

## ASSISTIVE SUPPORTS AND THERAPIES

### “ABC (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence) Model”

*BQIS/Outreach Fact Sheets provide a general overview on topics important to supporting an individual's health and safety and to improving their quality of life.*

#### Objectives

The reader will know what the ABC model is and be able to put the three components together to understand why behavior happens.

#### Definitions

**The ABC model:** The three-term contingency of Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence. An antecedent is something that comes before a behavior, and may trigger that behavior. A behavior is anything an individual does. A consequence is something that follows the behavior. (Miltenberger 2008; Reid & Parsons, 2007).

#### Facts

- Looking at behavior from an ABC perspective is part of a comprehensive functional assessment of a behavior.
- Using the ABC model is an effective way to understand why a behavior happens. Being able to look at several ABC data sheets provides a brief ‘snapshot’ of what is going on when an individual engages in a particular behavior. It enables us to see what is going on in the environment before the behavior that might trigger it, and what happens after the behavior that might maintain it.
- The ABC model can also be effective for increasing behavior. For example, we can use specific antecedents to trigger behavior we want to increase and follow the behavior with a consequence that will increase or maintain that behavior. See the examples below to see how this is done.
- Collecting data in ABC format does not require extensive skill or time. This data is helpful to the person writing the plan. Many times, the data forms for ABC data collection are simple checklists or other grids that are easy to use.

## Recommended Actions and Prevention Strategies

1. ABC data should be collected as part of a functional assessment of a behavior. ABC data is a necessary part of determining why a behavior happens.
2. To collect ABC data, the observer writes down what happened just before and just after the behavior, and specifies what the behavior looked like (Miltenberger, 2008). For example:
  - Antecedent: Staff asked individual to take a shower
  - Behavior: Cursed at staff for 30 minutes
  - Consequence: Staff walked away
3. We should look at the antecedents to problem behavior. If we can eliminate those antecedents, we may be able to eliminate the behavior (Reid & Parsons, 2007). For example, if we know that an individual consistently engages in screaming and self-injurious behavior when at the grocery store, we might eliminate trips to the grocery store. However, that may not be the most practical solution. We might look instead at going to small convenience stores, spending less time in the store, or other supports and methods to increase the individual's tolerance for the grocery store.
4. ABC data should be collected on an ongoing basis, in addition to frequency data, to help determine if the behavior plan is working.
5. We should use the ABC model to teach positive behavior. We can use antecedents before and reinforcers after positive behavior, to help the learner engage in more functional and socially appropriate behaviors (Reid & Parsons, 2007). For example:
  - Antecedent: Staff offered individual choice of bath or shower
  - Behavior: Went to bathroom with towel
  - Consequence: Verbal praise

## Learning Assessment

Questions that can be used to verify a person's competency in the material contained in this Fact Sheet:

1. Which of these is not a reason to collect ABC data?
  - A. It helps to determine why the behavior is happening
  - B. It helps to see which kind of punishment is best to use
  - C. It helps to teach a new behavior
  - D. It helps us learn why a behavior is happening
2. Which of these includes all parts of the ABC model?
  - A. All Behavior has Consequences
  - B. Antecedent, Behavior, Categories
  - C. Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence
  - D. All Behavior is Crucial
3. True or False: Collecting ABC data is so complex that only someone with advanced training should try to do it.

## References

- Miltenberger, R.G. (2008). *Behavior Modification: Principles and Procedure, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth
- Newman, B, Reeve, K.F., Reeve, S.A., & Ryan, C.S (2003). *Behaviorspeak: A Glossary of Terms in Applied Behavior Analysis*. Dove and Orca
- Reid, D.H. & Parsons, M.B. (2007). *Positive Behavior Support Training Curriculum*. Washington DC: American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

## Related Resources

- Indiana Institute on Disability and Community - Observing Behavior Using A-B-C Data  
[www.iidc.indiana.edu/?pageId=444](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/?pageId=444)
- Christine Hoffner Barthold, Ph.D., BCBA - ABC Data Collection Sheet  
[bartholdautism.com/datasheets/abc.pdf](http://bartholdautism.com/datasheets/abc.pdf)
- Behavior-Consultant.com - ABC Data Collection Form  
[www.behavior-consultant.com/ABC%20-%20202%20page%20form.pdf](http://www.behavior-consultant.com/ABC%20-%20202%20page%20form.pdf)

## Learning Assessment Answers

1. B
2. C
3. False

## Outreach Services

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As a service for persons supporting individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities, BQIS/ Outreach developed the Outreach Fact Sheet Library. The information provided is designed to enhance the understanding of the topic and does not replace other professional or medical instructions or individually developed plans. For more fact sheets and information, please visit [DDRSOutreach.IN.gov](http://DDRSOutreach.IN.gov).



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