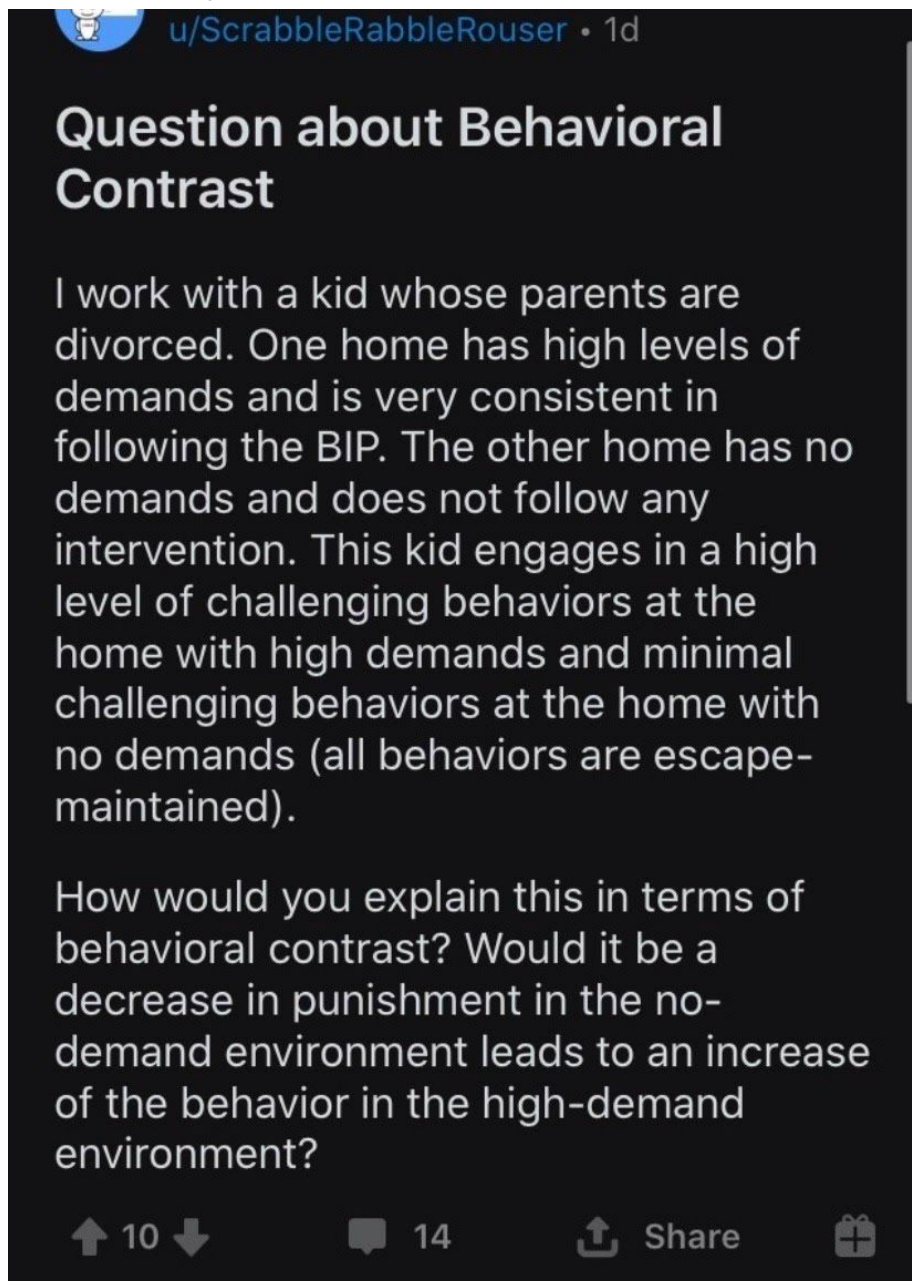


## Snapshots of ABA (part 2)

Here are some more examples of things I've seen, mostly from ABA therapists and companies. All of this showcases the fundamental problems with ABA.

**Example 1:** this ABA therapist wondering why a kid acts out more in the household that does ABA compared to the household that doesn't.

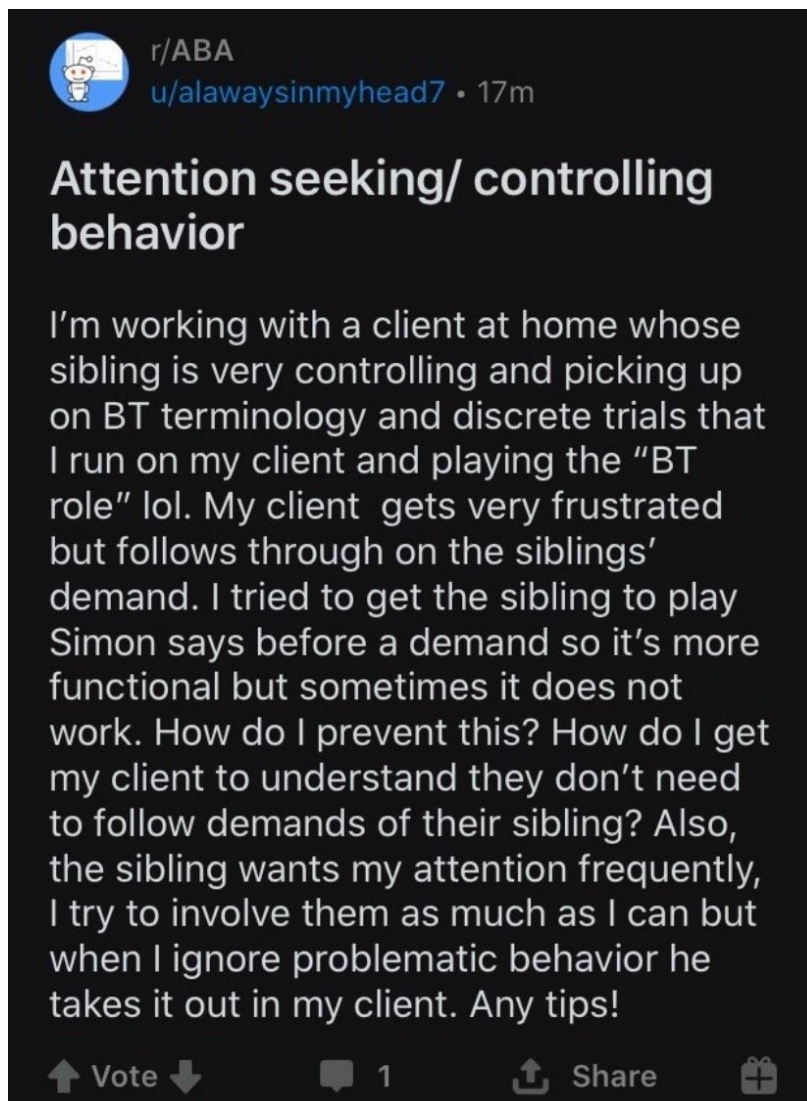


Isn't the entire theoretical point of ABA to decrease "challenging" behaviors? If so, isn't it quite ironic that the child is more distressed and therefore acts out more in the ABA-enforcing environment?

The therapist refers to ABA as an “intervention.” An intervention for what? For “challenging behaviors”? (Which you’re causing more than you’re solving) Or an intervention for autism itself?

Also, it seems highly unlikely that there just flat out aren’t any demands at the house where the parent doesn’t follow ABA rules and principles. If the parent is interacting with their kid in a positive way, and the child is happy there, then that parent is simply doing things differently. *Maybe instead of forcing the child to sit still and do repetitive table tasks, that parent is exploring outside with their child. Maybe that parent is teaching them about the world through experience instead of making them do meaningless drills.*

**Example 2:** this therapist who’s having a hard time trying to de-condition their client from compliance training.



The image is a screenshot of a Reddit post. At the top left, there is a blue circular profile picture of a cartoon character. To its right, the text reads "r/ABA" and "u/alwaysinmyhead7 • 17m". Below this is the title "Attention seeking/ controlling behavior" in a large, bold, white font. The main body of the post is a paragraph of white text on a black background, describing a therapist's struggle with a client's sibling. At the bottom, there are icons for voting (up and down arrows), a comment icon with the number "1", a share icon, and a gift icon.

r/ABA  
u/alwaysinmyhead7 • 17m

## Attention seeking/ controlling behavior

I’m working with a client at home whose sibling is very controlling and picking up on BT terminology and discrete trials that I run on my client and playing the “BT role” lol. My client gets very frustrated but follows through on the siblings’ demand. I tried to get the sibling to play Simon says before a demand so it’s more functional but sometimes it does not work. How do I prevent this? How do I get my client to understand they don’t need to follow demands of their sibling? Also, the sibling wants my attention frequently, I try to involve them as much as I can but when I ignore problematic behavior he takes it out in my client. Any tips!

↑ Vote ↓   1   Share   🎁

ABA is compliance training, at its core. How does this therapist expect the child to ignore their own needs and listen to them regardless of how they feel, and then somehow learn to stand up for themselves when other people do the same things? This child has been trained (by this therapist!) to comply with demands no matter what they are or who's saying them. *There's no way to solve that problem within the framework of ABA, because ABA is the problem.*

This therapist is *explicitly stating* that the practices that they themselves partake in are "controlling." And somehow they think that by establishing control over the sibling as well (playing Simon says), they'll get the sibling to stop controlling the autistic child. But that illogical approach does nothing but teach the sibling more ways to control the autistic person, by continuing the cycle of power abuse.

**Example 3:** this parent who is concerned about the things their autistic child is forced to do in ABA therapy, wondering if it will be traumatic for the child.

## r/AutismTranslated

u/tiny\_dinosaurs • 123d •

### Where is the line between causing trauma with ABA therapy techniques and causing pressure that will allow for growth?

crowdsourced

My son just started ABA I'm home. He is 2. They are very stern that they need to work up to 40 hours a week and fast. I was very reluctant but I also would rather use ABA to make small changes now vs him having to really struggle in a few years to make changes to set in behaviors. I have always used positive reinforcement with decent success and I guess they do also but they make him do little things here or there that I can tell are very uncomfortable to him. Like grabbing his hand forcefully to make him sign "more" when he wants something. Like if he's having fun and he wants us to shake the box he's sitting in again we have to grab his hands and smush them together a few times and then immediately praise him and reward him with what he wanted. But grabbing his hands makes him recoil and cry. He does snap out of it quickly most times but still it feels a bit wrong.

What do you guys think? Has anyone done ABA that can explain how it felt and if you think you would have been better off without it?

The things the parent is describing here are honestly quite commonplace. ABA teaches communication in a forced and unnatural way that often violates the physical boundaries of

the autistic person. Here, the sign “more” is a learned trick to get a treat, which in this case is the box being shaken. *There is nothing meaningful behind the child’s forced sign, so it is not really communication at all. It’s a performance.*

There are ways to teach sign language that respect a child’s boundaries. *And if the autistic person doesn’t like using sign language, there are many other options for communication, including AAC apps and devices.* There is obviously a huge difference between helping a child learn what communication accomplishes and then inviting them to participate in a reciprocal exchange, and forcing them to do something with their body that makes them very uncomfortable.

But clearly, the therapists and the boy’s parent knew exactly what he wanted without the sign “more.” So, the child was communicating effectively without sign language. Is it really necessary in this instance, then? Obviously it’s easier to understand someone when they’re communicating in a language you know. But that applies for the boy as well. Shouldn’t the parent and therapists be thinking about ways they could learn to communicate with autistic people that don’t involve rigid adherence to NT norms and standards?

*Learning communication skills is vital and important. But a boundary-violating performance should not be mistaken for a genuine, reciprocal human exchange of emotions, ideas, and resources.*

~Eden 🐸