Behavior is the Problem. It is the behavior that people engage in, not the people, that is the root cause of the “problems” we seek to fix.

On Terms: Problem or problem behavior is a subjective label applied to behavior that does not conform to the norms or value of the community.
A Science of Human Behavior

**Symposium Purpose.** This workshop will provide attendees with a basic overview of the philosophical and conceptual foundation of behavior analysis. Within this context, common barriers to program implementation and misconceptions will be explored and discussed.

**I disseminate Applied Behavior Analysis because it is:**

- Conceptually Sound
- Evidence-Based
- Reliability Effective
- Compassionate
- Do-able
- Scientifically Grounded
Symposium Agenda

A Science of Human Behavior

Example of the Application of ABA

Misconceptions of ABA

Barriers to the Implementation of ABA
What is Applied Behavior Analysis?

The science in which behavioral principles and technologies derived from behavior analysis are systematically applied to improve socially significant behavior.

ABA is part of a larger discipline, Behavior Analysis.

Behavior Analysis is the scientific study of behavior, ABA is the applied arm of Behavior Analysis.
What is Applied Behavior Analysis?

- The science in which behavioral principles and technologies derived from behavior analysis are systematically applied to improve socially significant behavior.

**Behavioral Principles** – Basic concepts of learning, such as reinforcement, extinction, and stimulus discrimination.

**Behavioral Technologies** – Made of basic principles, procedures and treatment packages to improve behavior.
What is Applied Behavior Analysis?

- The science in which behavioral principles and technologies derived from behavior analysis are systematically applied to improve socially significant behavior.
Looking for ABA. The application of ABA would possess the following qualities.

- **Applied** – Target meaningful behavior.
- **Behavioral** – Based on philosophy of behaviorism.
- **Data-based** – Ongoing data collection and analysis.
- **Effective** – Produce socially meaningful change.

Interested in learning more about spotting real ABA, check out the following:

- Seven characteristics of ABA, defined by Baer, Wolf, and Risley (1968).
- Behavior Analysis Certification Board website.
The Application of ABA
The Application of ABA

- **An Analysis of Behavior.** An illustrative hypothetical example of ABA.
  - **The Client.** Gerry is a 36-year old man with a diagnosis of Autism; Gerry has received a range of services over his lifetime; Gerry currently lives with his parents in a suburb of Lancaster.

- **The Concern.** Gerry is unable to keep a job and has generally poor hygiene, he spends about 8-hr a day playing online computer video games.
The Application of ABA

- **Initial Steps.**
  - **Target Behavior.** Operationally define the target behavior – based on direct observation, interviews, case documents; develop measurement systems.

Playing Video Games is defined as having the game console turned on while pressing buttons on the controller or keyboard; include cinematic scenes. Measure using total duration.

Personal care is defined as completing each activity showering, brushing teeth, and wearing clean cloths before 9:00 am on weekdays and 11:00 am on weekends. Measure using event recording.
The Application of ABA

### Initial Steps.

- **Functional Assessment.** Conduct a series of systematic assessments to identify the antecedents and consequences of the target behaviors; identify possible replacement or alternative behaviors.

  - Descriptive Analysis
  - Conditional Probability
  - Brief Functional Analysis
Philosophical Assumption About Behavior.

- Behavior occurs for a detectible reason; all behavior has a purpose or a function that can be understood through evaluation of an individual’s learning history, present environment, and physiology.

Operant Behavior: Behavior that changes as a result of consequences.

Respondent Behavior: Behavior that is elicited by stimuli (or a reflex).
What is the Cause of Behavior?
A Traditional Explanation of Behavior

Gerry is lazy and doesn’t care about his job or health.

Gerry’s Autism makes it difficult for him to hold a job or take care of his hygiene.

Gerry’s is using video games as a way to cope with his situation.
A Behavioral Explanation of Behavior

Video games as an activity are of higher reinforcing than work or self-care. As such, Gerry is allocating his time in a way that is functional to him.
The Application of ABA

- **Intervention Development.**
  - **Treatment Plan.** Using the results of the functional behavior assessment, develop and implement the comprehensive treatment program*.

**Contingency Contract w/Goal Setting and Visual Feedback**
Overview of Contingency Contract

- Rationale and Description. Provide the supervisee with rationale and relevance of the skill; describe the behaviors necessary to perform the skills.

- Don’t Beat Around the Bush. If the contingency contract is a measure of last resort, state seriousness of the situation.

Robson et al. (Unpublished).
Overview of Contingency Contract

- **Identification of Target Behavior.** Identify and operationally define the target behavior; apply basic methods of operational description.

- **Create Measurement System.** Develop system of measurement; apply basic data.

Robson et al. (Unpublished).
Overview of Contingency Contract

- **Define Goals.** Establish challenging, yet achievable goal, often with input from supervisee.

- **Develop Contingencies.** Establish contingency for occurrence and nonoccurrence of target response; consider:
  - Work or meeting cancelation.

Robson et al. (Unpublished).
Overview of Contingency Contract

- **Review Contract.** Thoroughly review all aspects of the contract; adjust as needed.

- **Sign Contract.** A signed contract represents a commitment; a behavioral trap; all relevant parties should have copies.
Contingency Contract Components

- **Overview of Contingency Contract**
  - **Collect Ongoing Data.** Measure the target behavior; standard data collection methods.
  - **Apply Contingency.** Based on repeated level of behavior, apply contingency as needed.

**Rationale and Description**

**Target Behavior**

**Define Goals & Contingencies**

**Review & Sign Contract**

**Collect Ongoing Data**

Robson et al. (Unpublished).
Misconceptions of ABA
The Misconception: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is a technique or set of procedures. If I use some of these techniques, I am doing ABA.

ABA Misconception #1

ABA is one of the tools in my tool box! I like to sprinkle a little ABA in to my treatment plans.

ABA is the tool box, the tools, and even suggests how to use the tools.
The Misconception: Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is effective for working with young kids who have autism, but that is about it...
ABA Misconception #3

**The Misconception:** Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) is really only good for the assessment and treatment of problem behavior; however, when it comes to instructional goals, coping with anxiety, or social skills ABA is of little help...

Phillip, our client, has behavior problems. We better get some ABA to help reduce some of the problem behavior. Let’s start with a functional assessment.
ABA Misconception #4

**The Misconception:** Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) may be effective at changing behavior; however, it does not address the underlying cause of behavior. The problem behavior is just a symptom of something else...
What are the misconceptions that you have heard about ABA. Alternatively, what are the criticism of ABA that you have or do not have a response?
Unfounded Criticisms. Many of the misconceptions about ABA are born through misunderstanding or misapplication (e.g., limiting the scope of application to a small subset of the population).

ABA is the Applied Science of Human Behavior
The most salient features of ABA—the techniques and procedures—are often misunderstood as being the ABA; however, these are just products of the science.
Dismantling Common Misconceptions

Antecedents

Consequences
Barriers to Implementation of ABA Programs
Barriers to Programming #1

- **Pioneers in a New Area of Study.** Despite the accumulation of applied behavioral research over 45 years, research with adults is still lacking.
  - **Filling the Gaps.** Although conceptually supported (Ivy & Schreck, 2016), practitioners must often generalize evidence-based techniques used with adolescents and children to adult populations.

Go forth trailblazers, set the path that others will someday walk.
Barriers to Programming #2

Condition A

Condition B
Basic Behavior Economics. An open economy describes conditions in which a reinforcer is available outside of the therapeutic (or experimental) contingencies.

Research Example. Roane, Call, and Falcomata (2005) examined the effects of economy type of performance of basic tasks.

- Participants. Two individuals with mild developmental delays, ages 14 and 18.

- Closed Economy. Reinforcer was only available for completing work task.

- Open Economy. Reinforcer was available for completing work task during the session but also freely available after the session.
Barriers to Programming #2

(Roane, Call, & Falcomata, 2005)
Barriers to Programming #3

- **The Right to Sleep in and Eat Donuts.** As an individual grows older, he/she is given increased responsibility and freedom to make decisions by members of the community.

On one hand, poor choices on the part of the client could hinder habilitation. On the other hand, moral and legal issues arise when the client’s right to choice is abridged (Bannerman, Sheldon, Sherman, & Harchik, 1990).

- Paternalism
- Libertarianism
Barriers to Programming #3

- **Presumption of Rationality.** This societal value is based on the assumption that an adult can and will – more often than not – make decisions in his/her best-interest.

Are the individuals you serve given the training and experience necessary to meaningfully self-determine?
Questions, Comments, or Points of Discussion

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