



A Pioneer in the Field: Remembering Dr. Murray Sidman

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Applied behaviour analysis (ABA) is a relatively young science that studies socially significant behaviour to improve quality of life. In the early 1960's, many researchers and practitioners contributed to shaping this science into what it is today. One of these great minds, Dr. Murray Sidman, passed away last week, at the age of 96.

Who was Dr. Murray Sidman?



Dr. Sidman received a Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University in 1952 and went on to help build the field of ABA, contributing close to 100 peer reviewed publications.

In *Tactics of Scientific Research*, a textbook published in 1960 that is still used today, Dr. Sidman describes guidelines and experimental procedures for studying and measuring behaviour. Although procedures are important, he often pointed out the importance of adapting them to the individual, stating that intervention should be highly individualized if they are to be effective.

Key Message

At a time when there were no published texts on applied behaviour analysis, researchers and practitioners like Dr. Sidman had to seek out effective teaching procedures by trial and error, applying the scientific principles that were known, and adapting them to the needs of the individuals they served. During a lecture, Dr. Sidman offered the following reflection regarding some of the work he had done from 1965 to 1975 in a facility for young boys with intellectual challenges.

“What we had done was to create a community devoted to learning, to change. What we did affected the boys' behaviour, and what the boys did affected *our* behaviour. Everything that happened had an effect on everything else, we were all changing all the time. Although some of us knew the scientific principles quite well, we found out quickly that those principles did not give us a fixed set of procedures, rather they helped inform us what to do next when a particular procedure did not work, or a particular problem arose.” If you would like to listen to the lecture by Dr. Murray Sidman, you may click [here](#).

If you are interested in learning more about Applied Behaviour Analysis, watch our recorded webinar [Myth Busting – Science of ABA and some everyday uses](#).