

## WHAT IS ABA?

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is the science of human behavior. Based upon the principles of learning theory, it is the study of socially significant behaviour (e.g., communication, social/play skills, academics, emotional/self-regulation, and adaptive living skills) in natural or naturalistic conditions.

ABA is an objective discipline that focuses on evaluation and reliable measurement. Interventions are designed, implemented and evaluated systematically to meaningfully improve socially significant behaviours. The effectiveness of individualized ABA-based interventions are examined as follows: (a) behaviours targeted to increase, decrease or maintain are selected; (b) specific goals and objectives are identified; (c) methods of measuring the target behaviours are established; (d) baseline measurements are taken – i.e., current levels of performance; (e) interventions for the target behaviours are designed and implemented; (f) effectiveness of interventions are determined by continuous measurement of the target behaviours; (g) modifications are made as required to maintain and/or increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the interventions; (h) evaluation of the effectiveness of the interventions is ongoing.

ABA methods are used with individuals with autism to increase and maintain desirable adaptive behaviours, teach new skills, reduce interfering maladaptive behaviours or narrow the conditions under which they occur, and generalize behaviours across situations and environments. The effectiveness of ABA-based interventions with individuals with autism is well documented in validated and peer-reviewed research. Children with autism who receive early intensive ABA-based intervention have been shown to make gains in IQ, language, academic performance, measures of social behaviour, and adaptive behaviour. These gains have been reported to be substantial and to have been sustained.

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