



## Success Stories

### **Skill Aquisition**

Shea, a five-year-old girl diagnosed with Pervasive Developmental Disorder – Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), was referred to ABA Psychological Services, P.C. in June of 2013 to devise and implement a program that would enhance skill acquisition and decrease challenging behavior. Shea has been receiving in-home ABA Psychological Services, P.C. by a paraprofessional under the supervision of a BCBA for the past year.

### **The Assessment**

Using the Verbal Behavior Milestones and Placement Program (VB-MAPP), an initial assessment was administered to identify and evaluate Shea's strengths and weaknesses in language, learning, and social skills. The VB-MAPP also identified various factors and maladaptive behaviors that would interfere with the acquisition of language and other functional skills. Based upon the results, various goals and programs were established to teach Shea new skills and decrease her challenging behavior using ABA therapy.



## Goals and Solutions

Several of Shea's goals, as well as, her progress toward reaching those goals are stated below:

### **Decreasing Tantrums:**

Shea would engage in tantrums in which she would cry, scream, throw herself on the floor, and hit herself if she could not find a missing piece of a toy (e.g., puzzle piece, or missing piece to Mr. Potato Head), dropped something, and/or if she was not given a preferred item. After collecting baseline data, a program was implemented to teach Shea the language skills necessary to request preferred items or missing pieces. This goal was accomplished systematically and explicitly by creating various situations in which Shea was presented with an item that had at least one missing component, or was not able to access a preferred item. A verbal prompt of "Where's the (item)?" or "May I have the (item)?" would be provided. Shea received the item immediately once she correctly repeated the phrase. As Shea progressed, the prompts were systematically faded, resulting in Shea independently requesting missing pieces and access to preferred items. Shea has successfully generalized this skill and no longer engages in tantrums.



### **Independent Play:**

Upon the initial evaluation, Shea would play with a few toys, but would not sustain play with these toys for more than 3 minutes at a time and would frequently play with the toys in a repetitive manner (e.g. lining the toys up). Therefore, one of the goals of ABA therapy was to teach Shea to independently play with toys for a longer period of time. In order to accomplish this goal, an activity schedule consisting of four pictures depicting different activities was created and Shea was systematically taught how to use this schedule. The schedule requires Shea to follow a list to complete four different activities and then tell the person administering the schedule, "I'm done," upon completion. The steps are as follows: get a toy, independently play with a toy correctly, put the toy away, look at the schedule and get the next toy to play with, and tell the instructor, "I'm done." This goal was achieved through the use prompts and fading those prompts as Shea successfully completed each procedural step. Currently, she is able to play independently and appropriately with toys for 20-30 minutes at a time.



### **Spontaneously Labeling Objects and Sounds:**

Prior to starting ABA therapy, Shea would not make comments or label things within her environment. A program was established to teach Shea to comment on novel objects, pictures, and sounds within the environment. Shea has accomplished this goal, and is able to say, "I hear a \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g., dog, cat)" when she hears a novel sound. In addition, Shea is also able to label novel objects or pictures around the house, saying, "I see a \_\_\_\_\_ (e.g. ball, piano)."

### **Discriminating Questions About Objects:**

Shea was able to answer questions such as, "what is it?", "what color?", "what number?" or "what letter?" when presented with an object or picture with one characteristic (e.g. a color card or a number). However, we noticed that she experienced difficulty with answering questions when the object being presented had two characteristics such as a purple ball or a red letter T. For example if the instructor would ask, "what is it?" Shea would respond correctly with "ball," however, if she were then asked, "what color?" Shea would respond incorrectly by saying, "ball." Additionally, if she was presented with a blue letter R and asked, "What color?" Shea would respond by saying, "R." She was not accustomed to being asked multiple questions regarding a particular object. Therefore, a program was created to teach Shea how to discriminate the questions. Although Shea exhibited some frustration in the beginning, she is now able to respond correctly to multiple questions regarding a particular object/item.



### **Engaging in Appropriate Play with Siblings:**

Shea rarely engaged in appropriate play with her brother prior to receiving ABA services. She would never initiate play and would often hit him or scream when he attempted to play with her. After several months of ABA therapy, in which she was taught how to play constructively, Shea is able to not only initiate play with her brother but also requests it several times throughout the day providing her with much enjoyment

The goals stated above reflect a few of the many programs currently in progress for Shea. She is a fast and determined learner who has acquired various skills in a short period of time through ABA therapy. Due to her success in acquiring more advanced language skills, Shea is able to communicate and interact with members of her family. In addition, she is not only capable but enjoys playing independently and with her family members for a sustained period of time. Shea's parents and teachers have indicated that she is more likely to verbalize her needs than engage in tantrums as noted in the past.



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