



# The Behavior Web Newsletter



CREATING ALTERNATIVES TO RESTRICTIVE INTERVENTIONS

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## Behavioral Parent Training

by Liliane Rocha, BCBA & Mike Marroquin, PhD, BCBA-D

In this issue of The Behavior Web Newsletter we will talk about parent training. Recently the Center for disease Control (CDC) recommended behavior therapy and particularly behavioral parent training as a [treatment option](#) for children with ADHD. Behavior analysts have been engaging in parent training for decades. The [oldest](#) article I could find doing a quick search on parent training on the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis dates back to 1976.

While caregiver training is not a novel concept in behavioral health, usually main stream behavioral health professionals do not think of behavior analysts when they think of it. The reasons for that could be the subject of a blog post (stay tuned), but the reality is that many

successful parent training models are based on behavior analytic principles. Here are links to some of these evidence-based, successful models:

[Positive Parenting Program \(Triple P\)](#)

[Parent-Child Interaction Therapy \(PCIT\)](#)

[Incredible Years](#)

[Helping the Non-Compliant Child \(HNC\)](#)

[Parent Management Training \(PMT\)](#)

These successful program include at least two components: behavioral skills training with practice sessions, and an emphasis on consistency and fidelity to the procedures. Usually, programs involve two phases: 1) teaching the parent to recognize and reinforce desired target behavior,

and 2) teaching the parent to deal with problem behavior.

Caregiver training is an important part of any behavioral program. After all, the behavior analyst is with the client a limited number of hours; teaching the caregiver to reinforce behaviors that lead to independence and recovery, and how to deal with challenging behavior will have a greater impact on the client's progress.

Here you have an article by Dr. Mike Marroquin, an experienced behavior consultant, and his take on parent training:

### Parent Training

Parent training is a tool that Behavior Analysts use to engage the parents as helpers in achieving their child's treatment plan goals or Individualized Educational plan (IEP) goals. It should be provided based on what a student and parent's current issues are. The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has a document that

explains the rules that apply to the education of students with disabilities. [PART 200 Students with Disabilities](#). This document defines parent counseling and training, "Parent counseling and training means assisting parents in understanding the special needs of their child; providing parents with information about child development; and helping parents to acquire the necessary skills that will allow them to support the implementation of their child's individualized education program." This is an excellent starting point for parents and practitioners.

For a parent with a newly diagnosed child, Parent training may start out with an explanation of what the disability is, how it affects their child, dispelling myths about the cause or myriad of quick-fix cures that litter the internet and social media. As parent training continues, the trainer should teach parents skills related to improving the behavior of their child, such as reinforcement, prompting procedures, and extinction. Here, the trainer should focus on the most important behavior to the parent. Some parents want to focus on academic skills, others, self-help, and social skills. I typically ask parents "If you could change three of your child's behaviors, what would you change?" The answer to this question will tell you what parents are most concerned about, as well as what behavior change will be reinforcing to that parent.

Parent training evolves over time usually starting with training one parent, then both, grandparents and siblings should also be involved when they spend a significant amount of time with the child. Everyone should benefit from parent training. Parents should learn about their children and develop new skills to help their children improve.

Trainers should gain a better understanding of what works for that family and should use that information when writing plans and training staff.

Some parents like to talk more than others, some like to roll up their sleeves and work, some like to collect data and go over it with you, others don't. Some will appreciate a behavior analytic research article that you want to go over, others will not. Parents and trainers will know that parent training is working when parents are asking more questions, trainers are seeing parents follow through with what was taught, parents are moving on to new problems armed with skills they did not have a few weeks or months ago, and ultimately when children are improving.

A common complaint that I have heard from practitioners doing parent training is that parents are not consistent in applying what was taught or a lack of follow through. This usually results from the parent trainer not understanding what motivates the parent. We do reinforcer assessments with children, why aren't we doing them with parents?

Parents have to be honest with their trainer on how they feel about a treatment and if they are having trouble following a plan. Do not worry about offending the trainer because you don't like a plan. They will appreciate the honesty and work with you on developing a plan that you will like. Parent training should strengthen the partnership between provider and parents towards the child's progress. As trained professionals, it is our responsibility to be able to understand the variables affecting the parents' behavior with regards to the

treatment, and address them as necessary.

Mike Marroquin is a New York State Licensed Behavior Analyst and, in general, a nice guy. He has been working in homes and school districts on Long Island for over 12 years as a behavior consultant. He has been teaching Graduate and Undergraduate courses on Human Learning and Autism at Queens College for 11 years. He has dedicated his career to helping children with autism and helping his college students to become behavior analysts so that eventually he can take some time off.

## Additional Readings & Resources on Parent Training

<http://www.thebehaviorweb.com/what-have-learned-during-a-parent-training-session/>

[www.broccolibootcamp.com](http://www.broccolibootcamp.com)

## Check The Website

For updates to the blog, including video tutorial explaining a chosen technical term. New videos are uploaded regularly. You can also subscribe to the blog to have these updates delivered to your inbox.

[www.TheBehaviorWeb.com/blog](http://www.TheBehaviorWeb.com/blog)

## Coming Soon

New courses in preparation phase:

*Principles of Behavior Management – Understanding The Environment.*

*Writing Objective and Measurable Person-Centered Treatment Goals*

*Understanding My Child's Behavior*