

25

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

for the Successful Behavior Analyst:

*From Graduate School to
Chief Executive Officer*

by Jon S. Bailey
Mary R. Burch

Authors of *Ethics for Behavior Analysts*





for the Successful Behavior Analyst

This second edition of Bailey and Burch's best-selling *25 Essential Skills for the Successful Behavior Analyst* is an invaluable guide to the professional skills required in the rapidly growing field of applied behavior analysis.

The demands on professional behavior analysts, BCBAs and BCBA-Ds, are constantly increasing such that several new skills are required to keep up with new developments. Each chapter has been thoroughly updated and seven new chapters address recognizing the need to understand client advocacy, cultural responsiveness, and the movement toward diversity, equity, and inclusion in the field.

The authors present five basic skills and strategy areas which each behavior analyst need to acquire: essential professional skills, basic behavioral repertoire, applying behavioral knowledge, vital work habits, and advanced skills. This book is organized around those five areas, with a total of 25 specific skills presented within those topics.

Jon S. Bailey, PhD, BCBA-D, Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Florida State University for over 50-years, teaches ethics and professional issues graduate courses. Dr. Bailey was a founding Director of the Behavior Analyst Certification Board® and is past president of the Florida Association for Behavior Analysis.

Mary R. Burch, PhD, BCBA-D, is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst®. Dr. Burch has more than thirty years of experience in developmental disabilities. She has been a Behavior Specialist, QMRP, unit Director, and Consulting Behavior Analyst in developmental disabilities, mental health, and preschool settings.

“The skills described in this invaluable resource book are generic, that is they are relevant for virtually all professional endeavors. Uniting practice of them with knowledge of behavior analysis would supply behavior analysts an advantage in any field they chose to enter.”

—**Patrick C. Friman, Ph.D.**, ABPP; Vice President of Behavioral Health, Boys Town; Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, UNMC

“This book provides precious direction on how to develop a robust set of professional skills. Among the recommended texts for new and practicing behavior analysts, this book stands as most important to me.”

—**Martin Myers, BCBA**; President, Flatrock Advising; Editor, Flatrock Weekly



for the Successful Behavior Analyst

*From Graduate School to
Chief Executive Officer*

Second Edition

Jon S. Bailey and Mary R. Burch

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

Designed cover image: Cover Design by CuneoCreative.com

Second edition published 2023
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2023 Jon S. Bailey and Mary R. Burch

The right of Jon S. Bailey and Mary R. Burch to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

[First edition published by Routledge 2009]

ISBN: 978-1-032-20856-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-19207-9 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-26557-3 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003265573

Typeset in Minion Pro
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

This 2nd edition of our *25 Essential Skills* book is dedicated to the memory of my former student and colleague of 40 years, Maxin Reiss, PhD, BCBA-D (1948–2018). You epitomized the necessary repertoire for successful behavior analysts and modelled it for our graduate students. You were instrumental in encouraging me to put this vision into print. I think you would be proud of the enhancements to your original model.

—Jon S. Bailey, BCBA-D





Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Contents

List of Figures	ix
Preface to the 1st Edition	xiii
Preface to the 2nd Edition	xxi
Acknowledgments	xxv
UNIT ONE Essential Professional Skills	1
Chapter 1 Professional Etiquette (Behaviors)	3
Chapter 2 Interpersonal Communications	13
Chapter 3 Ethics in ABA	19
Chapter 4 Total Competence in Applied Behavior Analysis and in Your Specialty	29
Chapter 5 “Think Function”	39
UNIT TWO The Basic Behavioral Repertoire	49
Chapter 6 Deliberate, Ethical Supervision	51
Chapter 7 Leadership in ABA	59
Chapter 8 Assertiveness	69

Chapter 9	Cultural Responsiveness	81
Chapter 10	Client Advocate	89
UNIT THREE	Applying Your Behavioral Knowledge	97
Chapter 11	Managing Difficult People	99
Chapter 12	Use Shaping Effectively	113
Chapter 13	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	121
Chapter 14	Performance Management	135
Chapter 15	School-Based Behavior Analysis <i>Dr. Jennifer L. Austin</i>	147
UNIT FOUR	Vital Work Habits	161
Chapter 16	Time Management the Behavioral Way	163
Chapter 17	Become a Trusted Professional	173
Chapter 18	Networking	183
Chapter 19	Learn to Deal With Stress: A Behavioral Approach	193
Chapter 20	Public Speaking	207
UNIT FIVE	Advanced Skills	219
Chapter 21	Creative Problem-Solving and Troubleshooting	221
Chapter 22	Insurance and Billing <i>Michele Silcox-Beal</i>	231
Chapter 23	Critical Thinking	241
Chapter 24	Design Thinking	255
Chapter 25	Aggressive Curiosity	267
	About the Authors	279
	Index	281

Figures

- 5.1 Graphic of the FABAs “Think Function” slogan. 41
- 6.1 This figure shows the tasks for which the RBT is responsible and how the BCBA Supervisor determines if the behavior-change protocol has been implemented with integrity, and if the RBT’s measurement of the client’s behavior matches their count. 53
- 6.2 This figure shows how the RBT’s count of their client’s behavior differed greatly from that of the supervisor during the initial observations. After re-training and feedback, the RBT’s count closely matched the supervisors and acceptable IOA of client behavior was achieved. 54
- 6.3 This figure shows the RBT’s self-estimate of their treatment integrity at very nearly 100%, but the supervisor indicates that the RBT is greatly overestimating their success in following the behavior plan. After re-training and feedback, the RBT’s treatment integrity improves and nearly matches that of the supervisor. 54

11.1	This figure shows how one colleague may reinforce a refusal to help another colleague.	101
11.2	This figure shows how a supervisee may be accidentally reinforced by a supervisor for making excuses.	101
11.3	This figure shows how one BCBA may inadvertently reinforce another BCBA for getting off track and arguing.	102
14.1	This figure shows how the BCBA tested several hypotheses with regard to a therapist's performance with clients. It seems clear from this hypothetical data that clarifying goals and adding prompts had no effect. It was only after training followed by improved supervision that the quality improved.	141
16.1	This figure shows a weekly calendar of To-Do items and meetings.	165
16.2	This figure shows an example of using the Premack Principle to reinforce daily work activities.	168
16.3	This figure shows an example of a BCBA's To-Do list and planning notes for one day of service delivery.	169
19.1	Examples of setting events and antecedents that cause stress.	200
19.2	Scatter plot graph of times of day that cause an emotional reaction. <i>Note:</i> Black is for chest pains, dark gray is for anxiety, and light gray is for food cravings.	201
20.1	This figure shows the standard story arc for a behavior analysis presentation.	210
23.1	This flowchart shows critical thinking steps, including the role that assumptions can play in the critical thinking process and the consequences for clients. Adapted with permission from Paul, R. W., & Elder, L. (2012). <i>Critical thinking: Tools for taking charge of your learning and your life</i> . Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.	246

23.2	Data for one participant from the Mason and Iwata (1990) study. Data are redrawn to illustrate the effects of the sensory integration procedures more clearly. From Mason, S. A. and Iwata, B. A. (1990). Artfactual effects of sensory-integrative therapy on self-injurious behavior. <i>Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis</i> , 23, 361–370.	247
24.1	This graphic shows the five-step process of Design Thinking.	257
25.1	This graphic illustrates some likely controlling variables for curiosity.	270
25.2	Aggressive curiosity often produces dead ends and usually involves several stages of inquiry before new answers and solutions emerge.	276



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Preface to the 1st Edition

I come home from working at the Developmental Disabilities Center twice a week, drop on the couch, and just cry. I don't know what's wrong with me. I think they just don't like me and don't trust me. I feel like an outsider. I have clients whom I love, and I enjoy the challenge of solving problems. I'm well paid by my consulting firm, but at the DD center they don't respect me, and they won't listen to me. I've been told the administrator talks about me behind my back. They like to use drugs for treatment instead of my behavior plans I can't admit to my supervisor that I'm in trouble. I don't know what to do, really, I don't. I'm board-certified, and I've taken Dr. Bailey's ethics course, but it's not helping me in this situation.

This emotional and heart-wrenching plea came to us in the form of a desperate phone call from Kimberly, a newly certified behavior analyst. This extremely bright, enthusiastic, go-getting graduate student had such an intense desire to get her first job and begin helping clients with behavioral needs that no one would have predicted she would find herself in the depressing situation she described. But she did.

We began to notice that many other behavior analysts were experiencing similar problems, and we had a revelation—being an expert in behavior analysis is *not* sufficient for a behavior analyst to be a successful consultant. As our field continues to grow, it is critical that we educate behavior analysts on *all* the skills needed to be effective and make a difference in the life of others.

Applied behavior analysis evolved from the experimental analysis of behavior in the mid-1960s. Our field became formalized in 1968 with the publication of the first issue of the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* under the editorship of Mont Wolf at the University of Kansas. The blueprint for the field was established in a seminal article in that issue, “Some Current Dimensions of Applied Behavior Analysis,” authored by Don Baer, Mont Wolf, and Todd Risley (1968). In this article, they outlined the key distinctions of this new field that made it different from the rest of psychology. As described in the article, behavior analysts were interested in solving applied problems by using a to-be-developed technology based on the science of behavior; that is, operant conditioning. This technology would be inherently data-based. It would its own methodology for demonstrating cause-effect, that is, the single-subject research design, and it would evolve over time to give us a vast array of techniques that would show how these procedures would help people improve the quality of their life. In 1968, the cutting-edge thought-leaders who authored this important article did not anticipate today’s overwhelming demand for behavior analysis. This enormous need for services has developed in the past five years, and services are now provided in many countries by Board Certified Behavior Analysts[®].

As a result, master’s degree programs have sprouted like wildflowers across the United States and indeed the world. Two-year and three-year graduate programs that turn out behavior analysts by the hundreds are now working overtime to provide professionals to work with individual clients who are autistic, developmentally delayed, brain injured, or otherwise disabled. In some cases, behavior analysts are working one-on-one with clients, and in

other situations, they are working with teams of paraprofessionals who are implementing behavior programs designed by a behavior analyst.

Behavior analysts are also working in business, industry, government, and organizational settings to improve human performance in safety-related areas or to increase productivity, product quality, or service. In these settings, the behavior analyst takes on the role of the consultant, the professional advice giver who must know a great deal about how organizations work and don't work and about how to train, motivate, and manage people in settings that were never designed from the outset to be optimal for human performance.

As it turns out, being an expert in behavior analysis does not provide all the necessary skills to be an effective, successful consultant. The settings where we work have often been visited before by other consultants who had no behavioral training whatsoever but who, with their finely tuned sense of business etiquette, social skills, and gift of gab, have made it difficult for the behavior-technology-savvy behavior analyst to make much headway. Upper-level management of human-service organizations and CEOs of major corporations now have an expectation of a quality of interaction that is hard to acquire in graduate programs that offer only courses in applied operant conditioning, research methodology, functional analysis, data collection, and practicum experience working one-on-one with an autistic child. And it turns out that working as a consultant in a developmental training center, in a classroom for children with behavior disorders, or with parents who need to learn how to manage their unruly children requires that the behavior analyst must interface with a wide variety of people who present (a medical term meaning "show up with") an amazing array of contentious and obstructive behaviors that can thwart the unwary and unprepared would-be behavioral consultant.

This became obvious when the first author was contacted by the supervisor of a recent graduate—a hardworking and bright

individual who was failing on one of his first consulting assignments. This budding behavior analyst was yet another young professional who found himself in a dilemma much like the one Kimberly described to us (in the case at the beginning of this preface). According to the supervisor, the new behavior analyst had missed the initial cues from management that he was in trouble, and when he finally learned there were problems, he did not seek help. His tendency was to blame the direct-care staff for their shortcomings and failure to carry out his programs. Upon further investigation, he had simply been unprepared for a semi-hostile school environment that paid lip service to wanting behavioral consultation but in truth was set in its traditional ways.

Rather than rebuke or blame the new consultant, the first author made an attempt to determine what went wrong in his training. This led to countless interviews with current and former students, supervisors of consultants, trainers of consultants, and CEOs of companies that hired behavior analysts. In addition, senior consultants were asked a series of questions about their experiences dealing with tough problems in a variety of settings, how they solved these problems, and what they had learned from the experience. When possible, these consultants and supervisors were asked to provide working scenarios that described in a concise format the nature of the problems encountered.

From these interviews and written scenarios, we developed over a six-month period key words and descriptors of skills and strategies. At this stage, about 100 descriptive terms emerged as important skills and strategies for successful behavior analysts. This number of skills was clearly too many to try to describe or teach. We began a search of sources of knowledge that might prepare the consultant in training for the difficult road ahead. Using key words and Amazon.com, we found it was possible to determine recent books that seemed to focus on the key skills we identified, even though they were not specifically written for our new type of professional: the behavior analyst consultant. Although these books were written for professionals in other fields, it was

clear that they had relevance for us. They denoted and described general categories that are clearly required for any professional operating in someone else's setting; topics such as business etiquette, assertiveness, and leadership were common. We found that the business consulting literature emphasized that professionals should have excellent personal communication and persuasion skills as well as a strong background in negotiation, lobbying, and public speaking. As categories of skills and strategies that began to encompass our original list of 100 emerged, a solution to the problem of categorizing our comprehensive list of required skills began to look possible. By reanalyzing the scenarios that we had gathered in terms of "What skills would it take to fix this?" we eventually were able to formulate five general categories of skills and strategies. In addition to having the basic skills just described, consultants would have to be prepared to apply their knowledge of behavior analysis to deal with what is known in the business literature as "difficult people." The good behavior analyst must know how to use his or her knowledge of functional analysis, shaping, and performance management to deal with these problems and ask pointed questions about issues that come up daily with "Can I see that?"

As a professional, the behavior analyst must also confront the difficult task of managing his or her own behavior on a daily basis. Without careful monitoring, even bright, highly motivated behavioral consultants can waste time, be a burden to other professionals, get stressed out, and find themselves needing help but not knowing how to go about getting it.

One final area emerged from our interviews and scenario collection. There is an expectation that behavioral consultants will grow over time, roughly a five-to-seven-year period when they are expected to take senior consultant positions. These positions will involve additional responsibility, and the need for greater wisdom in making decisions can have a wide-ranging impact on the organizations served. From preschools to factories, experience teaches consultants to refine their critical-thinking skills and to anticipate

and quickly troubleshoot problems that invariably arise while consulting in any setting. Senior consultants are expected to take on training, coaching, and mentoring roles with newly minted behavior analysts and may engage in these important tasks with mid- and upper-level managers as well.

Finally, with time and experience, advanced consultants are expected to begin to see the “big picture” of how the world works and to develop an appreciation for the larger metacontingencies that control our society and our nation. This big picture analysis then expands to a broader worldview in which the consultant can suddenly begin to see the behavioral connections between his or her failed efforts to persuade a school principal to adopt a new discipline policy and the failure of an emergency relief effort in Myanmar.

The consultant who has developed advanced skills will have developed one of the most important skills of all—aggressive curiosity. Aggressive curiosity is the skill and attitude about the science of behavior that will enable the advanced consultant to see the beauty in measurement techniques that are robust enough to document the behavior problems of a client with Prader-Willi syndrome who routinely goes AWOL, track the cell phone usage of people in third-world countries, or monitor the feeding patterns of Antarctic penguins.

For the modern-day behavior analysis consultant, being competent and well trained in the technical aspects of behavior analysis is simply not enough. To be successful and effective, behavior analysis consultants need knowledge in critical areas of competence, which now also include essential business skills, basic consulting repertoire, the ability to apply behavioral knowledge, vital work habits, and advanced consulting skills.

25 Essential Skills & Strategies for the Successful Behavior Analyst was designed to be used as a companion to our book *Ethics for Behavior Analysts* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), in courses addressing ethics and professional issues in behavior analysis, or as a handbook for practicum courses where

students are acquiring and testing their consulting skills for the first time. Supervisors of newly hired behavior analysts who consult in school systems, in residential facilities, or with families should also find the taxonomy useful in spelling out what their expectations are for professional representation of the consulting firm. Finally, experienced consultants might find the references to the professional consulting literature and checklists of value in improving their own skills.

Behavioral consulting is largely the art of practicing the science of human behavior. We hope that this book conveys the excitement and challenges that face our new colleagues as they join our ranks as professional behavior analysts.

—Jon S. Bailey and Mary R. Burch
2010



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Preface to the 2nd Edition

This 2nd edition of *25 Essential Skills . . .* is intended to introduce the reader to a wide range of professional attributes that are expected in today's complex, competitive behavior analysis environment. Largely considered *soft skills* this expansive repertoire is quite the opposite; it represents a set of expectations for the 21st-century behavior analyst who must deal with a full range of challenges across many dimensions, some personal and many organizational in nature. A modern-day behavior analyst is expected to understand not only the technical details of our rapidly changing technology but they should also have a complete mastery of what is known as "The White Book." (Cooper, Heron & Heward, 2020). They are also expected to keep up with a flood of complex methods and techniques emerging from 50+ years of research published in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis* (having a subscription is *de rigueur*). BCBAs are expected to be critical thinkers when it comes to consideration of magical and outlandish treatments that pop up like mushrooms in the spring from caregivers and yet have the social skills to explain to families

in plain, polite English why it would be a violation of their ethics code to be involved with them. Administrators looking to hire a Board Certified Behavior Analyst are looking for well-rounded individuals who are calm, mature, organized, thoughtful, caring and above all else effective in diagnosing behavior problems (what is the *function* of this behavior?) and then designing and implementing effective behavior change programs based on that information. Company owners desperately want to add to their team a person with leadership skills who they can count on to train young people to become behavior technicians and therapists and then to take responsibility for their supervision; this is a special skill in itself that as it turns out few people have and which requires months, even years, of practice in behavior shaping (aka BST), goal setting, diplomacy, and an even-handedness that is near impossible to master given all the other demands of the job.

In this 2nd edition, now named *25 Essential Skills for the Successful Behavior Analyst*, we endeavor to capture the flavor of this vast array of talents and abilities that are now obligatory. We know that they will not all be acquired during the short, standard two-year period of training that most BCBA's currently receive. Those five or six semesters are full of courses on the techniques of ABA as applied to a variety of populations and settings. What is generally missing is any sense of what is expected by our consumers in the way of an actual professional repertoire; this book aims to outline those skills that we believe will make a difference in broadening the expectations of what it means to be a *successful* professional. We have begun each Unit with a challenge that captures the scope of the skills to be presented.

As you might expect, techniques for overcoming such challenges are not taught in most grad programs. We should add that this book alone will not provide all the answers, rather we hope that by explicitly naming the skills and introducing the content and process you will be able to seek the kind of post-BCBA training and experience necessary to make you a respected member of the behavior analysis community. For faculty, we hope that they will be able to create at least some opportunities for their students

to explore these areas of expertise and to acquire basic skills in professional etiquette, interpersonal communications, leadership, cultural responsiveness, and so on.

This edition of the *25 Skills* book is divided into five units starting with *Essential Professional Skills* and *The Basic Professional Repertoire*. We believe that the ten skills included in Units 1 and 2 should prepare most graduates for their first jobs, not with expertise but at least the fundamentals to make a difference when working with the public. Unit 3, *Applying Your Behavior Knowledge*, highlights five skills closely related to basic principles of behavior but which will require a certain stretch to attain such as managing difficult people, knowledge and sensitivity to diversity, equity, and inclusion and applying behavior analysis in business and industry and in schools. Unit 4 adds five more essential skills for a BCBA to be effective day to day including time management, networking, dealing with stress, and of course, public speaking. In the final section, Unit 5, we propose some skill areas that are rarely taught in graduate programs but are surely going to be essential if a behavior analyst is going to grow professionally over time. These include creative problem-solving, critical thinking, a new chapter on *Design Thinking*, and finally, one of our favorite topics, aggressive curiosity.

A unique feature of this 2nd edition is the addition in each chapter of three sections pertaining to the development of one's career over time. As suggested by Dr. Baker Wright in early interviews regarding our book proposal, we now realize that these 25 Skills are not just for the newly minted BCBA but rather represent a foundation for a full lifetime commitment to the profession of behavior analysis. In short, behavior analysts grow up and with more and more years of experience, they are expected to take on more and more important duties as a behavior analyst supervisor, director, and eventually perhaps as an owner or a CEO. As they advance through the ranks and build up credibility and responsibility, more is expected of them. We characterized this in an early title draft as *25 Skills for the Successful Behavior Analyst: From*

grad school to the C-suite but were persuaded that the latter term might be unfamiliar to potential readers. We firmly believe that as behavior analysts move up the ladder from being fresh out of grad school, to their first job, to becoming a young professional (3–5 years), then mid-career (6–10 years), and finally becoming a senior behavior analyst, that applying these 25 skills will be useful for one’s entire career. Each chapter is set up then to introduce the skill and describe it in some detail and then provide possible elaborations for each of the subsequent maturations in professional development.

We hope that you enjoy this 2nd edition as much as we have in envisioning this development and maturation of behavior analysis and that you will find it useful as a guide to professional growth over your entire 25–30-year career. We have high hopes for the future development of our field and wish you well in whatever career path you choose and look forward to seeing you at future professional conferences.

—Jon S. Bailey and Mary R. Burch
August 2022

REFERENCE

Cooper, J.O., Heron, T. E., & Heward, W. L. (2020). *Applied Behavior Analysis*. 3rd edition. Pearson Education, Inc.: Hoboken, NJ.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Baker Wright who has taken over the helm of BMC after Maxin Reiss's untimely death. In early discussions with him about our plans to revise the 25 Skills book his first comment was, "You know that this isn't just a book for grad students, I've assigned it to my staff including those BCBA's with several years' experience. I think you need to describe how you think these fundamental professional skills can be useful at any stage of a person's career." After giving it some thought, we agreed on four benchmark stages of a behavior analyst's career as described in the Preface to the Second Edition. Other colleagues looked at drafts of chapter titles and made great suggestions for additions and deletions: Missy Olive, Dawn Bailey, and Kim Lucker-Greene's input early on helped us formulate the ultimate chapter lineup. Former students, now successful professional behavior analysts, read drafts of chapters and offered suggestions for improvement: Kolton Sellers and Hope McNally, we thank you for your dedication to ABA and your time providing expert input. Thanks also go to Loren Eighmie, a former student who kindly shared her complex session schedules to illustrate the busy calendar that behavior analysts must manage.

Finally, I would like to thank Sinan Turnacioglu, MD for educating me about his groundbreaking *Floreo* virtual reality device that could revolutionize behavior analysis treatment, as well as Einar Ingvarsson, PhD Director of Clinical Services at Virginia Institute of Autism and Kathleen Kariel, BCBA, Clinical Director who were so kind as to share the first behavioral data using this device; this was a mind-expanding experience. Thank you.

Unit

One

Essential Professional Skills

A BCBA-D who supervises newly graduated BCBA's at a large ABA firm was overheard to say to a colleague at a conference:

Someone in my position needs to know what to watch for in new hires just out of grad school. They can *talk* about behavior, but still need mentoring, especially on specialty areas, and they need training on our company's procedures. Most of our new hires are articulate and enthusiastic, but they need practice communicating with parents and caregivers.

Our new hires are well-trained in ethics related to the Code, but we see them needing coaching when it comes to their own ethics, as in, don't promise more than you can deliver and don't discuss clients with anyone else.

They usually understand “Think Function” related to clients, but they still need reminders about the function of stakeholder behaviors and especially their *own* behaviors.

But they are motivated and eager to learn. With good supervision, I feel that these new graduates will develop broader skills over time.

1

Professional Etiquette (Behaviors)

FRESH OUT OF GRAD SCHOOL, FIRST JOB

By the time you decide to pursue a career in behavior analysis, you will be aware of the many tasks that will come with your new job. Completing assessments, designing behavior programs, meeting with families, supervising RBTs, and evaluating client progress, are just a few of the behavior analytic skills you will need.

In addition to these technical skills, there will be several other critical skills required for you to be successful in the behavior

analytic workplace. One of these skill sets is *professional etiquette*. Professional etiquette is the way in which we conduct ourselves in a professional or business setting. Being polite and having good manners are the foundation of etiquette.

Key etiquette behaviors in the professional setting include using appropriate greetings and introductions, refraining from gossiping, demonstrating good manners during business meals

Behavior analysts are in a rather intense competition with people in other professional services, and even though this has been the case for quite some time now, some behavior analysts might not be aware of this development.

and events, listening, and not interrupting, turning off your cell phone during meetings and business meals, dressing appropriately for work, being punctual, communicating well (without jargon), using good eye-contact, and having a warm smile for most occasions.

Good etiquette also involves showing you are respectful and genuinely interested in others and remembering that please and thank you go a long way. Behavior analysts who have good professional etiquette skills create great first impressions by making others feel at ease. Your good etiquette leads to others thinking of you as likable, capable, and professional. Depending on the number of years you have been a behavior analyst, the etiquette skills related to you may vary.

Since graduate schools focus almost entirely on the science and technology of behavior analysis, little time is spent on the professional skills needed to effectively bring our talents to our consumers. As a field, behavior analysts have a long way to go in terms of our image. If we compare applied behavior analysis to premium professional services regarding how we present ourselves to our potential clients, there is often quite a contrast. Our “service representatives,” Board Certified Behavior Analysts[®], are often young people with a casual attitude and even more casual attire. They often address their professors on a first-name basis, and this casual demeanor extends to the cavalier use of behavioral jargon in conversations with consumers and other professionals. While not intentional, these behaviors can be off-putting.

Behavior analysts are in a rather intense competition with people in other professional services, and even though this has been the case for quite some time now, some behavior analysts might not be aware of this development. The greatest pressure seems to be, somewhat surprisingly, in autism treatment. This is somewhat difficult to believe because from an evidentiary perspective there is essentially no competition. No other treatment currently available has the breadth and depth of applied research showing reliable, clinically significant changes in behavior. Unfortunately,