



The ONTABA

# Analyst



## Meet the Directors

How well **do you know**  
**your board?**

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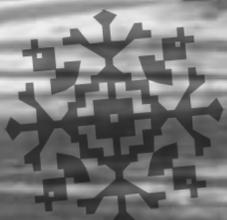


Photos from the  
annual conference

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## Happy New Year

# ONTABA!



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# From the President's Desk

**Editor's note:** For Jen's inaugural 'From the President's Desk', I thought it would be interesting and fun to interview her and being the amicable and cooperative person she is, she agreed. Enjoy! *Lesley*

## Interview with ONTABA's new President, Jennifer Cunningham, MADS, BCBA

**I'm still waiting on the calculations from NASA so please remind me—how long have you been involved and volunteering for the ONTABA board? Give us the play by play.**

(Laughs). I can't actually remember the year anymore but I started off as the Graduate Representative. That year I was assigned as the Chair of the Satellite Committee and I was the "understudy" for the Conference Committee. After that I was acclaimed as the Secretary and took on the Conference Chair position for three years, which was a committee of one for the first two years (laughs). I took one year off and then ran for President-Elect, so that's a 2-year position during which time I was again the Chair or Co-Chair of the Conference Committee and now here I am in my first of two years as President.

**In your full-time job, your work is mostly community-based—working with parents and consulting to childcare centres which really means that you get your job done on someone else's turf. In my humble opinion, this is where 'soft skills' can make or break a consultation in trying to achieve behaviour change. Can you comment on this?** I do spend a lot of time working on someone else's turf; which I think is a familiar position to many ONTABA members so the unique challenges in this type of

work environment are no secret. The program that I work for is one of the only in Ontario that has partnered directly with its region's respective child care centres, so we provide consultation as part of a model of service that uses the principles of behaviour analysis. We receive referrals for kids with and without diagnoses. My program also has a formal collaboration with the Children's Aid Society (CAS) so we provide consultation to foster parents, kinship caregivers, and adoptive parents.

I really enjoy consulting—it can be challenging but also very rewarding. To be successful as external consultants, one of our responsibilities is to know the environment. For child care centres, we need to know the requirements of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) and the legislation and policies that they have to work within. For foster parents, kinship



caregivers, and adoptive parents, they too have responsibilities, various training requirements, and other stressors. We need to know what's on their plate so that we can try to alleviate some of the stress or barriers in working together, or at the very least, we can try to understand the very real challenges that they face in engaging in a behaviour consultation.

Once you're on site, the key is to establish rapport with the staff and the kids too. For us behaviour analysts, you know that's going to involve some pairing with known reinforcers. It's time well spent and it can start the minute you go to complete indirect assessments—start a conversation, get an idea of what they think about a child's behaviour and what they feel like they need to be able to make positive change, take time to provide feedback on data collection and of course point out when something is done well. I think the best way to view a consultation is to see it as a true collaboration—I know science of behaviour and I can share that but at

the same time, the staff on site are experts in their own field and they know the child. It's definitely not one-sided.

**The last few years for ONTABA have seen a notable increase in terms of public presence and growth in membership. You've been a part of this change at the board level, can you comment on this growth and what do you envision for our organization for the next few years?** The growth that has taken place is unlike anything I've seen before...in anything! (Laughs). The amount of work completed by the board, committees and task forces is awe-inspiring—I have to remind myself that all these people are doing this work unpaid! Honestly, I stand in admiration of all the work and achievements to date. Looking ahead, this is something that we really have to consider as we set goals—can we do the work at a rate that is realistic for volunteers to achieve? The gains that we saw over the last few years are amazing and these gains have set the course for us to do amazing things in the future, we can do it but from the outset we need to ensure that we set a realistic pace as an organization of volunteers. Having said that, it's not like we are grinding to a halt, the sheer size of our membership and the commitments that we have require that we stay on course. To this end, as mentioned at the 2017 AGM, the board will be exploring the possibility of hiring a paid staff person and how this move could support the board, committees, and the membership. As an organization, we are entering new waters and we need to ensure that we have the capacity to achieve our organizational goals.

**I think a question that has been on**

**everyone's mind is: How do you feel about being Louis Busch's successor?** (Laughs). I would say that I definitely have big shoes to fill! In some ways, as President, I suppose I will be the new "face" of ONTABA but when I say "I" or "me" I really mean the board as a whole as we all share the vision that has been set out in the Strategic Plan. It has been a pleasure to work along side Louis. I think people will notice that our styles of leadership are different but ultimately my role is to continue to pursue the goals that have already been established at the board level.

In terms of leadership skills, with each new board and new President, including Louis of course, I have learned so much. There are many different ways to achieve any one goal and in my estimation each new President and each new group of board members for that matter has its own distinct way of functioning, interacting, and achieving its goals. I want to carry forward everything I've learned along the way and I'm excited about applying my knowledge and skill set to advance our organization and behaviour analysis as a field.

**Given the recent warp speed pace of many board committees and task forces and the persistent fear and opportunity for public criticism (thank you social media), I can totally understand why ONTABA members may feel intimidated or inhibited from stepping forward and volunteering. What is your advice to someone who wants to support the cause but has not yet taken a run at a board position?** We recently put a call out for volunteers for committees and this is probably the easiest way to get involved as a starting point. Choose a committee that is particularly meaningful to

you or one that you know you can bring a unique set of skills to. If you're looking for more information or if you have questions about "life on the board", talk to a past or current board member—definitely don't feel intimidated; we are all behaviour analysts working for the same cause.

**A long, long time ago when I was teaching one of my very first classes at George Brown College, in spite of my very poor memory, I do remember you as a young student in that class. What stood out to me the most was that you were quiet and kind and frequently signed off your written submissions with a smiley face beside your name (laughs). Tell us about how you got interested in ABA and your experience as a student new to the field.** The honest truth is that I was in my final year of a degree in Psychology at the University of Waterloo and I really wasn't sure what my next move was going to be after graduating. A friend of mine showed me an advertisement in the university newspaper for the Behaviour Science Technology (BST) program at St. Lawrence College. I was definitely interested in working with people and I had volunteer work experience with children with behaviour difficulties so I looked into it a little further and discovered the BST program at George Brown College which was a little closer to home. They were hosting an information session so my friend and I decided to attend. Drew McNamara delivered the session so as you can imagine he opened my eyes to the world of behaviour analysis. What can I say? I fell in love with the science of behaviour thanks to the amazing professors who taught me during my time at George Brown College (the ones at

Brock of course continued to foster the love). So, I applied to the 10-month post-graduate program and got in. Once enrolled I remember feeling like I was opened up to a whole new world; not just by the science and technology but also by the breadth of application as my professors described their clinical work experiences. The potential that this field has to improve the quality of life of so many people is really what captured me.

In spite of our growth, the world of ABA here in Ontario is still so small in some ways. Although I was in the 10-month program at George Brown, some of our classes were combined with the students who were in their 2nd year of the traditional 3-year BST program. Being creatures of habit we typically sat in the same spots in class and without fail I always sat behind this guy with long dark hair, typically in a braid. He was obviously doing all the assigned readings very diligently because he would always raise his hand and ask these impressive and thought-provoking questions. I would think to myself, *“Who is this guy?”* (Laughs). This guy was of course, Louis Busch.

**That’s priceless! And for the record, do you still sign off with smiley faces?** (Laughs). Yes, only for non-professional communication, ok well sometimes I sign emails to my colleagues with a smile...plus now we’ve got emojis!

**Alright, back to business—what’s the game plan for the next two years?** Well, we’ve already established our Strategic Plan so all the work that we will be doing over the next two years will be achieving the goals indicated in the plan. We will continue with the governance structure that is in place and work to expand it.

We will continue to promote and expand behaviour analysis in Ontario and this is where regulation is going to be so important for all of us. We are eagerly awaiting the decision from the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Board (HPRAC) and in the meantime we will continue to move forward with the Private Act and Title Protection. We will continue to engage our stakeholders and maintain our already established working relationships with key ministries such as the Ministry of Children and

Youth Services (MCYS), the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), and the Ministry of Education (MOE).

In terms of exciting new projects, probably the top two are the Ontario Scientific Expert Task Force for the Treatment of Challenging Behaviour (OSETT-CB) report and the Jurisprudence exam, both are currently underway.

So far as the volunteers of our committees and task force, the board will continue to support them in setting realistic goals and achieving them. Whether ONTABA moves forward with a plan for a paid staff person is a decision on the horizon for us. Later this year we will be revising our Standards of Practice, the organization’s Mission, and updating our Bylaws. Finally, we will develop new policies, not for the needless sake of writing policies but rather to ensure effective and efficient processes to support the current and future growth of our organization.



# Announcements

Got something for an upcoming issue?

Love reading and talking about research articles?

Do you enjoy reading and discussing research articles? Do you enjoy learning with and from your peers? If yes, the Professional Development Committee would love to chat with you! We are looking for people to facilitate learning events this year. For more information, email: [professionaldevelopment@ontaba.org](mailto:professionaldevelopment@ontaba.org)

The ONTABA Analyst is produced quarterly. The remaining issues for 2018 will be released in the last week of **April, July, and October**. Interested? Send it to us! [newsletter@ontaba.org](mailto:newsletter@ontaba.org)

Suggestions or feedback?

Could we really call ourselves behaviour analysts if we didn’t want feedback? [contact@ontaba.org](mailto:contact@ontaba.org) or [newsletter@ontaba.org](mailto:newsletter@ontaba.org)

# Meet the Directors

**Note from the Newsletter Committee:** You voted and here is your new board! Instead of doing the expected headshot with a bio, we thought we'd do something more interesting. Enjoy! *The Newsletter Committee*

Match the ONTABA Director  
to the correct personal fun fact



- A. Took archery lessons because of a love for Robin Hood.
- B. Likes to eat Nutella with a spoon.
- C. Has 3 citizenships.
- D. Is a huge Harry Potter fan.
- E. Is a highland dancer.
- F. Didn't speak a word of English until the age of 10 (moved to Canada at that time).
- G. Loves to play guitar.
- H. Used to be a chef.
- I. Likes to run Ultra Trail Marathons.
- J. Is secretly obsessed with Grey's Anatomy.
- K. Loves cheese so much that wedding cake was made of stacked cheese.



Stefanie Cali



Cheryl Dore



Jeffrey Esteves



Milena Kako



Raluca Nuta



Sarah O'Donoghue



Joan Broto



Kendra Thomson



Jennifer Cunningham



Jason Bosett



Shiri Bartman

**Answers:**

- A. Jeffrey
- B. Milena
- C. Sarah

- D. Joan
- E. Kendra
- F. Shiri

- G. Raluca
- H. Cheryl
- I. Jason

- J. Jennifer
- K. Stefanie



# Committee Updates



## ASD Task Force

ONTABA formed the ASD Task Force in April of 2016 to support policy makers in developing ASD services that reflect the values of behaviour analysts and contribute to the best possible outcomes for consumers of behaviour analytic services.

In anticipation of a busy year ahead, we sent out a call for additional task force members in November. We are pleased to welcome the following new members:

**Laura Campbell**  
**Dr. Nancy Freeman**  
**Samantha Herberman**  
**Rachel Koffman**  
**Kristina McAdam**

They join the remaining ASD task force members, including: Dr. Julie Koudys, Jane Lee, Nancy Marchese, Kim Trudeau-Craig, and Kevin Shama.

Our focus over the next year will include sharing our expertise with policy makers and stakeholders regarding behaviour analytic services for children and youth with ASD, specifically in relation to the new Ontario Autism Program. We will also further develop connections with stakeholder groups, including parent organizations and other professional disciplines.

We look forward to providing additional updates throughout the year.

Sincerely,

Carobeth Zorzos  
 Chair, ASD Task Force



## OSETT-CB Task Force

Over the past several months, the Ontario Scientific Expert Task Force for the Treatment of Challenging Behaviour (OSETT-CB) has been completing a research synthesis on evidence-based practices for treating challenging behaviour in individuals with intellectual disabilities with the goal of disseminating best practice guidelines for Ontario's behaviour analysts, families, community partners, and policy makers. Working with professionals across the province, the committee has developed the core elements of the working document. These elements will form the basis of the best practice guidelines and are related to the development and maintenance of challenging behaviour in individuals with disabilities, the current approach to challenging behaviour in Ontario, structural and functional assessment of challenging behaviour, efficacy of treatment approaches based on applied behaviour analysis, efficacy of eclectic interventions, and supervision requirements for practicing behaviour analysts. Our goal for the coming months is to establish the best practice guidelines in a manner that is consistent with advancing behaviour analysis in the province. Sub-committees have been created to develop, refine, and establish the various best practice guidelines with respect to the core elements.

Committee co-chair Alison Cox was awarded a grant from the Society for the Advancement of Behavior Analysis (SABA) in 2017 to fund the OSETT-CB project. In addition, the task force has received a grant from Western University that is aimed to assist in funding the project and support with its distribution. We graciously thank both SABA and Western University for their contributions.

Sincerely,

Val Saini  
 Co-Chair, OSETT-CB Task Force

## Education Task Force

Over the course of the Fall 2017 the Education Task Force prepared and disseminated ONTABA's position statement on [Violence in Schools](#). The statement was sent to various ministry and union representatives in the province, as well as to education advocacy groups and professional councils. The statement will be sent to the attention of each school board's Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and superintendents in charge of student services (special education or otherwise). In the meantime, members of the task force continue to have discussions and get updates from the Ministry of Education and union representatives regarding the new ABA pilot in Ontario's schools for students with ASD. The task force continues to promote ABA technologies for all students and to that end, the task force will aim to prepare a more comprehensive document summarizing ABA teaching practices in school settings.

Sincerely,

Tricia Lee Keller  
Co-Chair, Education Task Force

## Professional Practice

The Professional Practice Committee (PPC) would like to introduce our new committee co-chairs, Shiri Bartman and Jason Bosett. We are currently working on the finishing touches to our Standards of Practice and hope to be bringing this to the membership in the near future.

We would also like to invite our membership to submit any professional practice questions to [professionalpractice@ontaba.org](mailto:professionalpractice@ontaba.org) and we will endeavour to answer your questions or connect you to evidenced-based practice resources.

We look forward to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Your Professional Practice Committee

## Professional Regulation

It is an exciting time for behaviour analysts in the province. As you are aware, the Ontario Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC) is currently reviewing the risks associated with the practice of ABA and options for oversight for behaviour analysts in the province. The council's decision is to be announced on January 31, 2018. The Professional Regulation Committee is hopeful that the decision will be favourable and will move the province toward autonomous regulation of behaviour analysts. Thank you to all members who took part in the process in various ways.

The PRC Co-Chairs and the ONTABA President met with HPRAC on November 14, 2017 to present ONTABA's position on regulation. We followed up with a [letter](#) which was based on the [position statement](#) that was sent to the membership.

As per previous membership updates, the PRC has been in the process of finalizing the private act for title protection to table in the legislature before the election in May 2018. A private act can be implemented as an interim measure while public regulation is being pursued, and can provide consumers with information regarding which professionals have met certain criteria such as professional certification (e.g., by the BACB), up-to-date professional liability insurance, a clear vulnerable sector criminal records check, and completion of ethics and jurisprudence training specific to clinical practice in Ontario. We are currently incorporating legal feedback on the private act and soliciting political support to sponsor and table it. We will continue to provide updates as they become available.

Sincerely,

Your Professional Regulation Committee



## Membership, Awards, and Recruitment

**A**s of early January 2018, we are currently at 1113 members, with 570 of those members being new to ONTABA.

- 821 Full
- 204 Student
- 28 Sustaining
- 57 Affiliate
- 3 Emeritus

As we move into the new year, we hope to see that number grow even higher as we continue to hold recruitment events throughout the year and expand our membership benefits.

We would also like to congratulate all of the recipients of the awards presented at the 2017 annual conference:

- Dr. Julie Koudys was the recipient of the Research Award.
- Dr. Sylvain Roy was the recipient of the Behaviour Analysis Ally Award.
- Jen Porter was the recipient of the Teaching Award.
- Sarah Davis was the recipient of the Student Award and a \$1000 scholarship.

Sincerely,

Your Membership, Awards, and Recruitment Committee



L to R: Dr. Julie Koudys, Nancy Marchese

Photo credit: Louis Busch



L to R: Sarah Davis, awesome novelty cheque, Louis Busch

Photo credit: Lesley Barreira

## Public and Community Relations

**T**he Public and Community Relations Committee (PCRC) is dedicated to staying connected with the membership and we will be welcoming new volunteers in the coming months. The PCRC has four sub-committees: **Parent Outreach, Marketing, Media Response,** and **Events.** One of our goals is to bring members together, along with the annual ONTABA social we are planning a few other fun events in the coming months. Stay tuned for an exciting 2018!

Sincerely,

Your Public and Community Relations Committee

Photo credit:  
Lesley Barreira



L to R: Jennifer Cunningham, Jen Porter

Photo credit:  
Lisa Orsi



L to R: Louis Busch, Dr. Sylvain Roy

# Conference

**T**he 2018 Annual Conference is less than 11 months away and we are already hard at work organizing the event. The conference will take place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre on **Thursday, December 6th and Friday, December 7th, 2018.**

We are currently reviewing potential speakers based on suggestions from the membership. Stay tuned for updates regarding speakers, the call for papers, and conference pricing.

A big thank you to everyone who filled out the 2017 conference feedback survey. We are reviewing the results and will incorporate your suggestions to make the 2018 conference a great event. See you in December!

Sincerely,

Your Conference Committee

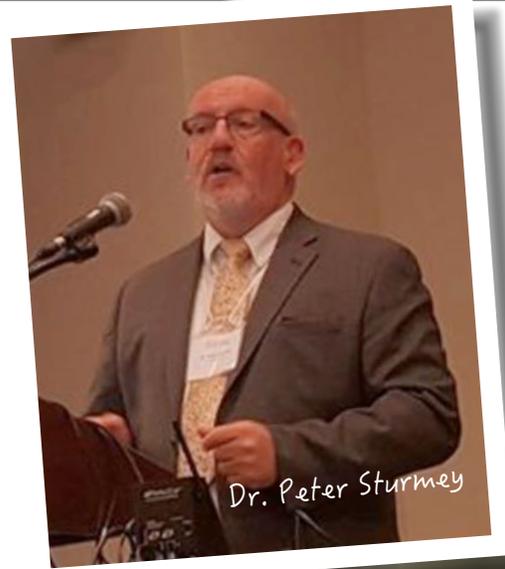


Photo credit:  
Louis Busch

Dr. Peter Sturmey



Dr. Larry Williams

Photo credit: Lesley Barreira



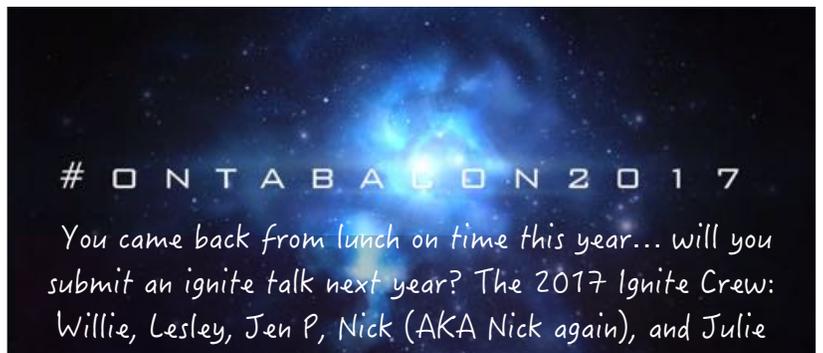
Dr. Pat Friman

Photo credit: Louis Busch



Dr. Merrill Winston (rapping!)

Photo credit: Lesley Barreira





**Behavioural cusp · n. 1** | be.hav'ioʊr.al cusp | /br'hɛɪvjər(ə)l kʌsp/

# The Cusp

"Any behavior change that brings the organism's behavior into contact with new contingencies that have even more far-reaching consequences...a cusp is a special instance of behavior change, a change crucial to what can come next." (Rosales-Ruiz & Baer, 1997, p. 533)

## Behaviour Analysis in Ontario: The people behind the work

**Editor's note:** *Some would say he is the most interesting man in the world in behaviour analysis in Ontario so needless to say I couldn't let him escape the crosshairs of the Cusp. Enjoy! Lesley*

**Louis Busch, BST, ABS (H.C.), M.Ed., BCBA**

Louis is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst with the Forensic Dual Diagnosis Specialty Service at the Centre for



Addiction and Mental Health. As part of an interprofessional team, Louis works with individuals living with intellectual disability and complex mental illness to support recovery, mitigate risk, and facilitate successful community living. Louis is a part-time instructor at George Brown College and past President of the Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis.

**What was the highlight or favourite moment during your run as President?** I would have to say the release of the OSETT-ASD report.

The amount of work that went into it, the great people who were involved, and the incredible race against the clock that culminated into this single report; the whole process was exhilarating, in the nerdiest way possible of course. Getting the report into the right hands at the right moment was a small miracle really. It was such a privilege to be working with all of

the expert-level behaviour analysts that came together on the project, it's like getting to tour with your favourite rock band. When the printed copies came out, it was pretty exciting to have the actual document in my hands. Seeing it on the news and debated in the Ontario Legislature were the cherries on top.

**Do you have any advice for the new President?** I think I would say to anyone stepping into the role to build strong partnerships and stay as organized as possible but Jen already does both of those things better than I ever did! Generally speaking, I think it's important to retain the broad focus of our mandate. It's really easy to get caught up in the high profile portfolios that command a lot of attention—for good reason, however, we have a responsibility to lobby and advocate in other areas too. It's hard to be everywhere all at once, but so many populations and social issues could benefit from what we have to offer.

**How has repatriation back to "normal life" been going for you?**

Pretty good so far. There was definitely a brief period of severe ONTABA withdrawal—I wasn't anticipating that (laughs). I'm still doing some ONTABA committee work so I get my fix. After the AGM, I was officially a regular citizen again but I was continuing to post things on the ONTABA Facebook

page. I was chastised by one of my colleagues so I'm working on a differential reinforcement of lower rates of behaviour program right now (laughs). I've got a couple of projects on the go that were on hold for a long time but I've got the time to devote to them now. There are some nights now that I come home after work and I don't have any deadlines screaming in my face, so I can take the night off and binge-watch Game of Thrones with my Lisa. I'm enjoying time with family, reading for fun and even dusting off the old gee-tar now and then. Not too shabby.

**I think a lot of people know you as the (past) President of ONTABA or the organizer for the OBACoP meetings and they may not know that you've been working in the field of mental health for the past 10 years. Tell us how you got into this application of behaviour analysis and also what keeps you there.** I guess like most people in our field nowadays, I started off working with young kids with autism, teaching basic skills and getting them ready for the transition to school. I worked in both home and centre-based programs. I had a few really awesome supervising therapists and I learned a ton. I started working with older kids and teens and as you start working with young adults, more complex challenges like mental health issues and medical complexity tend to

come up. I was also working with Ken Hamilton, providing consultation to various agencies and group homes around Ontario. I mostly summarized data and helped with functional assessments at first, but this is where I got my first exposure to dually diagnosed young adults who were engaging in really severe behaviour problems and that really sparked my interest. Before too long, I got a job at CAMH in the Dual Diagnosis Program. I cut my teeth there so far as navigating interprofessional teamwork and in learning how to teach skills to patients who were not new and young learners. Trying to teach a 65-year old man who has been in and out of institutions his whole life, who has mental health concerns and an acquired brain injury secondary to substance use is a whole other ballgame. The way you conceptualize learning and the impact of the environment is different and you often need to rely on colleagues from other disciplines to get the best possible outcome.

Along the way I had the chance to work with individuals who had contact with the law, either through the forensic mental health or the criminal justice system. I shifted over to work on a locked inpatient unit where all the patients have a disposition with the Ontario Review Board, meaning that they have been found not criminally responsible or unfit to stand trial under the Criminal Code of Canada.

It's a cool opportunity to see how our science can be applicable in complex situations. Regardless of diagnosis and life experiences, people are still learning in their contexts and are impacted by contingencies. We set up token economies and contingency

contracting for people who were thought to be "untreatable" because of psychosis or personality disorder and we can see the effect that positive reinforcement can have on someone's life. To be able to use behavioural principles to aid in recovery is pretty amazing.

One of the great things about behaviour analysis is that if you need a new and different challenge there are so many opportunities to move on to something else—I try to make connections with experienced practitioners, build my scope and learn as much as I can so I can be ready for the next adventure.

**Is there a particular person, paper, or presentation that has really influenced you?** One paper that I've read multiple times and really clung to is Bud Mace's 1988 paper on behavioural momentum and compliance which was translational research; from conceptual work to tested theory in the operant conditioning labs to an applied technology to solve real life problems. The way it was presented—the steps, the outcomes, it was so clear. I read it, I tried it, and it worked! How amazing is it to take a piece of technology that was grown in the lab and then apply it and grow it in real time? Seeing responses get quicker and stronger and just seeing the behaviour take flight is awesome. Being on the ground, seeing the change and its impact on the individuals and their families is what I think most of us are in it for.

**How did you know that behaviour analysis was for you? Was there a particular moment?** Well I think there have been a few moments but I can trace my behaviour analytic inclinations quite far back. I was a

weird kind of kid—growing up in a family with five brothers and two sisters, I was fascinated by the behaviour of others. As a child I attended the lab school daycare at the University of Manitoba, this is actually a story that my mom likes to tell, one day at the playground there were two university students who were there observing and I walked up to them and said "*I know you're watching me.*" For all I know they could have been Garry Martin's or Dicky Yu's students (laughs).

I think I've always been interested in the big question of 'why do we do what we do?' In school, listening to Drew McNamara and Rudy Vogt talk about behaviour analysis they'd get this twinkle in their eye, I was sold. It was easily in the first couple of classes that I knew that I had been a behaviour analyst all along; I just didn't know that there was a name for it. I stumbled onto the BST program at George Brown College. I had actually applied for a Law Clerk program and BST and got into both. I really struggled with which program I was going to choose but I'm really glad that I made the choice that I did, I don't think I would have made a good clerk.

**Any advice to your younger self as a new clinician in the field?** Yes, if I could go back I would slap myself and say something like: "*You don't know half as much as you think you do!*" When I first entered the field I was so passionate about our science but it was to the point of being militant. I can see that now and I can also see it in other behaviour analysts that have had fairly restricted scopes of practice. You know, not even being able to listen to anyone else because we are most right and our 'truth' has the biggest capital 't'. It probably took me way

too long as my younger self to realize that you don't get very far in working with other disciplines that way. I also realized that I missed opportunities for learning a lot of great stuff. If you really want to do better and have the most impact, you need to figure out how behaviour analysis can be integrated with the work of other professionals. On my first 'ride along' with a nurse in the dual diagnosis program, there was this one patient who was repeatedly sticking his hand in his mouth and gagging and laughing and the staff would run over to attend to him. Instantly in my mind, as a naïve behaviour therapist, I'm thinking about attention-maintained

behaviour and I'm going into informal testing mode. Then the nurse said to me "Have you heard of gastroesophageal reflux disease?" I hadn't, but I learned that it's like really intense acid reflux. It's a serious condition and occurs at higher rates in people with developmental disabilities. This patient was prescribed a medication to treat the condition and in two days this long-standing unusual behaviour just evaporated into thin air. It was one of those moments that taught me that there is more benefit to the client when we work together actively and not just in parallel. I spent longer than I should have as a 'lone wolf' who was unwilling to

listen to others. I could have done better for more clients. This does not mean that we should sacrifice our science and rigour for collaborating with other professional disciplines—these things are not mutually exclusive.



Have someone in  
mind for the Cusp?

Let us know, we love suggestions!

[newsletter@ontaba.org](mailto:newsletter@ontaba.org)



# WHAT

## Would You Do?

### Professional and Ethical Issues

**By: Dr. Rosemary Condillac, C.Psych., BCBA-D**

Associate Professor, Centre for Applied Disability Studies  
Brock University

Welcome to the "What Would You Do?" column on ethical and professional dilemmas in ABA. Please submit your questions, issues, dilemmas or tricky situations to [newsletter@ontaba.org](mailto:newsletter@ontaba.org). My responses are my own, and are not intended to represent the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB), ONTABA, or any other organization with whom I am affiliated. Responses should not be taken as specific legal or professional

advice as it is not possible to have or provide enough information in a column of this nature.

*John is a behaviour analyst in private practice, providing behavioural intervention to Sharon, a grade 10 student with an intellectual disability and serious self-injurious behaviour. In addition to being responsible for assessment and developing the treatment plan, he is also responsible to train school staff, family members, and employs the RBTs who provide support in the family home. In December, while providing supervision to the RBT staff, he is asked to train Sharon's brother Kevin who is home from university for the holidays, and will be moving back home in April when he graduates from*

school. John is impressed at how quickly Kevin picks up the programs. He later finds out that Kevin is finishing a degree in behavioural science. John is always looking for well-trained staff, so he suggests that Kevin send him his resume if he is interested in a job when he gets home from school in April. John is excited about this potential new hire, and discusses it with the RBTs. They are concerned that this arrangement might violate the code, but they are unsure how to proceed because John is their supervisor.

What is the problem here? First, the RBTs needs to consider the situation and consult with the Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts (BACB, 2016). The code refers to avoiding multiple relationships (1.06 a & b). They wonders if John entering a relationship with Kevin constitutes a multiple relationship because Sharon is technically the client, not Kevin. It is true that the services being provided are for Sharon, however, Kevin is a close family member who will be living in the house with Sharon. It would be considered a multiple relationship if John were to hire or supervise Sharon's parents (BACB, 2015) so it would serve to reason that hiring her sibling could also have potentially damaging results. First, if John were to hire Kevin to work with Sharon, that would be a clear conflict of interest. Second, if John were to hire Kevin to work with other clients, and the situation didn't work out, there could be a potential impact on John's work with

Sharon. If the business relationship between Kevin and John didn't work, that might impact John's ability to provide services to Sharon and cause an unnecessary interruption in her treatment. If Kevin works for John, even with other clients, might he feel that he could provide direction to RBTs who are supporting his sister?

The BACB Newsletter in October 2015 sheds some more light on this issue with respect to dual relationships. While the article focuses on client's parents, it would stand to reason that many of the points of discussion would generalize to other family members in the home, who are actively involved in the application of the behavioural intervention, and as such would have a dual relationship with the Behaviour Analyst. The article discusses potential violations with client's parents that include supervision for BCBA hours, entering into business partnerships, and other ethical violations relating to conflicts of interest and dual relationships with parents, family members, and close friends of clients.

There is enough potential for harm with this multiple relationship that the RBTs should provide some feedback to John. The RBTs could share the BACB newsletter with John and suggest that he check with BACB before hiring Kevin.



## References

Behavior Analyst Certification Board (2016). Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for Behavior Analysts. Littleton, CO: Author. [bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/161101-experience-standards-english.pdf](http://bacb.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/161101-experience-standards-english.pdf)

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