

# Green Box ABA

Parent Newsletter



## Welcome 2021

Back in January, I decided that 2020 would be the “Year of the Parent.” ABA therapy is about more than just the time we spend with your child. The more that we support and empower you, the more successful therapy will be. Of course, in January 2020, there was no way to know that as the year progressed you would find yourself functioning as a teacher’s aide for virtual school and facing new challenges as your child’s routines were altered and their activities restricted. The “Year of the Parent” took on new meaning.

During 2020, we increased the publication rate of the Parent Newsletter from quarterly to monthly to provide you with more timely and frequent information. We accelerated the pace and frequency of the Parent Educational Workshops which had been scheduled quarterly. Throughout, the goal was to not flood you with information at a time when you were being flooded from other sources, but to make sure that you had access to information and tools that could help. Behind the scenes, the Behavior Analysts were spending time learning more about how to take their parent support skills to the next level with an increased focus on meeting families “where they are,” which has been especially important during the pandemic.

We hope that you discovered some useful information through our 2020 Parent Workshops. We know that the scheduling for live workshops (Saturday mornings) does not fit with everyone’s schedules, so

recorded versions of the workshops are available under “For Parents” at [Greenboxaba.org](http://Greenboxaba.org) and on our YouTube Channel (Green Box ABA). And feel free to share the recordings if you know a parent who might be interested in one of the topics. We will be going back to the quarterly schedule with the first workshop of 2021, which focuses on toileting challenges, such as daytime accidents and bedwetting.

The Parent Newsletter also returns to a quarterly schedule, with issues in January, April, July, and October. The newsletter will continue to be a mix of Green Box-specific information and general interest articles that often include tips and strategies (for example, see the “Making Habits Stick” article on the next page!).

On an individual level, you can expect that your Behavior Analyst will continue to work closely with you, as you are an integral part of your child’s behavior change plan. There are some new initiatives on that front as well, all of which are designed to ensure that ABA therapy fits your unique situation.

Let’s be honest, 2020 threw us enough curveballs to last a lifetime. Head into 2021 knowing that you are weathering that storm and can face any challenges ahead!

—Dr. Kaminski

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January 2021

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Parent Educational Workshop  
Oops! Managing Toileting Accidents and Problems  
Saturday, January 23, 2021 9:00—10:00am  
Via Zoom



New habits require repetition. Lots of repetition. Give your child (or yourself) lots of opportunities to practice.

## New Year's Resolutions: Making Habits Stick

The start of a new year is traditionally a time to focus on a “new start,” often in the form of making a “New Year’s Resolution.” You might pledge to eat healthier, exercise more frequently, or drink less coffee. The gym sees a huge spike in new customers and it is hard to find an open treadmill. At least for a month or so. And after that the gym collects monthly fees from people who had good intentions.

Why is it so hard to “stick with it” and what does that have to do with our kids? If you are like many people when you start at the gym, set a goal and maybe a system to support it. You might even promise yourself a treat of some kind if you meet the goal. With determination, you may stick with it until you meet the goal. There will always be a handful of people for whom it becomes a new habit, but for many, the resolution will quickly fall by the wayside. If it is this hard for *us* to ingrain new habit and working on changing, just imagine how hard it is for a kid who doesn’t see why cleaning up their toys is a good habit to have!

New Year’s resolutions have similarities to token systems and self-management systems in ABA therapy. Let’s say that you want your child to (1) make their bed, (2) pick up their toys, and (3) use their napkin during dinner. A “token chart” is set up and it includes some incentive, a “reward,” for completing the requirements of the token chart. Beds will be made, toys picked up, and napkins used as long as the reward is something that they are motivated to earn. But is that enough to develop new habits? If the system in place is consistent and the reward remains a motivator, we are going to see the behavior that we want. But what we really want is tidy beds, toy-free floors, and used napkins even when there is no promised reward.

How can we turn these things into habits

that last? There are several strategies that are used in ABA. The first is to change the requirements to earn the reward, requiring more tokens to earn it. In ABA, we call this “thinning.” Theoretically, “thinning” works. But to the child earning tokens it seems kind of, well, unfair. “I have been doing what you asked and now you want me to do *even more* of that for the same reward.” Outcome: unhappy child.

Another strategy is to make the reward less predictable. If your child originally earned the reward after 10 tokens, surprise your child with the reward after only 5 tokens. But then the next time, they need more than 10 tokens – maybe 12 or 13. By making it less predictable, it is easier to slowly increase the number of tokens needed. To your child, because sometimes only a few tokens are needed, the system seems pretty sweet.

But, to successfully remove the system entirely, there needs to be other, more natural, rewards for the behavior. Going back to the gym example, the person most likely to continue going to the gym in February is the one who starts to feel healthier and enjoys their time on the treadmill. Help your child identify good things that come from having their toys picked up (is it easier to find a toy they are looking for?) and it will be more likely that they will pick up their toys without a token system. Those things, the natural outcomes of the behavior, need to become important for the behavior to last.

Of course, creating new habits is complex business, and the above tips are simplified. But new routines *can* become habits. Goals help. Rewards help. Practice helps (the more often you do it, the more likely it will become a habit!). It might not be easy, but it will be worth it.

## Meet Our Staff!

### Meet Clara!

#### How do you describe your job?

I always tell my friends I have the coolest job-I get to play all day!

#### Where did you grow up?

I grew up right here in Northern Virginia, in Woodbridge.

#### What are some of your favorite things to do while you are not at work?

I love exploring different kinds of art-I'm very into sculpting right now, and I really enjoy painting. I'm also on the board of the inclusive theater nonprofit Heart House Inclusive Productions.

#### Who would you most like to swap places with for a day?

I know this isn't a person, but I would love to switch places with a house cat. I feel like I would nail everything on a cat's schedule (nap, yell for food, wreak havoc), and personally I think I would be adorable.

#### If you could visit anywhere in the world you've never been, where would you go?

I'd like to visit Japan! I've never been outside of North America, and I think Japan is neat.

#### What is your secret talent that no one knows about?

I don't know how secret it is, but I do a pretty good impression of Gollum from the Lord of the Rings (editor's note: also a pretty good Owen Wilson)



#### Which 4 people (living or dead), would you most like to eat dinner with?

I'd like to eat dinner with Diogenes of Sinope, Carrie Fisher, Nicolas Cage, and Dolly Parton. I feel like we'd either end up best friends or mortal enemies.

#### If you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be?

I'd like to take a painting class! Or explore abandoned buildings.

#### If you could only eat one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Definitely sushi! Especially spicy shrimp rolls.



The theatre that Clara mentioned (which, if you remember from the November 2020 newsletter, Eva is also involved with) is Heart House Inclusive Productions, which was created to help integrate actors and performers with disabilities into mainstream theater. HHIP envisions theater-goers enjoying performances which include actors with a wide variety of talents.

Productions are on hold, due to social gathering restrictions, but check out HHIP at:

<https://www.hearthouseip.org/>

## Communication

To make sure that your needs and questions are addressed in an appropriate and timely manner, please use the following guide:

### **General questions about services:**

Main Office: [greenboxaba@gmail.com](mailto:greenboxaba@gmail.com); 571-297-4308

### **Cancellations:**

Contact your therapists and BCBA/BCaBA

### **Questions/issues related to copays/invoices:**

Main Office: [greenboxaba@gmail.com](mailto:greenboxaba@gmail.com); 571-297-4308

### **Clinical Administration:**

Required testing

Service authorizations

Clinical Assistant: [tmcrae@greenboxaba.com](mailto:tmcrae@greenboxaba.com); 571-297-4308

### **Scheduling:**

Scheduling Specialist: [msauter@greenboxaba.com](mailto:msauter@greenboxaba.com); 571-297-4308

### **Clinical and behavioral concerns:**

Your BCBA/BcaBA

Management is also available, in the event that an issue cannot be resolved with the departments above. Contact the main office to speak with or leave a message for:

Carl Dzyak, CEO

Chris Richardson, COO

Barbara Kaminski, Clinical Director

