

Training program for dealing with behavioral problems is available for home computers

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A full, home-computer version of Behavior Breakthroughs, an interactive program developed by Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), is now available to help train parents, caretakers and others who work with children and adults with behavioral problems.

The program uses game-based strategies and 3-D imagery to provide the tools that parents, teachers and professionals who care for [children](#) with [autism](#), attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder ([ADHD](#)) or other disruptive behaviors need to intervene effectively.

The release in April coincides with National Autism Awareness Month, according to Roel Almendarez, a senior research engineer in SwRI's Aerospace Electronics, Systems Engineering and Training Division. An abbreviated version was released earlier this year as an iPhone app, and the complete program is now available for PC and Mac-based computers.

"This program takes game-based learning in a new direction, providing direct, practical help for parents and caregivers based on sound science and the advice of leading psychologists," Almendarez said. "By interactively applying interventions in simulated scenarios and immediately experiencing the consequences, users can quickly learn the appropriate techniques and timing necessary to handle problems such as tantrums and self-injurious behaviors in a variety of everyday situations," he added.

"The goal is to provide parents and caregivers with an opportunity to learn and practice the use of 'positive reinforcement' and 'extinction' techniques to encourage behavior they want to see increase and reduce behavior they want to see decrease," said Dr. Cheryl Fielding, a board certified behavior analyst and associate professor in The University of Texas-Pan American's (UTPA) Educational Psychology Department.

The program is based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and more than 40 years of empirically validated research that supports behavior intervention strategies developed by professional psychologists and educators.

"It provides an environment in which caregivers learn to effectively implement proven behavioral strategies and techniques," Fielding said.

As users progress through the training, they are engaged in more challenging scenarios to further develop their skills and intuition.

Behavior Breakthroughs introduces you to Asa, the program's simulated boy, and requires you to master different ABA skills to alter Asa's behavior. The use of [behavior](#) techniques such as shaping, chaining, correction, discrete trial, prompt fading and errorless teaching are introduced in each of the six levels.

More information: The full version can be purchased from Amazon at www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004X6UGBK . An abbreviated version of the app is available from iTunes as a free download at itunes.apple.com/app/id418987677 . Facebook and Twitter links are, respectively, www.facebook.com/behaviorbreakthroughs and twitter.com/bbthrougths .

Provided by Southwest Research Institute

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