



## WORKSHOP D-3

# First Things First: Exploring Effective Antecedent Intervention for Learners with Autism

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*Tracks: Challenging Behaviors, BACB*

### ABSTRACT:

Antecedent intervention as an effective means of behavior management is not well understood and therefore underutilized in teaching learners who have a diagnosis of ASD. The history of antecedent intervention in the context of the field of Applied Behavior Analysis, educational approaches, and society's views of behavior management will be outlined. Two established antecedent interventions with an extensive evidence base will be explored in depth, specifically Behavioral Momentum and Functional Communication Training (FCT). Case examples drawn from published research and the presenter's clinical experience will be used to illustrate treatment implementation, data collection, and outcome. Recommendations for working with a variety of learners with autism will be provided.

### OBJECTIVES:

1. Participants will be able to define antecedent interventions.
2. Participants will be able to provide examples of two antecedent interventions and describe them.
3. Participants will be able to describe a method of data collection for monitoring the effectiveness of an antecedent intervention used with school age children.
4. Participants will be able to explain the application of a specific antecedent intervention for reducing the likelihood of negative/undesired behavior.

### **Aletta Sinoff, PhD, CCC-SLP, BCBA-D**

is a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist and Board Certified Behavior Analyst in private practice in the Cleveland area. She earned her PhD from the Department of Speech/Pathology and Audiology, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, 20 years ago and achieved Board Certification as a Behavior Analyst in 2005. She has extensive clinical experience, with expertise in speech, language and communication development and disorders, the relationship between communication impairment and problem behaviors, and mentoring staff and parents. She is the past Director of the Cleveland Clinic Center for Autism, prior to which she developed the Center's Early Childhood Program from inception. She has lectured and presented on a variety of topics in ASD. Last year she was a recipient of the Milestones Professional Excellence Award for exceptional contribution to autism services in the region. Her second son, an adult with autism, inspires her journey to serve individuals and families who live with autism, and the people who guide and assist them.

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Milestones Conference

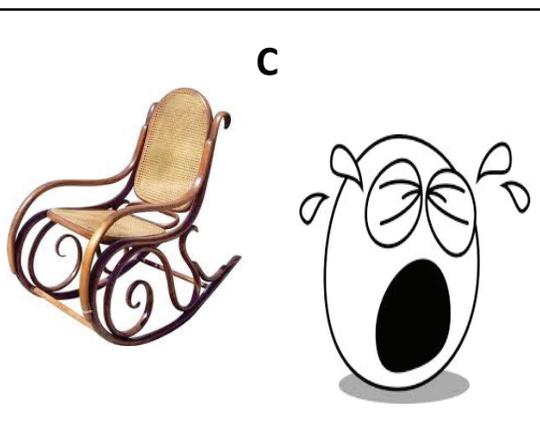
June 19, 2013

Let's start at the very beginning  
A very good place to start  
When you read you begin with A-B-C  
When you sing you begin with do-re-mi

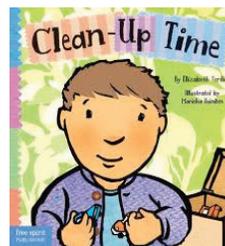
"Do-Re-Mi"  
From *The Sound of Music*

When you do ABI you begin with?

B                      A  
A  
                    B  
                                    B  
B                                      A



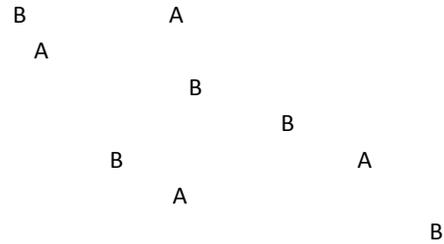
Where Do You Begin?



### And Then



### Where Do You Begin?



### AaaaaaaHhhh

Once upon a time.....



.....And they lived happily ever after.

### Antecedent Intervention

Once you have identified **B**,  
it starts with **A**

### The Evidence

- 1) National Standards Project (NSP) (2009)
  - Established “treatments” for learners with autism
  - “**Antecedent Package**” based on a review of 99 studies

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## The Evidence

- 2) National Professional Development Center on ASD (2010)
- To establish the evidence for “focused intervention practices” for learners with autism
  - Identified 24 evidence-based practices, the first of which is **Antecedent-Based Intervention (A-BI)**

## Terminology and Concepts Related to ABI

- Underutilized
- Loose application
- Oh – was that an antecedent intervention
  
- **Stimulus control SD**
- **Motivating operations MO**

## Steps (Adapted from NPDC)

- 1) Identify the target problem/unwanted behavior
- 2) Complete FBA that concludes with a hypothesis statement to include:
  - a) Setting events (i.e., the environment or conditions in which the behavior occurs), immediate antecedents, and consequences following the behavior
  - b) Refine the operational definition of behavior if necessary
  - c) Identify the function of the behavior

## Steps

- 3) Identify a goal that will be achieved as a result of the intervention
- 4) Collect baseline data
- 5) Identify and implement ABI strategies that directly address the function of the interfering behavior to **prevent** its future occurrence
  - a) Identify an ABI strategy(ies) that directly addresses the function

## CASE EXAMPLES

## ABI Strategies (NPDC)

- Using learner preferences
- Changing schedules or routines
- Implementing pre-activity interventions
- Using choice-making
- Altering how instruction is delivered
- Enriching the environment

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## Steps

- 6) Implement the ABI strategy by creating a lesson plan that includes:
- a) Weekly objectives for the learner that will lead to a decrease in interfering behavior
  - b) Statement of the strategy and what the teacher will do
  - c) The materials needed to implement the ABI strategy

## Steps

**Extinction** Often used in conjunction with ABI strategies

- 7) Reinforce the learner
- 8) Monitor learner's progress
  - Is the problem behavior decreasing?
  - If not, engage in trouble-shooting to determine potential reasons, and then modify or adjust the intervention

## Trouble-shooting

- Is the problem behavior observable and measurable?
- Is implementation of ABI strategies consistent across staff?
- Do the ABI strategies address the function of the behavior as identified by the FBA?

## The High-Probability (p) Instructional Sequence

- Antecedent intervention with the most support for treating noncompliance (Wilder 2011)
- Presenting a few instructions (3) with which the learner is likely to comply, immediately before giving a **low-p instruction** (i.e., the target instruction)
- **High-p instructions** should be presented back-to-back to build **behavior momentum** for compliance with the low-p instruction
  - Case example

## Functional Communication Training

- A Differential Reinforcement (DR) procedure
- Purpose: To teach the learner to emit an appropriate communication response (mand) as an alternative to engaging in problem behavior to access the same class of reinforcement
- ***The learner develops an alternative communication response as an antecedent to reduce the problem behavior***
- The problem behavior is typically placed on extinction, i.e., the problem behavior is not followed by reinforcement
- Efficacy is well documented, as part of treatment package to reduce problem behavior maintained by attention, escape, or access to preferred items

## Three Stages of Training

1. Functional analysis to identify the environmental events that serve as reinforcers for problem behavior and the conditions that evoke problem behavior
2. Identify an appropriate communicative response (mand), vocal, sign, picture, AAC device by reassigning the reinforcer which maintained the problem behavior to the communicative response
3. FCT is generalized across people and settings

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## FCT: The Beginning

- Identified by Carr and Durand (1985) for treating problem behavior of 4 children with DD
- Remediation consists of eliminating behavior problems, replacing them with socially useful behaviors, once it has been determined whether the behavior problem serves an escape or attention seeking function
- An alternative to escape is seeking assistance for a difficult task; an alternative to obtaining attention through problem behavior, is to learn an appropriate alternative response that secures adult attention

## Carr and Durand, 1985: FCT as Treatment for Problem Behavior

- 4 children with DD
- “Am I doing good work?” was taught to the students for whom attention was thought to be maintaining their problem behavior
- “I don’t understand” was taught to the children for whom escape from difficult tasks was considered to be maintaining their problem behavior

## Outcome

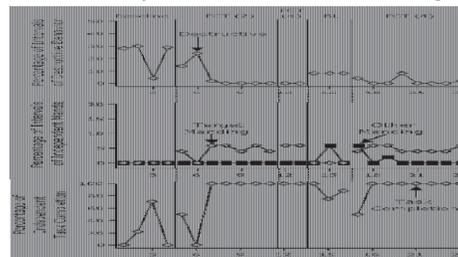
- The students acquired the vocal responses
- Substantial reductions in the problem behavior of all 4 children

## Selecting an Alternate Response a.k.a. A Communicative Response Topography

- The alternate response should:
  - Be selected from existing response classes to ensure use of least intrusive procedures – CAUTION re linguistic complexity
  - Require less response effort than the target inappropriate behavior, at least initially
  - Have an established history of reinforcement
  - Be acquired quickly
  - Be recognized across caregivers/teachers

Conducting Functional Communication Training in Home Settings: A Case Study and Recommendations for Practitioners. Harding, J. W., Wacker, D.P., et al. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*, 2(1), 21-33, 2013.

Percentage of intervals of destructive behavior (top panel) and independent target manding and other manding (middle panel) and percentage of independent task completion (bottom panel) during functional communication training and baseline conditions. BL = baseline, FCT = functional communication training.



## Concluding Comments

“Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.”

Alan Lakein, Author  
*“How to Get Control of Your Time  
and Your Life”*

**Thank you all for coming😊**