

# ABC Assessment And Modification Of One Problem Behavior

Intervention Tool

“a favorite intervention tool” – by Lynn Clark, PhD



What do the ABCs stand for in “ABC Assessment And Modification Of One Behavior?” **A is for Antecedent Events** – the events occurring prior to the problem behavior. **B is for Behavior** – the problem behavior such as tantrums, hitting, etc. **C is for Consequences** – the consequences for the child of his behavior – the results which follow the child’s behavior (e.g., attention, power, or a correction such as time-out). The child’s bad behavior may have been “accidentally rewarded” with a social, activity, or material reward. Do the assessment steps in the order of B, C, and then A.

Select only one target behavior with a parent, caregiver, or teacher. As a counselor, your objective is ask the parent to slowly describe in detail the ABCs of one example of one target behavior.

## B Behavior

## C Consequences

## A Antecedent Events

Begin with B Behavior.

- 1st** B *Tell me, what was your child’s behavior. What did she do? Remember the best single example that you can, and slowly describe that behavior. Please walk me thru.*
- 2nd** C *What did you do after his behavior occurred? What happened next? Walk me thru.*
- 3rd** A *What led up to this problem behavior? What was going on just before the problem behavior occurred? Walk me thru.*

The caretaker must have been present when the problem behavior occurred in order to clearly describe the ABCs of that behavior to you. As a counselor, you are interested in the ABCs of one occurrence of one target behavior, not a “combination description” of several occurrences of a target behavior. You are assessing the parent’s attempt to manage that problem behavior or emotional upsetness of his child. Get specific! Parents often feel threatened, not because they have handled behavior problems badly but because they have difficulty giving you the detail that you are seeking. Be emotionally supportive of these parents!

Parents will greatly sharpen both their observational skills and their behavior management skills when you teach them how to analyze problem behaviors using the ABCs. Ask parents to keep *ABC Logs* of selected target behaviors which occur during the week and to discuss these *ABC Logs* in parent counseling sessions.

This *ABC Assessment And Modification Of One Behavior* is especially useful when you serve as a consultant and help other mental health professionals and teachers in determining interventions for a particular child. I use this practical technique when serving as a consultant.

Antecedents and Consequences primarily determine Behaviors. To improve problem Behavior you modify the As and the Cs, especially the Cs.