Affordable ABA

# How Behavior Analysis Can Change Your Life

Introduction ..... 2

Section 1: Basic Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis ..... 2

The Analysis ..... 4

Section 1 Personal Reflection ..... 7

Section 1 Key Words ..... 7

Section 2: Science and Technology of Behavior Analysis ..... 8

Cause of Behavior ..... 9

Behavior Shaping ..... 12

Behavioral Research Methods ..... 14

Section 2 Personal Reflection ..... 16

Section 2 Key Words ..... 17

Section 3: Issues of Behavior Analysis ..... 17

History of Reinforcement ..... 17

Bad Habits ..... 19

An Individual's Personality ..... 19

Section 3 Personal Reflection ..... 20

Section 3 Key Words ..... 21

References ..... 22

# Introduction

Behavior analysis is a method that is used to understand human behavior. It evaluates the influence of the physical and social environment on behavior. One main goal of behavior analysis is to determine various ways of modifying the environment so that significant behavior change is able to be produced. Applied behavior analysis (ABA) is an evidence-based approach to treatment. As behavior analysts, we understand that the environment plays an important role in one's development and existence because humans (and non-human animals) have evolved to adapt to the environment and the changes that occur. When something within the environment changes, humans are able to change their behavior to thrive or even just to survive.

In this course, participants will learn to (1) identify basic concepts and principles of behavior analysis, (2) discuss the science and technology of behavior analysis, and (3) discuss general issues of behavior analysis.

# Section 1: Basic Concepts and Principles of Behavior Analysis

There are often times as people continue to learn about the field of behavior analysis that they compare and contrast the field to other avenues and subject matter. They also tend to evaluate the varying perspectives that are held among the different fields. In an early case within the field of behavior analysis, the varying perspectives among behavior analysts and that of clinical psychologists were demonstrated (Wolf et al., 1964). Within this monumental case, a three-year-old that demonstrated multiple severe behavior problems was referred to a team of behavior analysts. The young child had undergone cataract surgery and was required to wear corrective lenses or would lose their vision completely. For

over a year, the child's parents struggled and were not able to get the child to wear the corrective lenses. Additionally, the child would exhibit severe tantrums and was unmanageable to the point that he was institutionalized. The child was diagnosed with a multitude of disorders (i.e., autism spectrum disorder, psychosis, schizophrenia) and engaged in multiple behavior problems (i.e., lack of normal social and verbal repertoires, poor eating habits, head banging, face slapping, hair pulling). Several interventions were also attempted at the direction of their family physician such as restraints, sedatives, and tranquilizers. As a result of unsuccessful interventions, the child was admitted to a mental hospital for more precise treatment.

The behavior analysts observed the young child interact with their mother and realized that the mother was inadvertently reinforcing the child's behavior. The child's behaviors were a result of social contingencies that were being provided. As a result, the team of behavior analysts decided to implement time-out. Time-out involves the use of separating the individual from any source of reinforcement for a period of time, contingent on the demonstration of inappropriate behavior. As a result of this intervention, the child's previously exhibited behaviors were reduced to zero.

Although the aforementioned information is only part of the situation, it still demonstrates the key components that are involved in the manner that behavior analysts think. This was a single case of an individual that required therapy. The team of behavior analysts were intrigued by the case as it included a complex set of socially significant behaviors that were at life threatening levels. The behavior analysts were able to determine that these behaviors were learned and were confident that they could identify the variables that were maintaining the behaviors exhibited by the child. Furthermore, they were versed on the environment in which to treat the child that they could have control in.

After the team of behavior analysts were able to demonstrate control over the most serious behaviors, they were able to then begin to treat the child's remaining challenges and begin by shaping the wearing of glasses, reduce the behavior of throwing glasses, implement an intervention for teaching verbal behavior, and reduce the behaviors of food throwing and food stealing. For each of these aforementioned behaviors, the team of behavior analysts directly observed each behavior, evaluated the situation for controlling variables, and then developed and implemented a change in procedures to reduce inappropriate behaviors and teach new behaviors.

The team of behavior analysts were able to train the child's parents and the child was able to gradually fade back into the home. This example demonstrates the ways in which behavior analysts think. Behavior analysts believe that it is vital to treat socially significant behaviors with effective treatment. Effective treatment is a treatment intervention that works to demonstrate a socially significant change in the demonstrated behavior, not just a minimal statistically significant change. Behavior analysts view individuals as someone that needs help or guidance on managing a behavior, not as an experiment. Furthermore, this student represents one of the earliest demonstrations of how behavior analysts are able to view the exhibition of behavior and treat it in socially significant ways.

Behavior analysis is not similar to traditional versions of psychotherapy, and behavior analysts do not view themselves as psychotherapists. However, some individuals would argue that behavior analysis is a form of therapy that has a basis in nonmedical treatments for various mental and behavioral disorders.

## The Analysis

When determining the meaning of behavior analysis, the term analysis refers to the search for maintaining variables that signal a behavior as well as for the

individuals that continue, or reinforce, the behavior. Behavior analysts engage in this behavior of analysis prior to developing a treatment intervention and others see it as a method for finding the reason why a specific behavior occurs.

For example, a friend, Bob, is observed by you as continuously interrupting different conversations when you are together with a group of friends. You also mention to a different friend that Bob is so rude and you cannot understand how all he wants to do is talk about himself. In this situation, if you reviewed this scenario as if you were a behavior analyst, you may say to yourself that you are curious as to why Bob is constantly interrupting conversations. You feel that there is a reason that Bob does this and that there must be a reason that he continues to engage in this behavior. As the next get together occurs, you observe the situation more closely. First, you look for a stimulus that creates the stage for Bob's behavior of interrupting. Then, you watch and observe closely for any variable that may prompt Bob's behavior of interrupting. You begin to notice that Bob interrupts other people when a specific person begins to talk or when a certain topic is discussed. Once you have noticed these situations, you then make a note as to what happens right after Bob finishes his statement and how Bob reacts to these particular events. You learn that he always interrupts when the conversation is about sports as Bob knows a plethora of information regarding sports. As Bob provides some information about the sports topic, he appears satisfied as those involved in the conversation look puzzled and stop the conversation. Often, someone will ask Bob to explain how he knows the information that was relayed and then Bob will begin to tell a story to explain the information.

In an effort to learn to handle an individual like Bob, you would first have to observe the situation closely and decide how and when the behavior being exhibited is being reinforced by the individuals that are around him. A behavior analyst thinks objectively and analytically. Any behavior that a person

demonstrates has a cause or a reason as to why they have exhibited the behavior. As others begin to understand this concept, it will become easier to manage individuals by choosing to ignore certain behaviors or to reinforce behaviors that are exhibited that are socially acceptable.

Early within the development of behavior analysis, the field was known as behavior modification. The thought behind the early stages of this field was that a behavior needed to be fixed and that it was irrelevant as to why the behavior was occurring. This thought process led to a strategy that was not desired. This strategy upheld the view of discovering and demonstrating the use of aversive consequences as a method of suppressing or eliminating the behaviors demonstrated by individuals.

Later, this thought process changed dramatically as research demonstrated that it was possible to determine the controlling variables that were maintaining severe behavior challenges and use the knowledge acquired to develop and implement treatment interventions that were effective (Iwata et al., 1982). Within this research, researchers that were at The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the John F. Kennedy Institute worked with children that exhibited self-injurious behaviors. Self-injurious behaviors are often the most perplexing behaviors for behavior analysts. Since this monumental study by Iwata and colleagues (1982), it has become best practice to take baseline measurement as well as to perform a functional assessment before treatment begins. While there are some common functions that exist (i.e., adult attention, access to tangible reinforcers) and the performance of a functional analysis is standard practice, the variables that are tested can be unique to the individual and lead to worthwhile results. When a behavior analyst is able to determine the cause of a behavior, this can lead to the development of the most effective and humane treatment possible for the individual.

Another common way to define the term analysis is to demonstrate experimental control (Baer et al., 1968). The time out procedure was analyzed by systematically demonstrating that when glass throwing was followed by ten minutes of time-out, the behavior of throwing decreased to zero within five days. Furthermore, when this contingency was discontinued for three weeks, the behavior of throwing increased to the previous level, then reinstituting the contingency reduced the behavior of throwing again.

As a result, behavior analysis is known for analyzing behavior by determining the maintaining variables. A functional analysis is used to identify the various conditions that are present that allow for a behavior to be more likely to occur. They are both conducted prior to a treatment intervention being implemented.

## Section 1 Personal Reflection

Have you ever worked with an individual that demonstrated a challenging behavior where it was difficult to find an effective intervention that could be used to decrease the individual's behavior? Were you able to conduct a functional analysis to determine the variables that were maintaining the challenging behavior?

## Section 1 Key Words

Behavior modification - a term used in the 1960s to describe an approach to behavior that emphasized behavior change often using aversive consequences

Controlling variables - contingencies of reinforcement that have been demonstrated to reliably produce a certain behavior

Time-out - separating the individual from any source of reinforcement for a period of time, contingent on the demonstration of inappropriate behavior

## Section 2: Science and Technology of Behavior Analysis

Behavior analysts and behavioral researchers often think about behavioral treatment in much of the same ways. Behavior treatment is similar to and looks like the behavioral research in which it was developed from. Clinicians and researchers alike take baseline data, integrate intervention implementation into their work, and evaluate interventions on an ongoing basis.

In an effort to achieve good methodology, behavioral researchers are advised to conduct inter-observer agreement (IOA) checks. On the other hand, clinicians typically do not conduct these types of checks. For example, if a clinician were to implement behavioral treatment to an individual, they would observe the individual, record data, and discuss the results that were found to the individual's team. However, if this were research, the behavior analyst would not take data on the treatment that they implemented as this might provide bias toward the findings. As a result, the behavior analyst would ensure that there is more than one person observing the implementation of the treatment and recording data. Both of these individuals would not talk to one another as they observe and record the treatment data. At the end of the session, IOA would be calculated by the researcher to determine agreement and if needed, additional training would be provided to the individuals that observed the treatment implementation.

Researchers also seek out to test for social validation of the methods that they have utilized. Social validation seeks to find out if members of the public would find the research that has been conducted as useful. On the other hand, behavioral therapists hardly ever have to test for social validation. The notion that clients are seeking out behavioral services provides the approval for the initiation of treatment. The families of the client receiving services often push for treatment to continue which provides social validation for the treatment outcomes.

Within large organizations, behavioral consultants are routinely engaging in the use of research protocols in their practices. This helps to demonstrate to corporate customers that valid and reliable results are being achieved. In an effort to demonstrate systematic changes in behavior, these behavioral consultants will use research designs that show that the effects of the intervention were obtained as a result of certain specific inputs and outcome measurement.

A purpose of applied behavioral research is to evaluate the procedures used in ABA and compare them to different approaches on the same problem. For example, in reference to a study that was published on food selectivity, an occupational therapy technique that has been used with problems associated with pediatric feeding disorders was compared to an ABA-based approach. The occupational therapy technique had not been rigorously evaluated and had limited empirical support, revealing that approximately 68% of children had shown no advancement. As a result, researchers developed an experimental design that allowed them the ability to test the occupational therapy technique with ABA-based methodology. This experimental design used a combination of a multiple baseline with multielement and reversal designs. Within a few sessions, the ABA-based treatment produced 100% response. As a result, behavior analysts that are working with individuals with food selectivity concerns are able to utilize ABA-based methods that were described and have confidence that this methodology will help individuals enjoy other food options.

## Cause of Behavior

Behavior analysts are often described as practical individuals that are fascinated by the demonstration of human behavior. Often, they are predominately fixated on two different questions. Behavior analysts want to know why the behavior occurred or what caused it. Secondly, they would also like to know what they can

do to improve the behavior for the individual. Behavior analysts are focused on providing a higher-quality of life for the individuals they provide services to that contains less pain and frustration and more enjoyment for the individual and their family.

When a behavior analyst seeks to ask the question of why the behavior occurred, they are not searching for the original cause of the behavior. Behavior analysts are often trying to figure out what is occurring in the moment that is prompting or maintaining a particular response that is observable or that is causing the individual to be upset or those around them to suffer. In an effort to find an answer to this question, behavior analysts use a procedure known as experimental functional analysis or functional analysis. This procedure was developed by Brian Iwata in 1982. This procedure is utilized because the belief is that a behavior is occurring with some consistency, and it is producing an effect or a consequence that is maintaining it.

For example, Susie is a six-year-old who is having difficulty in school. Susie's teacher has expressed some frustration and has referred this student to the behavior analyst within the school district for behavior services. The teacher has stated that Susie spends a significant time off task and becomes disruptive in the classroom. Susie also will stare off into space and will often climb onto chairs in an effort to make other students laugh. Prior to any observations or assessments being conducted, the behavior analyst within the school district had wondered if Susie's behaviors were occurring because the material was too challenging and she is trying to get out of doing the work, it is reinforcing to make noises and climb on chairs as the other students laugh at Susie, or because when Susie is off task or exhibiting challenging behaviors, the teacher attends to Susie and talks to her, providing her with encouragement and redirection to get back on task. In this hypothetical situation, the behavior analyst for the school district believes that Susie's behavior is occurring for one of these three reasons; however, they are not

certain which one or if there is a different variable that has not been identified yet that is contributing to Susie's behaviors.

At this point in this situation, a behavior analyst would conduct a functional analysis where they would evaluate each variable individually to determine how the behavior is exhibited. If the behavior analyst believes that the math problems are too challenging for Susie, then easier problems would be provided on specific days to determine if there is any effect on Susie's disruptive and off task behaviors. On other days, Susie's regular math work would be provided, and the teacher would be prompted to only respond to Susie when she is on task and not exhibiting challenging behaviors. As this systematic process continues, one variable after another variable would be tried and then repeated so that the cause of the off task and disruptive behavior could be isolated. Then, this information can be utilized to develop an appropriate intervention for the student.

However, if the behavior analyst for the school does not have sufficient time and resources to conduct a full functional analysis, they may decide that they will conduct a functional assessment instead. This approach involves the use of nonexperimental methods such as informal observations, interviewing important individuals to the student and asking diagnostic questions, or conducting a more formal direct observation that integrates the use of a systematic method of data collection. The main purpose of the different functional assessment procedures is to guide the behavior analyst in locating a variable that appears to be the controlling variable. Once this variable has been targeted, a treatment plan is developed and implemented on a trial basis to determine if the behavior analyst was correct. The behavior analysts with the school may also ask Susie's teacher what happens when Susie is off task or disruptive and if it only occurs during certain periods of time during the school day. If this is the case, the behavior analyst may further question and ask Susie's teacher what she is working on when these behaviors are exhibited. These questions as well as other questions may

help guide the behavior analyst to formulate a hypothesis that states that Susie's off task and disruptive behaviors occur during times when Susie is working on math problems. Then, the behavior analyst may suggest that Susie is provided with some easier math problems for the next couple of days to see what behaviors are exhibited. As this trial phase occurs, data will be collected that the behavior analyst will review to determine if their hypothesis was correct or not. If the behavior analyst's hypothesis was correct, the behavior analyst will develop a behavior change program that will be provided to Susie's teacher to implement. Susie's parents will also be notified of the behavior change program, asked to provide consent and sign consent forms, and allowed the opportunity to ask any questions regarding the plan that will be used and developed to address Susie's behavioral concerns.

## Behavior Shaping

Behavior analysts view behavior as behavior despite the organism that exhibits the behavior. The same principles apply to all behaviors. Animal behavior has been evaluated by various professionals. It has been the subject of study from a multitude of perspectives such as experimental psychology, ethology, veterinary medicine, and behavior analysis (Burch & Bailey, 1999).

It is interesting to see the number of individuals that are trained in behavior analysis that do not know or have little knowledge regarding the training of their own pets. One suggestion that is often provided to dog owners is that after they have secured a veterinarian, they should also locate an obedience school. This suggestion also applies to behavior analysts who tend to believe that they know everything they will need to know to train their own pet. Dogs are different from humans, so there is some species-specific training that is applicable.

The basics of sit, down, stay, come, and walking on a leash should be taught to a

dog when they are just a puppy. Often, puppy training classes are able to be enrolled in for six to eight weeks at a time and meet at least once per week. Every week, the owner of the puppy will be taught how to train a new behavior and be provided with different exercises to work on at home. The main thought behind these exercises is to not only reinforce the new behaviors that have been learned but to also train for generalization to new settings such as the home environment and out in the community.

It can be a difficult process to generalize newly learned behaviors from the obedience class or school to other environments. It may often be challenging and not a process that occurs automatically. The new skills that are learned while in the obedience class should be practiced over and over in other environments until the puppy is able to demonstrate that they are able to sit, stay, down, come, and walk on a leash just as they would if they were in the obedience class with a trainer. It should not be expected that since the puppy is able to sit at obedience class that they will be able to generalize this skill to the home environment. This process will not occur unless the owner of the puppy is able to train for generalization.

Often, individuals will believe or have the thought that behavior shaping does not work. In fact, it is quite the opposite. It is not the notion that behavior shaping does not work but instead it is that the skills that are learned have not generalized to a different setting. For example, the puppy will need to continuously practice what they have learned in obedience class while they are at home, in the community, at the park, and in a different yard. If the puppy exhibits jumping on people behavior, then the puppy should learn an alternate behavior such as sit-stay. Furthermore, if the puppy gets loose and does not come back to you when you call their name, then you should seek out to manage the environment differently by purchasing a fence or instructing others in the home to ensure that the door is closed at all times. Once the environment has been managed

differently, then the owner should begin by calling the puppy from a short distance away and providing them with a treat when they return to you.

## Behavioral Research Methods

Behavioral research methods can be quite different that the methods implemented in statistical research. Even though the methods that behavior analysts integrate into their own research is common to others such as scientists in biology and chemistry, these methods are not like those utilized in the rest of psychology. Skinner (1938) developed the framework for the field of behavior analysis through the laboratory work that he conducted which, in turn, further inspired a multitude of applied researchers. These researchers worked with different populations and individuals that would later benefit from a technology of human behavior. Skinner became the catalyst for teaching others how to think the same way a behavior analyst does through how they look at what an individual says or does.

In the early work that was completed by Skinner, he demonstrated that the basic principles of behavior could be noted by evaluating a small number of individuals over a set time period. Even though Skinner had predominantly worked with pigeons and rats, researchers still found that these approaches used by Skinner also were applicable to human participants. Furthermore, as it has come to be, many of the variables that are deemed important that are applicable to human participants have to be evaluated in this manner as a method for determining effective treatment options. Results that are demonstrated from group statistical research typically have minimal relevance for humans that desire treatment. On the other hand, within-subject research is often ideal for individual cases like those that include that of managed care.

The beginnings of statistical research occurred within the area of agriculture.

Researchers wanted to determine the effects that seasonal crop rotations had as well as the use of certain fertilizers on their fields. It has been found that the use of statistics is relevant and applicable to situations like this because the effects that are statistically significant would continue to accumulate as time progresses over the numerous acres that would be under study. However, we are evaluating the effects of specific variables as they pertain to humans and a change in behavior, and it is vital that a clear picture can be provided for how each individual participant is performing. Within the research that is conducted in the field of behavior analysis, technology for research is relied on that was developed by Skinner to assist with evaluating individual performance in a careful manner. For example, the utilization of statistics may yield results that are not intended or warranted. If a behavior analyst were to observe a group of children that were disruptive within a classroom setting, data could be recorded on the number of times the children got out of their seat. If a statistical research model were being employed, then those numbers may be averaged together. These results would provide the behavior analyst with a false impression as they would want to know the child that was out of their seat during classwork 25 times, not all of the children, who averaged getting out of their seat 10 times per day. This example provides an explanation as to why behavior analysts are often found using a research methodology of behavior approach known as single-subject design. In the aforementioned example, behavior analysts who evaluated this group of children that were disruptive in the classroom setting would look at the data of each child on an individual basis instead of looking at the group as whole.

In the beginning, as Skinner continued to refine and develop a science that was applicable to individual behavior, he realized that he first needed to learn how to quantify the performance of an individual as time progressed. He realized that if he developed a small working environment for his pigeons and rats where they were able to receive reinforcement, then he would also be able to learn about

their behavior. The mechanism that he created was an operant chamber, and it was designed to allow his animals to press a level or peck a key when they were exposed to various conditions. He discovered that he could teach these animals a complex skill that included a chain of behaviors. This chain of behaviors were individual behaviors that were shaped individually and then chained or linked together. Skinner's findings were replicated by various researchers and were extended to different species.

Through the use of Skinner's system, each participant served as their own control. This provided the opportunity for Skinner to not have to use a control group. The science of behavior that Skinner came to have developed provided the groundwork for thousands of studies to be conducted that have clearly outlined the idea that certain variables have been found to consistently have an effect on the behavior of humans.

As a result of the aforementioned work and research, behavior analysis research methods are able to be utilized to study the behavior of individuals in various settings and environments. The performance of these individuals can be evaluated during both treatment and no-treatment conditions, and groups can be compared using single-subject research designs. In conclusion, the research methods that are employed in ABA have developed so far that they allow for applied behavioral researchers to evaluate the behavior of humans in practically any environment (Bailey & Burch, 2002).

## Section 2 Personal Reflection

What are some uncommon environments that you could find the application of behavior analysis to be useful in? What are some ways that you could see interventions based in behavior analysis being used to change human behavior outside of common applications or uses?

### Section 2 Key Words

Generalization - behavior trained in one setting may occur in a second setting where no training took place

## Section 3: Issues of Behavior Analysis

There are several concerns that are brought forth when discussing the realm of behavior analysis. Several questions are posed which then become a focus of discussion and often raise concerns that develop within the field of behavior analysis.

### History of Reinforcement

When an individual's history of reinforcement is discussed, this phrase describes what occurs as an individual engages and interacts within their own environment throughout time, as new skills are acquired, and as an individual is able to adapt to their environment. For example, a child is placed in a highchair and eagerly awaits a snack. The child drops a toy from their highchair and when their mother does not immediately pick up the toy, the child begins to cry. The mother then picks the toy up and the child no longer cries. This interaction begins the child's history of reinforcement for crying. Fast forward a few years- the child who is now ten years of age does not hesitate to cry when they want the new doll that was just released, engaging in multiple outbursts.

As crying results in the child obtaining a desired item when they are younger, this intermittent reinforcement of crying can also continue as the child becomes older into adulthood. Additionally, the history of reinforcement may not be related to a particular behavior that evolves throughout time. Instead, the history of reinforcement may refer to something that occurred in a single instance. Each

individual evolves and grows as they are exposed to different situations with various histories of reinforcement. Some individuals are raised to wait for others to help them. Other individuals will learn to do things by themselves and become independent at tasks. However, the important take away from each of these situations is to note how the individual was reinforced by others within their environment or if they received direct reinforcement from the activity.

Each individual is composed of behaviors that have been reinforced, how the behaviors have been reinforced, and the schedule of reinforcement that was utilized. Behavior analysts view behaviors that are persistently exhibited as being shaped by experiences that have occurred early in an individual's life Each family creates their own history of reinforcement within their child without even consciously being aware of it that will determine if the child is an individual that will easily give up or stay with a problem if it is challenging. Furthermore, an individual's history of reinforcement will determine if the individual is lazy, athletic, or stubborn. Socialization with peers will also determine if the child will be easy to get along with, take turns, or show an interest in what others are discussing. As a result, the ultimate goal of socialization is to develop a history of reinforcement for these particular behaviors so that a child becomes empathic and not selfish, caring instead of hateful, and someone that is eager to become a good person.

An individual's history of reinforcement is not able to be viewed by the rest of the world. However, there are some hints if you are able to study the individual's exhibition of behaviors throughout a period of time. The individual's history of reinforcement can often be determined by viewing how the individual is able to respond to certain situations. It is important to understand contingencies of reinforcement and the effect that these contingencies are able to have on behavior. It is vital to understand an individual's history of reinforcement as that is also critical to understanding their behavior.

## Bad Habits

Behavior analysts are often faced with behaviors that are unwanted, challenging, and even dangerous. Instead of integrating punishment as a method for reducing these particular behaviors, behavior analysts often try to replace these behaviors with behaviors that are more appropriate or acceptable. The first step in replacing challenging behaviors is to figure out why the individual exhibits the behavior in question. Every behavior that occurs has a function and there are usually immediate consequences that maintain these behaviors.

In an effort to understand the idea of a replacement behavior, the behavior that you want to replace will need to be identified. Additionally, the consequence of the behavior will need to be identified and a replacement behavior will need to be selected that has an equivalent or more effective consequence than the consequence that currently occurs. Lastly, the individual will need to be taught the replacement behavior.

If an individual wants to break a bad habit (i.e., habit reversal), there are a multitude of evidence-based interventions available that can be utilized. In order to replace a bad habit with a behavior that is more acceptable, your awareness of the behavior should be sharpened, a competing or replacement behavior should be developed, a reinforcer for the replacement behavior should be arranged, and the new skill should be used in various environments so that the behavior is able to be strengthened.

## An Individual's Personality

Personality can commonly be viewed as differences that exist within characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving (American Psychological Association, 2018). However, behavior analysts are able to view an individual's personality in a different manner. Often, behavior analysts will see personality as the behaviors

that an individual exhibits, which are under the control of different contingencies in their environment, which more than likely match that of these contingencies. As a result, when a behavior analyst thinks about one's personality, they question the characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving and instead look at the environment surrounding the individual and analyze the individual's behavior in each of these environments.

With the aforementioned information, one may ask if it is possible to change a person's personality. First, a behavior analyst should analyze whether or not an individual's behavior matches the contingencies that exist within a particular environment. If they do not, then the behavior analyst should question if it is appropriate or not to attempt to modify the behavior that is exhibited.

As an individual moves through various environments, the individual is expected to continuously adapt to each environment. An individual contains a repertoire for interacting with upset customers, another repertoire for responding to a boss that has high expectations, and an additional repertoire for working through conflict with a child.

Behavior analysts ultimately do not feel that it is possible to change an individual's personality. However, they do believe that it is possible to assist individuals with being able to more effectively adapt to their own circumstances and life. Behavior analysts work with an individual in their own environment where the targeted behavior occurs, determine a method for measuring the behavior, and ascertain a baseline within the setting. Within this methodology, behavior analysts are able to help individuals change their behavior so that they can match the requirements of any environment that they are a part of.

## Section 3 Personal Reflection

How have you had to change your own behavior to match the requirements of the

various environments in which you have been a part of? Have you found yourself having to change your behavior depending on the different contingencies that are present within the environment?

## Section 3 Key Words

History of reinforcement - what occurs as an individual engages and interacts within their own environment throughout time, as new skills are acquired, and as an individual is able to adapt to their environment

Personality - the behaviors that an individual exhibits, which are under the control of different contingencies in their environment, which more than likely match that of these contingencies

# References

American Psychological Association. (2018, April 18). APA dictionary of psychology. https://dictionary.apa.org/personality

Baer, D., Wolf, M., & Risley, T. ( 1968). Some current dimensions of applied behavior analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *1*, 91-97.

Bailey, J. S., & Burch, M. R. (2002). *Research methods in applied behavior analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Burch, M. R., & Bailey, J. S. (1999). *How dogs learn*. New York: Howell Book House.

Iwata, B.A., Dorsey, M. F., Slifer, K. ]., Bauman, K.E., & Richman, G.S. (1982). Toward a functional analysis of self-injury. *Analysis and Intervention in Developmental Disabilities*, *2*, 3-20.

Skinner, B. F. (1938). *The behavior of organisms*. New York: Appleton-Century.

Wolf, M., Risley, T ., & Mees, H. (1964). Application of operant conditioning procedures to the behaviour problems of an autistic child. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, *1*, 305-312.