



What are the differences between Clinical Psychologists and Applied Behavior Analysts?

The fields of psychology and behavior analysis are broad. So for the purpose of answering this question, we will describe the difference between Clinical Psychologists and Applied Behavior Analysts who work to improve socially important behaviors.

Clinical Psychologists:

- Conduct psychological testing and diagnose;
- Believe problem behaviors and psychological distress are caused internally, by faulty thinking or maladaptive-attachment to emotions;
- Conduct an assessment to define thoughts, behaviors, and emotions that led a client to seek help;
- Teach clients to understand the causes of problems;
- Reduce the problems by teaching new ways of thinking that change thoughts, behaviors, and emotions;
- Conduct both assessments and treatments in the therapist's office.

Behavior Analysts

- Look for the causes of behavioral and emotional problems;
- Use observation and measurement of the client's behavior in the problematic situation;
- Work with the client to define specific, observable goals;
- Directly modifies environmental and social conditions (that maintain the behavior) to improve behavior;
- Collect and analyze data to measure the benefits of intervention;
- Conduct assessments and treatments in the situations (e.g., school, community, or client home) where the problems occur.

Although a bit of an overstatement, a Clinical Psychologist approaches change by understanding and changing how the patient feels and thinks and the Behavior Analyst generally approaches change by modifying environmental and social cues that trigger and maintain the behavior.