



## **Parents Make A Difference: What the Research Shows**

Parents, do you wonder whether you can have an impact in the treatment of your child with autism?

Scientific research shows that if you are involved in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) interventions for your child YOU CAN!

Below is a sample of findings from major research studies on the effectiveness of ABA for children with autism. All these studies were published in respected, peer-reviewed scientific journals. Each of them cites the important role played by parents like you.

In Ivar Lovaas landmark study at UCLA showing the effectiveness of ABA for autism, parents were a vital part of the treatment:

The parents worked as part of the treatment team throughout the intervention; they were extensively trained in the treatment procedures so that treatment could take place for almost all of the subjects waking hours, 365 days a year.

Lovaas, O. Ivar. (1987) Behavioral Treatment and Normal Educational and Intellectual Functioning in Young Autistic Children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 55, 3-9.

More recently, when Lovaas' findings were repeated outside of the university setting, the role of parents was retained, and even expanded:

Parents were encouraged to be involved in all levels of intervention. At the beginning of treatment, all parents attended a 12- to 18-hour training workshop across 2 to 3 days on behavioral principles and intervention methods. Thereafter, they participated in weekly training sessions to generalize their child's newly established skills to the natural environment...they were asked to be active participants in their child's intervention.

Cohen, Howard, Mila Amerine-Dickens and Tristram Smith. (2006) Early Intensive Behavioral Treatment: Replication of the UCLA Model in a Community Setting. *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 27 (2), 145-155.

Parent-directed children, did about as well as clinic-directed children, although they received much less supervision. This was unexpected, and it may have been due in part to parent-directed parents taking on the senior therapist role, filling cancelled shifts themselves, actively targeting generalization, and pursuing teachers and neighbors to find peers for daily play dates with their children.

Sallows, Glen O. and Tamlynn D. Graupner. (2005) Intensive Behavioral Treatment for Children With Autism: Four-Year Outcome and Predictors. *American Journal on Mental Retardation*, 110 (6), 417-438.

Parents participating in ABA treatment have had a positive impact on speed of learning:

Participants not only acquired joint attention with their parents involving toys and routines in the home and community but did so as or more quickly in Study 2 than in Study 1, suggesting the development of a learning set. [Study 2 studied parents extending the use of a combination of discrete trial and Pivotal Response Training techniques in the home immediately after Study 1, which tested the same techniques in a school setting.]

Jones, Emily A., Edward G. Carr and Kathleen M. Feeley. (2006) Multiple Effects of Joint Attention Intervention for Children With Autism. *Behavior Modification*, 30, 782-834.

Parents participating in ABA treatment have had a positive impact on retention and generalization of skills:

The children whose parents were trained largely retained their gains or continued to improve. The gains the children made in appropriate play, social non-verbal, and appropriate verbal behaviors were usually retained. When the contingencies were instated both in the home and at school, behavior changed in both settings.

Lovaas, O. Ivar, Robert Koegel, James Q. Simmons and Judith Stevens Long. (1973) Some Generalization and Follow-up Measures on Autistic Children in Behavior Therapy. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 6, 131-166.



These same authors concluded:

Many therapists now argue that the child's parents are essential as mediators of treatment.

Don't doubt that you can make a difference in ABA treatment for your child.

The evidence says **YOU CAN!**  
(Author of this synthesis unknown)