD:

A GUIDE TO AUTISM AND ABA

WELCOME! THIS HANDOUT IS DESIGNED TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT AUTISM AND A COMMON SUPPORT CALLED APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA). WE KNOW YOU WANT THE BEST FOR YOUR CHILD, AND WE HOPE THIS INFORMATION IS HELPFUL.

WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD)?

Imagine a beautiful rainbow - it has many different colors and shades. Autism is similar; it's a spectrum, meaning it affects each person differently and to varying degrees. There's no single "type" of autism.



Think of it this way: People with autism may see, hear, feel, and experience the world in a unique way. This can lead to differences in:

- **Communication:** They might communicate verbally, non-verbally (like pointing or using pictures), or a combination. They might also understand social cues differently.
- **Social Interaction:** Making friends, understanding social rules, and engaging in typical social play might be challenging.
- **Repetitive Behaviors and Interests:** Your child might have strong interests in specific topics or engage in repetitive actions (like flapping hands or lining up toys). These can be comforting and important to them.
- **Sensory Processing:** They might be very sensitive or less sensitive to sounds, lights, textures, tastes, or smells.



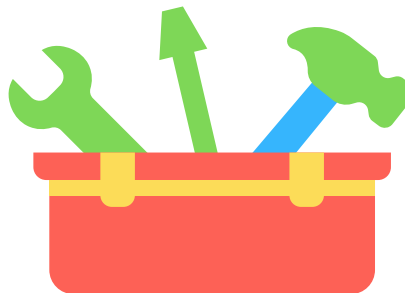
KEY THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT AUTISM:

- It is not a disease or something to be "cured." It is a different way of being.
- Every autistic person is an individual with their own strengths, talents, and challenges.
- Autism is not caused by bad parenting.

Introduction To ABA

WHAT IS APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA)?

Think of ABA as a set of tools and strategies to help your child learn new skills and reduce behaviors that might be challenging for them or others. It's like having a supportive coach who helps your child understand and navigate the world around them.



HERE'S HOW ABA WORKS:



- Focus On Learning: We use ABA to teach your child important skills. This could be how to ask for a toy, how to play with friends, how to get dressed, or even how to learn at school.
- Break Down Skills: Imagine teaching your child to brush their teeth. Instead of expecting them to do it all at once, we break it down: first, pick up the toothbrush; then, put on toothpaste; then, brush the top teeth, and so on. Breaking down bigger tasks into smaller steps makes them much easier to learn.
- Positive Reinforcement: This is a key part! When your child tries to say "please" for a cookie, and they get the cookie and lots of praise ("Great job asking!"), they're more likely to say "please" again. We use rewards to show them what we want them to do. The reward could be anything your child likes – a hug, a sticker, or time with a favorite toy.
- Understanding Behavior: ABA also helps us figure out why your child might be doing certain things. If they throw a toy when they want attention, we try to understand what's triggering that behavior (maybe they don't know how else to ask for attention). Then, we can teach them a better way to ask, like saying "Mommy, play with me?"
- Individualized Approach: Every child is different! We create a learning plan that's just right for your child, focusing on their specific needs and what they're good at.
- Teamwork: ABA works best when we all work together. This includes therapists, teachers, and you, the family. You play a huge role in helping your child practice and use their new skills every single day.



THINK OF ABA LIKE TEACHING ANYONE A NEW SKILL:

Imagine teaching someone to ride a bike. You wouldn't just push them off and hope for the best! You would:

- Break it down into steps (balancing, pedaling, steering).
- Offer encouragement and support when they try.
- Help them understand why they might be falling and how to correct it.
- Celebrate their successes, no matter how small.

ABA uses similar principles to help your child learn and grow.

WHY IS ABA USED FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN?

ABA has been shown to be an effective way to help anyone, including autistic individuals, to develop important skills and reduce challenging behaviors. It can lead to:

- Improved communication skills
- Increased social interaction
- Greater independence in daily living
- Reduced frustration and anxiety
- Enhanced learning in various areas



IMPORTANT THING TO KNOW ABOUT ABA

- It should always be ethical and respectful. The focus is on helping your child thrive and improve their quality of life.
- It should be enjoyable for your child. Learning should be a positive experience.
- It's not about making your child "less autistic." It's about helping them develop skills to navigate the world more effectively and reach their full potential.

Understanding your Child's ABA Program

ABA therapy has a few important parts that help your child learn and grow.
Here's a simple explanation:

WHAT GOES INTO YOUR CHILD'S ABA PROGRAM

- **Supervision:** A behavior expert (called a BCBA) is in charge of your child's program. They create the learning plan, teach the therapists, and keep track of how your child is doing.
- **Training:** The therapists who work with your child, and you too, will get training. This helps everyone use the same ABA techniques.
- **Programming (The Learning Plan):** The BCBA makes a special plan that lists what skills your child will learn and how they will be taught. It's like a personalized roadmap for your child's progress.
- **Functional Behavior Assessment:** ABA tries to understand why your child does certain things. This helps us teach them better ways to communicate their needs.
- **Data Collection (Keeping Track):** Therapists write down what your child does during therapy sessions. This helps us see if the therapy is working and if we need to make any changes. Without collecting valid data, we can't understand if we are progressing to success or need to change how we approach a specific task.
- **Parent Training:** You are a key part of your child's success! We'll teach you how to use ABA strategies at home, so your child can practice their new skills all the time.
- **Team Meetings:** We'll have regular meetings with you, the therapists, and the BCBA to talk about how your child is doing and plan the next steps.

WHO WORKS WITH YOUR CHILD?

Here are the people on your child's ABA team:

- **Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) or Behavior Technician (BT):** These therapists work directly with your child. They follow the learning plan and teach your child new skills. They also take notes on your child's progress.
- **Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA):** This person has a bachelor's degree and helps the BCBA with some tasks, like planning and supervising therapy sessions. They work under the BCBA's guidance.
- **Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA):** This is the behavior expert who designs your child's ABA program. They have a master's degree and oversee everything to make sure your child is getting the best possible support.



WHERE DOES YOUR CHILD RECEIVE ABA THERAPY?

ABA therapy can happen in different places, depending on what works best for your child and family and what is recommended by your BCBA. Here are the most common:

- At Home: Therapy can take place right in your house! This helps your child learn in a place where they feel comfortable, and it makes it easier to practice skills during your daily routines.
- In A Clinic: Some children go to a special center or clinic for their ABA sessions. These clinics often have lots of learning materials and a quiet space for therapy.
- At School: ABA therapy can also be provided at your child's school. This helps them learn and use their skills with teachers and classmates.

HOW BOUNDLESS ABA CAN HELP:

Boundless ABA understands that every family is different. We work with you to decide the best place for your child to receive therapy. We want to make therapy helpful and convenient, so your child can learn and grow in all parts of their life.



A GUIDE TO AUTISM AND ABA

RESOURCES

WORKING TOGETHER:

You are the expert on your child! By working closely with therapists and educators, you can help create a supportive and understanding environment where your child can learn, grow, and shine. Don't hesitate to ask questions and share your insights. We are all here to support your amazing child on their unique journey.



WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION:

National Organizations:

- Autism Society of America (AutismSociety.org): This is a leading grassroots organization with local chapters across the country. They provide information, resources, support, and advocacy for individuals with autism and their families. Their website has a "Find Your Affiliate" tool to locate local resources.
- The Arc (thearc.org): This organization supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism. They have local chapters and provide advocacy, resources, and support services.
- Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN) (autisticadvocacy.org): ASAN is a non-profit organization run by and for autistic people. They focus on advocacy for the rights of autistic individuals and provide resources from an autistic perspective, which can be invaluable for families seeking to understand and support their child.
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) (nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd): NIMH conducts and supports research on mental disorders, including autism. Their website offers comprehensive information about ASD, including diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing research.

ONLINE RESOURCES AND COMMUNITY:

- Online Parent Support Groups: Many online forums and social media groups connect parents of autistic children. These can be a great source of emotional support, practical advice, and shared experiences. Search on platforms like Facebook for "autism parent support group" or "Special Families." Be sure to look for groups that are moderated and have a positive, supportive environment.
- Reputable Autism Blogs and Websites: Numerous blogs and websites are run by autistic individuals, parents, and professionals. These can offer personal insights, practical tips, and the latest information in the field. Look for websites associated with established organizations or run by well-respected individuals in the autism community.
- University-Based Autism Centers: Many universities have centers dedicated to autism research and support. Their websites often have resources for families, information about local programs, and links to research findings (e.g., VCU Autism Center for Education - vcuautismcenter.org).

TIP FOR FINDING RELIABLE INFORMATION:

- Look for .org, .gov, or .edu websites: These are generally more likely to provide evidence-based and unbiased information.
- Be wary of miracle cures or unsubstantiated claims: Autism is a complex condition, and there is no single "cure."
- Consider the source's perspective: Understand whether the information is coming from researchers, clinicians, autistic individuals, or parents, as each perspective offers valuable insights.
- Cross-reference information: If you find something on one website, check other reputable sources to see if the information is consistent.
- Talk to your child's therapists and doctors: They can provide personalized recommendations and local resources specific to your child's needs.

By exploring these resources, you can build a strong foundation of knowledge and connect with the support you need to help your child thrive.

You are your child's biggest advocate, and understanding autism and supports like ABA can help you on this journey. Don't hesitate to ask questions and connect with other families and professionals for support.

Practice Assignment: Identifying Skills for ABA Therapy

We want to create the most effective ABA program for your child. Your input is essential! Please take some time to think about your child's strengths and areas where they could benefit from developing new skills.

Short-term: "Within the first week, the parent will complete the 'Parent Input' form to identify 3-5 priority skills for their child's ABA program."

Long-term: "Across the service period, the parent will consistently communicate new behaviors and updates on their child's progress at home and school to the ABA team."

Here's what to do:

Please consider the following areas and check the boxes next to the specific skills you would like your child to work on in ABA therapy. Feel free to add any skills not listed in the "Other Skills" section

Important Considerations:

- **Prioritize:** It's helpful to prioritize the skills that are most important or will have the biggest impact on your child's independence and quality of life.
- **Be Specific:** The more specific you are, the better. Instead of "improve communication," try "ask for a drink using words" or "follow two-step instructions."
- **Long-Term Goals:** Consider both short-term and long-term goals.

Thank you for providing this valuable information! We will use it to help develop your child's individualized ABA program.

Skills to focus on in ABA

1. Communication Skills

Expressing needs/wants (e.g., asking for food, toys, help):

Using Words

Using Signs

Using Pictures

Other:

Following Directions:

One-Step Directions

Two-Step Directions

Multi-Step Directions

Other:

Answering Questions:

Yes/No

Wh- Questions
Who/What/When

Choice Questions

Other:

Using Language:

Increasing
Vocabulary

Forming
Sentences

Using Correct
Grammar

Other:

**Non-Verbal
Communication:**

Pointing

Gestures

Facial Expressions

Other:

2. Social Interaction Skills

Playing With Peers

Parallel Play

Cooperative Play

Sharing Toys

Other:

Taking Turns:

In Games

In Conversations

In Group

Other:

Initiating Interactions

Initiating Interactions

Inviting Others To Play

Starting Conversations

Other:

Maintaining Conversations

Staying On Topic

Listening To Others

Asking Question

Other:

Understanding Social Ques

Reconizing Emotions

Understanding Body Language

Following Social Rules

Other:

3. Daily Living Skills

Self Care

Dressing

Feeding

Grooming

Other:

Following Routines

Morning Routine

Meal-time Routine

School Routine

Other:

Toileting

Potty Training

Bathroom Routine

Washing Hands

Other:

Household Tasks

Cleaning Up Toys

Putting Laundry
Away

Making Bed

Other:



4. Academic Skills

Pre-Academic Skills

Matching Objects

Matching Pictures

Sorting

Other:

Writing

Tracing Lines

Copying Letters

Copying Words

Other:

Reading

Matching Letters

Matching Words

Following Written Directions

Other:

Math

Matching Numbers

Identifying Numbers

Counting Objects

Other:

Fine Motor

Pincer Grasp

Stringing Beads

Scissor Skills

Other:

5. Behavior Skills

Reducing Challenging Behaviors

Tantrums

Aggression

Self Injury

Other: _____

Increasing Appropriate Behaviors

Staying On Task

Following Rules

Waiting Appropriately

Other: _____

6. Safety Skills

Awareness of Danger

Traffic Safety

Stranger Awareness

Household Hazards

Other: _____

Following Safety Rules

Crossing The Street


Staying With An Adult

Refraining From Touching Dangerous Objects

Other: _____

Please list any other skills that are important for your family and your child:

SHORT TERM PARENT GOALS



Identifying Priority Skills: "Within the first week of services, the parent will identify and list 3-5 priority skills for their child based on the 'Parent Input: Identifying Skills for ABA Therapy' document, with 100% completion of the form".

01

Expressing Goals and Concerns: "During initial meetings, the parent will verbally express at least 2 specific goals they have for their child's ABA therapy and at least 1 concern, as documented by the behavior analyst, in 100% of meetings."

02

Reviewing the ABA Program: "The parent will review their child's proposed ABA program and provide feedback or ask clarifying questions on at least 80% of the program components, as documented by the behavior analyst."

03



LONG TERM PARENT GOALS



Ongoing Collaboration: "The parent will attend at least 80% of scheduled parent training and team meetings across the duration of services (e.g., monthly), as documented by attendance logs."

01

Implementing Home Strategies: "The parent will report consistent implementation of at least 2 ABA strategies at home, as instructed by the behavior analyst, across 4 weeks, with implementation data provided in 75% of opportunities."

02

Consistent Communication of Child's Progress: "The parent will communicate new behaviors observed and updates on the child's progress at home and (if applicable) school to the ABA team at least 75% of the time across the service period, using agreed-upon methods (e.g., notes, meetings, email)."

03

