



# Success Through Applied Behavior Analysis: Cultivating Communication

The following article is a spotlight on a child that received [Applied Behavior Analysis \(ABA\)](#) at [SPIN](#). ABA is based on the science of learning and behavior and is used in treatment for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ABA helps children make positive changes in their behavior by studying how each child learns best. ABA can also help reduce harmful or challenging behaviors. ABA encourages positive behaviors and discourages negative behaviors in order to improve different skills such as communication and social skills. ABA is used where the child needs it: the school, the home and the community.

Hanna and her son Ilya, age 6, were connected to ABA at SPIN after Ilya attended preschool and received Behavioral Health Rehabilitation Services (BHRS) there. The following is an interview with his mother, Hanna, describing the family's experience with ABA and the changes she has seen in Ilya. The article includes feedback from the Licensed Behavior Specialist (BSL), Rebecca Nichols, guiding Ilya's ABA treatment. As the BSL, Rebecca helps individuals (like Ilya's mother or teacher) to reinforce the desired behaviors in the child's natural environment.

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## EPIC: How did your child get connected to ABA?

**Hanna:** My child used to go to SPIN for two years and he started receiving services. It's such a good place I think and we had very good teachers and specialists. One of them is a Therapeutic Support Staff (TSS) and she still works with Ilya. This is how we started with SPIN. After we started going to Spin. We had a couple of meetings and we discussed different programs for Ilya. We tried a couple of them and the last one was ABA and everyone agreed to start ABA for Ilya.



Elia at school with his puzzles (his favorite).

## EPIC: What can Elia do now that he couldn't do before?

**Hanna:** He has more words. He's talking clearly in both languages. Our native language is

## EPIC: How were you motivated by the Behavioral Specialist Consultant (BSC)?

**Hanna:** As a parent of a special needs kid, I really am by myself a lot in trying to solve problems. I have a close relationship with Ilya's teacher. And she helped us to introduce ABA to Ilya. She suggested it to us and the team agreed. The teacher agreed that my son is doing better and better everyday since doing ABA. He has been doing ABA a couple months. His behavior and speech have improved and I see a big difference.

## EPIC: What was your first impression or what did you think when you started ABA treatment?

**Hanna:** I thought maybe it's going to work. I wasn't sure because I heard positive and negative things. I heard that it can be too specific/directive. Put the kid on the chair and tell him "do this and do that." Yes,

Russian. He started helping me more in the home. He likes to do laundry. He puts it in the washing machine and then moves it to the drying machine. He's happy when I tell him "you're such a good boy, you helped me a lot."

**Rebecca:** In school instead of engaging in behaviors he's able to verbalize more when he doesn't like something. He will protest stuff or ask for stuff rather than screaming or throwing himself to the floor. He likes jobs. At school he hands out token boards. ABA helped him with this because before he didn't want to be involved in the morning routine.

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#### **EPIC: What was your favorite part?**

**Hanna:** Watching Ilya follow instructions. His teacher told me he's better now at just sitting in his seat and not walking away. Listening. He understands better what he needs to do.

**Rebecca:** He struggled with his fine motor skills but now he gets really excited when he is able to do these tasks. He loves the positive reinforcement/praise. He loves puzzles. He's better at sitting in his seat and doing his worksheet so that he can do a puzzle after. He is very motivated by that.

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#### **EPIC: What would you say to other parents who may be skeptical/doubtful of ABA?**

**Hanna:** You always need to try new things.

**Rebecca:** The nice thing about ABA is you get to do it in their natural environment. We aren't separating him and doing discrete trials. We are doing it with him in the classroom and asking him to do tasks that other children are doing. Natural routines.

maybe it was too structured. But I read more about ABA. I talked to SPIN and Rebecca and his teacher and got more information. His old Specialized Instructor (SI) explained ABA to me a lot and I decided to try it. I am happy with how far we have come.

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#### **EPIC: What was the hardest part?**

**Hanna:** I think it's always difficult to start something new for this type of kid. Even for any kid or any adult. Following instructions, I think this was the toughest for him but it takes time. Now he is getting better and better.

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#### **EPIC: How has it helped you as a Mom?**

**Hanna:** He understands me better. If I tell him something to do. He'll do it. Maybe not at first but after several requests. For me as a parent, he can play properly by himself and I can do what I need to do. I can stay calm and do the dishes. He can play with puzzles, play by himself properly and safely so I can do the things I need to do in the house or for my other kids. Before he would sit and be spinning wheels (repetitive behavior) or he could go in the kitchen and take a knife. He could open the entry door. Now he knows not to do that.

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#### **EPIC: Has it helped your relationship with your son?**

**Hanna:** We have more hugs. It's always better when you give positive reinforcement and he loves it.

## Special Thanks

Special thanks to Hanna, Ilya, and the staff at SPIN for helping to bring this story to light. Click [here](#) to learn more information about SPIN.

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