



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Using Applied Behavior Analysis in Daily Activities

Families living with autism spectrum disorder often look for tips on how to handle the many different challenges that may arise. “Real Life Tips for Kids with Autism” is a series of practical videos and resources presented by the experts at Children’s Specialized Hospital.

One of the main things that we do in interventions that are ABA based is look for what we can use as a reinforcer for appropriate behavior – behavior that we want to continue, behavior that we want to teach from scratch. What can somebody get for doing the right thing? We start with baby steps. We start saying, “Okay as you’re walking, maybe we can’t wait to get something great for the whole time walking from the building to the car in the parking lot, but what do we get, but how does it pay to stay with mom and not run away? How does it pay to hold mom’s hand or dad’s hand?” We try to always make it pay.

And if we don’t figure out what it is, what the reason is for someone doing what they do, then we’re not always likely to intervene effectively. Sometimes it’s kind of hit or miss and we don’t want to be hit or miss, especially with severe behavior like aggression and self injury.

You know what you want your child to do and you know why it’s important and sometimes the child doesn’t see it that way and children should just listen because they should, but guess what, they don’t right? So sometimes, short-term, we have to make things pay, sometimes we feel like for the wrong reason. He shouldn’t do it for the M&M. You know what, right now he doesn’t necessarily understand the long-reaching implications of his behavior. If he does it because he gets whatever (M&M, high-five, play a game), that’s okay for now because that’s how we are going to get it to build and we’ll build in delays and get him to work to get something a little bit later, that’s okay. You know, if you can get a child to be able to enjoy an outing with the family in the community, if you can, if the child has access to things that maybe now he won’t even try, he can go to the pool he can go to the park, that’s awesome.

Sometimes ABA’s teaching can look kind of artificial because of the setting or because of the repetition that’s involved, but sometimes what happens is we just need to practice a lot and we need to remove distractions and we just need to make a point and then we can go into a natural setting. Sometimes we can teach things right off the bat in a natural setting as things occur, but sometimes that doesn’t give us enough opportunities to practice.

The three-prompt hierarchy is, giving a verbal instruction, pointing, if giving instructions is not followed just with a verbal instruction, then if the point doesn’t result in the child doing what you’re trying to get the child to do, you physically guide the child. An example of that would be, pick up your toys, pointing to the toys or where they need to be put and then gently, whatever level of prompting will result in putting the toys away, so if you have to just kind of nudge on the back of the kids arm or elbow, fine.

If you need to put your hand on the child's hand and physically guide picking up each toy, maybe in the beginning, then he'll continue doing it himself. The least amount of physical interaction to make that happen is great.

So it's not necessarily that the child wakes up in the morning plotting against you, but what actually might be happening in simple terms is the child learns "I tantrum, I get a hug. I tantrum, I get out of the store." It happens because it works, not because there is anything necessarily malicious going on, but it just happens because it works and if it worked once I'll try it again.

We look at what we call the ABCs ; the B is behavior, the A is what happened before behavior - the antecedent, and the C is what happened after behavior - the consequence. So when was the behavior occurring? What time? With who? What activity was going on? What instructions were given, demands? Was it crowded? Was it loud? There are a lot of things sometimes are going on and some of them might be important to kind of close in on why the behavior is occurring or when it's happening or when it's not. Then what happened after the behavior, the consequence. That's the c part of the ABC's. What happened after? Did someone say "don't do that?" Did someone not try and offer something else? Was the child removed from the situation? What happened after the behavior occurred? It's not always enough to only look at one instance of behavior and what happened before and after, you want to look at a pattern. So sometimes we'll write it down on what we call an ABC sheet. What happened before, what happened during, what happened after? And then, are we seeing some patterns?

It's really important to keep eyes on the prize right? We know what we want for this child, we know why it's important and sometimes what we're doing, we had the best intentions, but it's not working so we'll have to sometimes have to take a step back and tweak things. Am I asking something too hard? Do I have to break it down and teach an earlier, easier skill? Do I have to give him a little bit more when he does the right thing? Do I have to make him work a little bit less to get something? Make it pay a little faster.

Sometimes it's tough if you see your child has been getting services, things have been working, and sometimes he's hit a snag and things aren't working like they were before. First of all you got to celebrate the successes of things that work till now and remember, the child has made progress, and sometimes we got to retool because things aren't always moving at the same speed or sometimes seem to go a step back. Don't give up because if we give up where's the kid going to be? You've got to keep going. There are a lot of links about ABA available on Children's Specialized Hospital website. Check it out.



Through a partnership with Kohl's Cares, Children's Specialized Hospital is improving access to care for children with special health care needs.



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