

Tips for working as a RBT

Working in ABA can be one of the most rewarding careers out there. You are able to make meaningful change on a regular basis and every day is different! However, being new to the field can be a little scary; there are so many things to consider and working in clients' homes can make things tricky. Below are some tips to get you off on the right foot.

- **Ask if you should take off your shoes.**
 - This may seem like a simple idea, but when you are standing in a client's doorway you are still making a first impression. Some clients feel very strongly about their no-shoe policy. Use this as an opportunity to show social awareness and professional right from the onset.
- **Ask which rooms are available during therapy sessions.**
 - Many of our protocols use natural environment teaching and this means that the sessions could potentially migrate throughout the house. Finding out early which rooms are available and which are off-limits is a sign that you respect and understand the necessity of professional boundaries, while acknowledging that you spend a lot of time in the family's personal space.
- **Ask about the rule for snacks.**
 - You may not be using edibles as reinforcement during therapy, but the session may be occurring during a snack time or sometimes a child will ask for a snack from their therapists knowing that they are not supposed to. Don't be the therapist who is found digging through the refrigerator who then has to explain that the child basically tricked them. If a snack is okay, some families will want you to help get the snack and some families will want to get it themselves. Being mindful of this will once again help you avoid an uncomfortable situation.
- **Ask about general house rules.**
 - Every family is different. It's impossible to predict all of the different idiosyncrasies (for example, expected manners, language, rules about pets) at the very beginning of a professional relationship. If you have a hard time remembering the different rules for all of your clients, write yourself a note.
- **Dress appropriately.**
 - The dress code is relaxed but modest. Remember that you may end up crawling on the floor or running around outside! And remember that you are also interacting with parents.
- **Follow scheduled session times.**
 - Don't be early or stay later than scheduled (unless there is an emergency situation, in which case, text the supervising BCBA or Clinical Director). Use the last 10 minutes of your session to wrap up any data collection, notes, and graphing and to tell caregivers how the session went.
- **Put away anything that you used during the session.**
 - Leave the space exactly as you found it!

- **Know your team.**
 - Make sure to exchange contact information with the parents/caregivers. And if you don't already have contact info for other RBTs on the case get it!
 - There will be a contact form in the front of the program book
- **Know where to find the things you need.**
 - If you are keeping materials and/or the program book at the house. Pick a spot to keep them and make sure that everyone on the team knows where to find them.
- **Be positive when talking to caregivers.**
 - If discussing problem behaviors that occurred during the session, use a neutral tone of voice and discuss how you managed the behaviors. Don't say the child had a "bad" day!
- **Don't share personal information with parents/caregivers!**
 - Be polite and friendly but respect and maintain boundaries. Remember that we are services providers not friends.
- **Don't do anything that makes you uncomfortable.**
 - For example, ask for guidance before implementing big/new behavior plans or toileting plans.
 - If the parents suggest something that makes you uncomfortable, talk to your BCBA
- **Don't be afraid to talk.**
 - Even with non-vocal clients. It may seem uncomfortable at first, talking with someone who doesn't talk back, but it helps with language learning and staying engaged.
- **Be focused when you debrief with parents.**
 - Avoid saying the child had a "good day" or a "bad day"
 - Pick one or two specific encounters in the session that were particularly relevant to the goals and describe those to the parents.
- **Focus on fun during pairing.**
 - Don't stress about implementing programs while you are in the pairing process. Pairing is a part a therapy, so don't feel like you aren't working if early sessions consist of playing and fun.
- **Be an ongoing source of reinforcement.**
 - Even after you get started implementing programs in sessions, don't be afraid to do "silly" or active (but safe) things during the session.
- **Program book is a great resource**
 - Contains information about how each program should be ran, the data that should be taken, graphing information, and master criteria
 - If you have a question first review the program book then if you cannot find the answer then contact your BCBA
 - Will contain contact information for parents and other team members

