

DO BETTER FIELD GUIDE:

DAY TO DAY BA EDITION



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QUICK TIPS AND ACTIONABLE CHECKLISTS
FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS IN EVERYDAY PRACTICES

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Dear Colleagues and Fellow Practitioners,

In behavior analysis, no matter what specific methodologies or perspectives we use, we all have the same goal: to make a meaningful impact on the lives of the people we serve, with compassion and evidence-based practices. That's why I'm excited to introduce you to the **Do Better Field Guide: Day to Day BA Edition**.

This Field Guide is designed to meet you where you are, providing straightforward, actionable strategies for the most common challenges we face in practice. Whether you're focusing on emotional regulation, building stronger connections, or improving parent coaching, you'll find practical, real-world solutions here to support your journey toward doing better every day.

Inside, you'll find:

- **Emotional Regulation:** Tips to help learners recognize and manage their emotions effectively.
- **Connected Relationships:** Practical tools for fostering stronger, more meaningful connections.
- **Language Development:** Strategies for developing communication and social interaction skills.
- **Assessment:** Guidance on building connected relationships and understanding communication before diving into formal assessments.
- **Parent Coaching:** Ideas for creating low-stress learning environments and partnering with parents.
- **Natural Environment Training:** Quick tips for incorporating naturalistic, child-led learning.
- **Toilet Training:** How to create a positive, individualized approach that works for each child.
- **Assent-Based Practices:** Ways to integrate emotional regulation, trust, and consent into your practice.
- **6 Areas to Assess for Assent-Based Service Delivery:** A guide to ensure your practice is neurodiversity-affirming and respectful.
- **Bonus Handout:** A resource for parents, explaining the importance of play-based interventions.

This Field Guide provides tools that you can immediately use to make a difference in your day-to-day practice. Each section offers practical steps and checklists to help you implement effective, ethical practices for those you support.

If you're ready to dive deeper and keep growing your practice, be sure to check out the **workshops and courses** we offer at [Do Better Collective](#), or better yet, become a part of our [membership community](#)! As a member, you'll get exclusive access to advanced content, live webinars, recorded content, discounts, and a supportive network of professionals who are dedicated to doing better, every day. Thank you for your commitment to improving the lives of those you serve. I'm grateful to collaborate with you and see the positive changes we can create together.

Sharing Knowledge, Sharing Inspiration
Megan DeLeon (Miller), PhD, BCBA-D
Founder, Do Better Collective



FOSTERING EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN LEARNERS



What is Emotional Regulation?

- **QuickTip:** Emotional regulation is the ability to manage emotional responses in a way that allows for interaction and learning.
- **Key Points:**
 - Emotional regulation includes recognizing and responding to physiological sensations (interoception), safely expressing emotions, and engaging in calming activities.
 - Learners must be able to manage their emotional responses to fully engage in learning and social interactions.

Strategies for Teaching Emotional Regulation

- **Quick Tip:** Teach emotional regulation through modeling and consistent practice.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Naming Emotions:** Model naming emotions and provide visuals to help learners identify their emotional state.
 - **Calming Strategies:** Teach calming strategies during neutral times, allowing learners to practice when they are not dysregulated.
 - **Safe Expression of Emotions:** Provide learners with opportunities to safely express big emotions, like anger or frustration.

FOSTERING EMOTIONAL REGULATION IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Emotional regulation is a critical skill that enables individuals to manage their feelings, navigate challenges, and engage in learning. By helping learners recognize and respond to their emotions in healthy ways, behavior analysts can foster environments that support growth and resilience. Teaching emotional regulation lays the foundation for effective communication, social interaction, and academic success. This checklist will guide you in promoting emotional regulation skills to enhance your learners' well-being and participation.

Yes	No	Assessing Emotional Regulation
		Does the learner recognize and express their emotional state?
		Have I identified whether the learner engages in self-calming or centering activities?
Yes	No	Modeling and Naming Emotions
		Am I consistently labeling emotions I am observing and helping them label their feelings?
		Have I provided visual supports to help the learner identify emotions?
Yes	No	Teaching Calming Strategies
		Have I practiced calming techniques with the learner during neutral times?
		Does the learner engage in self-calming strategies independently?
Yes	No	Safe Expression of Emotions
		Does the learner have safe ways to express big emotions like anger or frustration?
		Am I offering neutral practice opportunities to express emotions in a safe manner?

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING CONNECTED RELATIONSHIPS

What are Connected Relationships?

- **QuickTip:** Connected relationships form the foundation of meaningful interactions and learning.
- **Key Points:**
 - Connected relationships involve creating an environment where learners feel noticed, valued, and safe.
 - The focus is on building trust and communication, starting from observing the learner's engagement with the environment and people.
 - Identifying connection barriers, such as rigid rules or a lack of engagement, helps guide interventions.

Strategies for Building Connection

- **QuickTip:** Observe, join, and imitate the learner to build trust.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Free Operant Assessments:** Observe the learner's interaction with objects or people, allowing them to take the lead.
 - **Following the Learner's Lead:** Imitate the learner's actions with your own set of materials without placing additional demands.
 - **Use Shaping:** Gradually shape interactions, starting from where the learner is comfortable. If they show signs of distress, step back and adjust your approach.



CONNECTED RELATIONSHIPS IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Building and maintaining connected relationships is foundational to successful learning and growth. When individuals feel valued, safe, and understood, they are more likely to engage in meaningful interactions and learning experiences. By fostering strong connections, behavior analysts can create environments where learners trust, communicate, and collaborate effectively, paving the way for long-term success. This checklist will help ensure you're creating the conditions for these essential relationships to thrive.

Yes	No	Assessing Connection Barriers
		Have I identified any connection barriers (e.g., previous environments, rigid rules)?
		Am I observing the learner's current interactions with others?
Yes	No	Implementing Free Operant Assessments
		Am I removing stimuli that signal "work" or other aversives?
		Have I conducted a free operant assessment in a relaxed, non-demanding environment?
Yes	No	Following the Learner's Lead
		Am I engaging the learner by joining their play or imitating their actions?
		Have I respected the learner's boundaries when approaching or entering their space?
Yes	No	Using Shaping Techniques
		Have I identified the learner's baseline level of interaction?
		Am I gradually increasing the complexity of interactions without causing distress?

PHASES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:

BUILDING FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS FOR GENERATIVE LANGUAGE

Connecting and Understanding the Individual

- **QuickTip:** Start by building a connection and understanding how the person communicates.
- **Key Points:**
 - Focus on understanding the individual's preferences, motivations, and how they currently communicate.
 - Acknowledge and affirm their existing communication methods, whether it's gestures, sounds, signs, or behaviors.
 - Build a strong relationship and establish a desire to communicate with others.

Foundational Skills: Communicative Intent and Social Communication

- **Quick Tip:** Before language can develop, foundational skills like communicative intent and valuing communicative partners must be in place.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Communicative Intent:** Support the person in developing a clear intent to communicate their needs and wants.
 - **Valuing Communication Partners:** Help the individual understand the importance of engaging with others.
 - **Social Communication:** Encourage sharing experiences and interacting meaningfully with others.



PHASES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT:

Introducing Mands and Other Verbal Operants at the Right Time

- **QuickTip:** Once the foundation is in place, introduce mands (requests) and expand from there.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Start with Mands:** After establishing strong communicative intent and valuing communication partners, begin teaching mands (requests). Focus on natural, motivating situations where the person can learn to request what they need or want.
 - **Expand to Other Verbal Operants:** Once the individual is successfully manding, you can introduce other verbal operants like tacting (labeling), listener responding (following directions), and echoics (repeating sounds or words).
 - **Maintain the Connection:** Ensure that language teaching continues to be tied to meaningful, engaging interactions. Reinforce the importance of social communication as new language skills are developed.

Promoting Derived Relational Responding (DRR)

- **QuickTip:** Move past verbal operants to promote generative learning and relational responding.
- **Approaches:**
 - Use frameworks like PEAK or research by Dr. Siri Ming on early intervention and Relational Frame Theory (RFT) to promote generativity.
 - Support clients who are not yet vocally communicating by working on visual perceptual relational responding.
 - For vocally communicating clients, focus on fostering generativity through more complex language and relational frameworks.

Fostering Generativity Through Language

- **QuickTip:** Generative language leads to more flexible and adaptive communication.
- **Strategies:**
 - Promote flexibility and generativity in language by focusing on the individual's ability to derive relations between words, concepts, and experiences.
 - Ensure that language teaching is designed to go beyond rote learning and encourages new language use in novel situations.



PHASES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Language development is more than just teaching specific words or requests. It's about creating meaningful connections and promoting the ability to learn and apply language in flexible ways. With a strong foundation, we can help individuals move towards more generative and adaptive language use.

Yes	No	Connecting with the Learner
		Have I spent time understanding the learner's communication preferences and current methods of communication?
		Have I built a strong, trusting relationship with the learner?
Yes	No	Developing Foundational Skills
		Have I worked on communicative intent, valuing communication partners, and social communication before teaching mands?
Yes	No	Introducing Mands and Other Verbal Operants
		Have I introduced mands once the foundational skills are in place?
		Have I progressed to tacting, listener responding, and echoics when appropriate?
Yes	No	Promoting Generativity
		Am I focusing on derived relational responding (DRR) and using frameworks like PEAK or RFT to promote generative learning?
		Am I supporting visual perceptual relations for non-vocal learners?

BUILDING CONNECTIONS AND TAILORING TO THE LEARNER'S NEEDS

Start with Connection and Communication

- **QuickTip:** Focus on building a strong, trusting relationship before diving into formal assessments.
- **Key Points:**
 - Observe how connected the learner is with their environment and people.
 - Understand their current communication methods: gaze, gestures, vocalizations, etc.
 - Assess their communicative intent and whether they value communication partners.
 - Avoid progressing to more formal assessments until you have a solid understanding of these foundational elements.

Learner Profiles: Tailoring Assessments Based on Skill Level

- **Quick Tip:** Different stages require different assessment focuses.
- **Profiles:**
 - **Stage 1 (Early Learner):**
 - Assess instructional motivation, joint attention, mand training, and attending.
 - Include basic skills like matching, motor imitation, and play skills.
 - **Stage 2 (Middle Learner):**
 - Focus on receptive identification, sorting, pattern recognition, and labeling.
 - Assess advanced imitation and functional skills, such as following instructions.
 - **Stage 3 (Advanced Learner):**
 - Introduce intraverbals, conversation, sequencing, and more advanced academic skills like reading and math.
 - Assess social communication, including answering WH questions and engaging in pretend play.



COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES:

Common Challenges and How to Address Them

- **Quick Tip:** Identify barriers to learning and address them early on.
- **Key Points:**
 - If the learner struggles with instruction or communication, focus first on demand fading and building a stronger teaching relationship.
 - Address common challenges, such as difficulty navigating transitions, following directions, or handling frustration, before diving into skill acquisition.

Assessment Tools and Resources

- **QuickTip:** Use a range of assessment tools to get a comprehensive view of the learner's abilities.
- **Key Points:**
 - PEAK and TARPA for derived relational responding.
 - SCERTS and emotional regulation frameworks for assessing social and emotional skills.
 - Inventory of Good Learner Repertoires (IGLR) for challenging behavior or barriers to learning.
 - Incorporate elements from the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) and other NDBIs for younger learners.



COMPREHENSIVE SKILLS ASSESSMENT IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Assessment is not a one-size-fits-all process. Begin by understanding the learner's connection to their environment, communication preferences, and learning stage. By individualizing assessments based on the learner's profile and addressing challenges early, we can create a comprehensive and effective intervention plan.

Yes	No	Start with Connection
		Have I observed how the learner is connected to their environment and people?
		Do I understand the learner's current communication methods?
Yes	No	Tailoring Assessment to Learner Profiles
		Have I identified the learner's stage (early, middle, advanced) to guide my assessment focus?
		Am I using the appropriate assessment tools for the learner's profile (e.g., PEAK, TARPA, SCERTS)?
Yes	No	Addressing Challenges Before Skill Acquisition
		Have I addressed common challenges (e.g., emotional regulation, communication barriers) before diving into formal assessments?



PARENT COACHING:

THE PARENT IS ALWAYS RIGHT

Supporting Parents in Building Safety, Trust, and Consistency

- **Quick Tip:** Guide parents in creating low-stress environments that foster their child's learning and development.
- **Key Points:**
 - Help parents establish consistent routines to reduce stress for both themselves and their child.
 - Support parents in building trust by encouraging them to allow their child to explore and communicate at their own pace.
 - Focus on helping parents promote natural, enjoyable social interactions that support social communication development.

The Parent Choice Model: Collaborative Decision-Making

- **Quick Tip:** Empowering parents with choices leads to better outcomes for the whole family.
- **Key Points:**
 - **Present three intervention options:**
 - **Current Status Quo:** Explain the current approach and expected outcomes.
 - **Optimal Intervention:** Present the ideal strategy and the results it could bring, while acknowledging potential challenges.
 - **Modified Intervention:** Offer a feasible compromise, ensuring it aligns with family preferences and circumstances.
 - Work with the family to agree on a plan for a set period (e.g., one month), then revisit and revise as needed.

The Parent is Always Right: Coaching for Success

- **Quick Tip:** Collaborative coaching leads to more meaningful progress.
- **Guidelines:**
 - Focus on what is feasible for the family rather than overwhelming them with technical terms or unrealistic expectations.
 - Offer real-life examples and strategies that parents can easily apply.
 - Encourage open communication and make sure parents feel heard and respected throughout the process.



Section 4: Key Outcomes: Low-Stress, High-Engagement Environments

- **Quick Tip:** Focus on promoting long-term progress by creating positive and affirming spaces for the child.
- **Outcomes:**
 - Improved social communication skills.
 - Enhanced trust and engagement between parents and children.
 - Sustainable, low-stress environments where learning can thrive.



PARENT COACHING IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Guidance for Behavior Analysts: Supporting Play-Based and Child-Led Approaches

To effectively explain and implement play-based, child-led, and neurodiversity-affirming interventions, it's important to familiarize yourself with key resources like Dr. Wetherby's research on active engagement and the SORF. These tools provide a clear framework for assessing a child's baseline social communication and emotional regulation skills, helping you better explain to families why focusing on these foundational areas, especially regulation, leads to better long-term outcomes. Integrating the SORF into your baseline assessments allows for a data-driven conversation with parents about the importance of building connected relationships and fostering social communication. Additionally, explore our Do Better Collective courses that align with these resources to further support your practice and deepen your understanding of these approaches.

Yes	No	Building Trust and Safety
		Have I created a low-stress learning environment for the family?
		Do the parents feel safe and supported in the process?
		Am I acknowledging and affirming the child's current communication methods?
Yes	No	Collaborative Decision-Making (Parent Choice Model)
		Have I provided parents with three intervention options (status quo, optimal, modified)?
		Are the expected outcomes of each intervention clearly explained to the parents?
		Have I allowed the family to select the approach that feels most feasible?
Yes	No	Meaningful Communication with Parents
		Am I focusing on what's feasible for the family rather than overwhelming them?
		Am I offering strategies that align with the family's real-life context?
		Have I set up a plan to revisit and adjust the interventions after a set period?

EFFECTIVE EARLY INTERVENTION AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT TRAINING: BUILDING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Staying Current with Research

- **QuickTip:** Once the foundation is in place, introduce mands (requests) and expand from there.
- **Key Points:**
 - Prioritize social communication and active engagement in early intervention, as supported by current research.
 - Move beyond structured teaching and academic skills to first build foundational social communication skills.
 - Incorporate naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions, such as the Early Start Denver Model and JASPER, which emphasize natural back-and-forth interactions led by the child's motivations.

Checklist of Key Skills for Early Intervention

- **QuickTip:** Ensure you're addressing these essential skills in your early intervention plans.
- **Checklist:**
 - **Social Communication:** Assess and build the child's ability to engage in meaningful communication with others.
 - **Active Engagement:** Focus on promoting active participation in social interactions.
 - **Assent and Withdrawal:** Respect the child's signals to withdraw and work to build self-advocacy.
 - **Emotional Regulation:** Prioritize the development of emotional regulation skills as part of early intervention.
 - **Joint Attention and Symbolic Play:** Integrate joint attention and symbolic play as critical components, following naturalistic models like JASPER.

Naturalistic Teaching Over Structured Drills

- **QuickTip:** Create routines and natural back-and-forth interactions to promote learning.
- **Key Points:**
 - Follow the child's lead, allowing them to drive the interactions and lessons.
 - Build routines that align with the child's interests and motivations.
 - **Compare to traditional EIBI programs:** Instead of structured table drills, focus on teaching within naturalistic, play-based contexts.



EFFECTIVE NET/EI IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Early intervention should focus on building strong social communication and engagement skills in natural, everyday settings. By following the child's lead and using naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions, we can create meaningful learning opportunities that honor the child's individuality and promote long-term growth.

Yes	No	Building Social Communication and Engagement
		Have I prioritized social communication and active engagement over academic skills?
		Am I following current research on naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions (e.g., JASPER, Early Start Denver Model)?
Yes	No	Child-Led Motivation
		Am I following the child's motivation and interests during sessions?
		Have I built routines that align with the child's natural interests?
Yes	No	Assessing and Honoring Assent
		Am I assessing social communication and engagement before jumping into structured teaching?
		Am I honoring assent withdrawal and building self-advocacy and emotional regulation skills?



INDIVIDUALIZING TOILET TRAINING: A GUIDE FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS

Building the Foundation for Success

- **QuickTip:** Start with a low-stress learning environment and a connected, trusting relationship.
- **Key Points:**
 - Ensure you have a strong relationship with the child before introducing toileting demands.
 - Reduce stress in the environment as much as possible to create a space conducive to learning.

Understanding the Why: Reasons for Delayed Toilet Training

- **Quick Tip:** Identifying the reason for delayed toilet training is crucial for creating an individualized plan.
- **Common Reasons:**
 - Developmental readiness: Some children may simply not be ready.
 - Lack of prior attempts: Some children haven't had consistent opportunities.
 - **Routine or habit:** The child may follow their own routine or have a preferred spot.
 - Previous stressful experiences or medical concerns.

Tailoring the Intervention: Decision Points for Toilet Training

- **QuickTip:** Different toileting habits require different strategies.
- **Decision Tree:**
 - **Low Frequency of Urination (e.g., once or twice a day):**
 - Focus on reinforcement for using the restroom.
 - Possibly increase fluid intake to increase opportunities for success.
 - **Frequent Urination/Accidents:**
 - Use dry pants checks and reinforcement for staying dry.
 - **Recognizing Signals.**
 - Identify specific behaviors or routines that signal the child is about to urinate/defecate (e.g., going to a specific spot, a particular pose).
 - Use these signals to shape behavior and gradually transition to using the toilet.
 - **FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) During Play:**
 - Reinforce stopping play to use the restroom.
 - If necessary, implement a brief timeout when accidents occur, giving the child a clear choice between play and using the toilet.



Avoiding Punishment Components

- **Quick Tip:** There is no evidence that punishment is necessary for toilet training.
- **Key Points:**
 - Many traditional toilet training methods (e.g., Foxx and Azrin) include punishment components, such as positive practice or overcorrection.
 - Avoid punishment; it is not used for any other skill acquisition, and it creates a stressful environment for learning.
 - Focus on positive reinforcement and shaping behavior gradually.

Common Issues and How to Address Them

- **Quick Tip:** Adapt your approach based on the individual child's needs.
- **Common Issues:**
 - Reluctance to stop playing: Use clear choices and reinforcement for pausing to use the restroom.
 - Difficulty recognizing when they need to go: Look for patterns and cues in the child's behavior and reinforce bathroom use during these times. Language model and talk to the child about what you are noticing: **"It looks like you might need to use the toilet"**



INDIVIDUALIZING TOILET TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Toilet training should be individualized to the child's specific needs, habits, and environment. Avoid coercive, stressful methods and focus on building trust, creating low-stress environments, and reinforcing safe behaviors.

Yes	No	Building the Foundation
		Do I have a strong, connected relationship with the child?
		Is the learning environment low-stress and supportive?
Yes	No	Understanding the Child's Unique Needs
		Have I identified why the child isn't yet toilet trained (e.g., developmental, routines, stress, medical)?
		Have I assessed the child's toileting habits (e.g., frequency of urination)?
Yes	No	Tailoring the Toilet Training Plan
		If the child urinates infrequently, have I focused on reinforcement for using the restroom?
		If the child urinates frequently, have I implemented dry pants checks and reinforced staying dry?
		Am I recognizing signs that the child is ready to urinate or defecate and shaping the behavior towards toileting?
Yes	No	Avoiding Punishment
		Have I ensured no punishment components are included in the initial toilet training plan unless deemed absolutely necessary?

IMPLEMENTING ASSENT-BASED PRACTICES: A GUIDE FOR BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS

What is Assent?

- **Quick Tip:** Assent is the agreement to participate in an activity, and it's more than just vocal consent.
- **Key Points:**
 - Assent involves both verbal and non-verbal communication. Observe body language, gestures, and other communication styles.
 - Withdrawal of assent means the learner no longer agrees to participate, but this doesn't always mean stopping all demands.
 - The BACB® ethics code mentions assent but lacks detailed guidelines so interpreting and observing it correctly is crucial.

The Role of Emotional Regulation

- **QuickTip:** Emotional regulation is a foundation for effective assent-based services.
- **Key Points:**
 - Emotional regulation challenges are common in learners, particularly autistic individuals, and often result in more frequent withdrawal of assent.
 - Before focusing on assent-based practices, prioritize teaching emotional regulation skills to help learners navigate difficult situations.
 - Self-regulation often predicts better long-term outcomes than academic skills alone.

Understanding Communication Preferences

- **QuickTip:** Know how your learner communicates assent or dissent.
- **Key Points:**
 - Determine how your learner says 'yes' or 'no', whether through speech, gestures, or body language.
 - If you're unsure whether a learner is agreeing to participate, you need to pause and prioritize developing a better understanding of the client and possibly teaching more effective communication.
 - Model communication and validate the learner's emotions during interactions.



Strategies for Navigating Assent

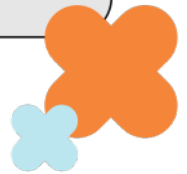
- **Quick Tip:** Assent-based practices require flexibility and respect for the learner's autonomy.
- **Key Strategies:**
 - **Non-Negotiable Rules:** Clearly explain “house rules” or non-negotiables that learners must follow, but allow flexibility elsewhere.
 - **Reasonable Choices:** Provide choices when possible to give learners a sense of control and autonomy.
 - **Acknowledge and Model:** Acknowledge the learner's communication efforts, and model language when helpful.
 - **Teaching Through Assent Withdrawal:** Withdrawal of assent doesn't always mean stopping all demands. Instead, help the learner build skills to navigate difficult situations.
 - Gradually teach the learner how to manage situations that may be uncomfortable or challenging, while respecting their autonomy.
 - Coach them through adversity by providing emotional regulation strategies, modeling self-advocacy, and fostering resilience.



IMPLEMENTING ASSENT BASED SERVICES CHECKLIST

Assent-based practices prioritize the learner's agreement to participate, while emotional regulation and clear communication are foundational to their success. Behavior analysts should strive to honor the learner's communication, offer choices, and help build self-advocacy in a way that is sensitive to the learner's unique needs.

Yes	No	Understanding and Honoring Assent
		Do I understand how the learner communicates assent and dissent?
		Am I observing both verbal and non-verbal signs of assent?
Yes	No	Emotional Regulation and Assent Withdrawal
		Have I worked on building emotional regulation skills with the learner?
		Am I teaching the learner to navigate adversity, rather than just ending demands when assent is withdrawn?
Yes	No	Providing Reasonable Choices and Teaching Advocacy
		Am I providing reasonable choices whenever possible to support the learner's autonomy?
		Am I teaching the learner self-advocacy while respecting their communication of assent or dissent?



6 AREAS TO ASSESS FOR ASSENT-BASED SERVICE DELIVERY

Assent-based service delivery emphasizes the importance of honoring the client's voice, ensuring they feel safe, connected, and motivated to participate in learning and therapeutic activities. It requires behavior analysts to assess and address key areas that build trust, connection, and collaboration with the individual.

The following areas are essential to evaluate to create an affirming and ethical intervention plan.

Areas to Assess:

- **Connected Relationships:**

- Assess how the client notices, initiates, and sustains interactions with others.
- Evaluate how the client communicates with others and values communication partners.
- Are they showing engagement, responding to social bids, and forming connections with their environment?

- **Emotional Regulation:**

- Observe how the client processes and manages emotions, especially during challenging tasks.
- Do they safely express big emotions like frustration?
- How does the client engage in calming or centering activities throughout the day?

- **The Big 4 Preventative Skills (Ala'i Rosales et al., 2018):**

- **Communication:** Is the client communicating their needs and wants safely?
- **Attention and Affection:** How does the client seek attention or affection from caregivers or peers?
- **Engagement in Activities:** Does the client engage in preferred leisure activities?
- **Tolerating and Coping with Adversity:** How does the client handle non-preferred situations or challenges?

- **Executive Functioning Skills:**

- Assess response inhibition, working memory, emotional control, task initiation, planning and prioritization, and other executive functioning skills.
- Evaluate how difficulties in these areas may influence the client's behavior during instruction.



- **Function-Based Treatment Options:**

- Conduct a functional assessment to identify escape-maintained behaviors and select function-based interventions.
- Are the current demands appropriate for the client or do tasks need to be modified?

- **Environmental Supports:**

- Assess if the environment is conducive to learning and emotional regulation.
- Evaluate the need for non-contingent reinforcement, visual schedules, and other environmental supports to reduce stress and promote independence.



IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE: 6 AREAS FOR ASSENT-BASED PRACTICE

This checklist helps behavior analysts monitor their practices and ensure they are prioritizing assent, connection, and client well-being.

Yes	No	Connected Relationships
		Have you assessed how the client engages with others?
		Are you fostering an environment that supports connection and social communication?
Yes	No	Emotional Regulation
		Are you observing the client's emotional responses?
		Have you integrated calming strategies and emotional regulation supports into their program?
Yes	No	Big 4 Preventative Skills (Ala'i-Rosales et al., 2018)
		Are you addressing communication, gaining attention, engagement in activities, and tolerating adversity within your programming?
Yes	No	Executive Functioning Skills
		Are you supporting the development of key executive functioning skills like planning, organization, and response inhibition?
Yes	No	Function-Based Treatment
		Have you conducted a functional assessment and ensured the interventions are individualized and aligned with the client's needs?
Yes	No	Environmental Supports
		Is the client's environment structured to minimize stress and provide clear expectations?



WHY WE USE PLAY-BASED AND CHILD-LED APPROACHES: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Introduction:

Fostering Connection, Regulation, and Growth

As behavior analysts, our goal is to create environments where your child feels safe, connected, and able to learn. That's why we use play-based, child-led, and neurodiversity-affirming approaches, grounded in research and designed to meet your child where they are.

The Research Behind Our Approach

• Dr. Wetherby's Active Engagement Model:

- Our interventions focus on supporting your child through the eight stages of active engagement, as developed by Dr. Wetherby et. al (2018). This approach starts with helping your child regulate, which is the foundation for all other skills.

• Key Points:

- **Regulation as a First Step:** Before any learning can take place, we need to make sure your child feels calm and safe. Regulation is the first step in the active engagement process.
- **Better Outcomes Through Engagement:** By focusing on creating a low-stress, play-based environment, we help your child engage in ways that will lead to long-term growth.

Using Baseline Data to Guide Our Work

• The SORF (Systematic Observation of Red Flags):

- We use the SORF, created by Dr. Wetherby and colleagues, to gather baseline data about your child's social communication skills. This helps us determine where your child is starting from and allows us to set meaningful goals.

• Key Points:

- The SORF provides clear definitions for each area of social communication, which helps us track progress and identify the areas where your child needs support.
- This baseline data shows us the importance of focusing on building connected relationships and supporting communication at your child's current developmental stage.



Why Play-Based and Child-Led Approaches Work

- **Key Strategies:**

- Sometimes, it might look like we're just playing. But in reality, we're using research-backed strategies to help your child learn and grow in ways that feel natural to them.

- **Benefits of Play-Based Learning:**

- Builds trust and connection.
- Supports your child's ability to engage in social interactions.
- Encourages communication and emotional regulation.



WHY WE USE PLAY-BASED AND CHILD-LED APPROACHES: A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Neurodiversity-Affirming and Trauma-Informed Practices

• Key Points:

- We believe in honoring each child's unique way of learning. Our approaches are neurodiversity affirming, meaning we focus on supporting your child's strengths and respecting their individuality.
- Our interventions are also trauma-informed, which means we prioritize your child's emotional wellbeing, ensuring they feel safe and respected during the learning process.

How You Can Support These Approaches at Home

• Suggestions:

- Create predictable routines that make your child feel safe.
- Encourage play and let your child take the lead in interactions.
- Focus on building a trusting relationship before pushing for specific learning goals.
- Use the same communication strategies we model to support your child's growth in social communication.

• Conclusion: Partnering for Your Child's Success

- By using these approaches, we're helping your child develop the foundational skills that will allow them to learn and thrive. Together, we can create an environment where your child feels confident, connected, and ready to grow.



ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS WITH IN-DEPTH COURSES

You've taken the first step with the tips and checklists in this Field Guide. Now, explore our courses to deepen your understanding and refine your practice. Each course is designed to give you practical, actionable strategies that align with what you've learned.

Course Listings by Topic:

• Parent Training:

- **The Parent is Always Right** – Free with Membership. A comprehensive guide to working collaboratively with parents to develop low-stress learning environments.
- **Aligning Parenting and Analysts utilizing connection and self-care** – Free with Membership.

• Toilet Training:

- **Neurodiversity Affirming Toileting** – Company-Wide Training Available Learn how to develop individualized, neurodiversity-affirming toilet training programs.
- **Toileting, Feeding, and Sleep Oh My!** – Free with Membership.
- **Assessing and Treating Patterns of Unwanted Behavior with Jamie Waldvogel** – Members Only.
- **Difficult Discussion on Toilet Training** – FREE Panel Discussion.
- **Rapid Toilet Training Pluses and Minuses** - FREE Podcast.

• Language Development:

- **Unlocking the Potential of Active Engagement** – Free with Membership. Strategies for teaching foundational social communication and engagement skills.
- **How to Create Effective, Play-Based, and Child-Centered ABA Interventions** – Explore early intervention strategies grounded in NDBIs and the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM).
- **Enhancing Language Development PEAK Cohort** – Advanced training on promoting derived relational responding and generative language learning.
- **The Great Divide: VB and RFT** – FREE Podcast

- **Early Intervention & Natural Environment Training (NET):**

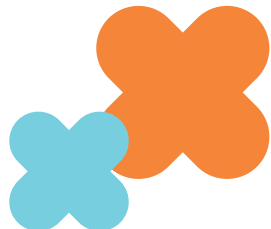
- **El: What I wish I knew** – Free with Membership.
Insights on improving early intervention practices with a focus on child-led motivation.
- **How to Create Effective, Play-Based, and Child-Centered ABA Interventions**
- **Examining Early Intervention Practices** – Free with Membership.
- **The Heart of ABA Service Delivery Connected Relationships** – Free with Membership.
- **Effectively Developing Reinforcers, Play, & Leisure Skills** – Free with Membership.

- **Assessment:**

- **Choosing the Right Assessment** – Free with Membership. Guidance on selecting the most appropriate assessments based on learner profiles.
- **Enhancing Language Development PEAK Cohort**
- **Addressing Barriers to Learning** – Free with Membership.
- **Innovative Instructional Practices** – Free with Membership.
- **The Hidden Link: A Guide to Emotional Regulation for Behavior Analysts**

- **Assent:**

- **Tools for Honoring Assent and Assent Withdrawal** – Free with Membership.
- **The Ethical Considerations of Assent Panel**
- **The Reflective Analyst**
- **The Hidden Link: A Guide to Emotional Regulation for Behavior Analysts**



Connected Relationships:

- [The Heart of ABA Service Delivery: Connected Relationships](#) – Free with Membership. How to build and sustain meaningful relationships with learners.
- [Effectively Developing Reinforcers, Play, & Leisure Skills](#) – Free with Membership.
- [The Reflective Analyst](#)

Emotional Regulation:

- [The Hidden Link: A Guide to Emotional Regulation for Behavior Analysts](#)
- [The Reflective Analyst](#)
- [Neuroscience Meets ABA](#)

6 Areas to Assess for Assent:

- [The Reflective Analyst](#)

READY TO START LEARNING?

Click below to **start transforming your practice today:**

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[**Explore Membership**](#)