

Ψ  
APA  
Dictionary  
*of*  
Clinical  
Psychology

Gary R. VandenBos, PhD  
*Editor in Chief*

American Psychological Association  
Washington, DC

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# Preface

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This dictionary is the fourth in a family of lexicographical works published by the American Psychological Association (APA). The parent reference, the 25,000-entries *APA Dictionary of Psychology*—the culmination of some ten years of research and lexicographic activity—was released in 2006, winning wide critical endorsement and recognition from both the publishing and reference library communities. We are pleased to note that a considerably revised and expanded second edition of this work is well under way and will be available in 2014.

An abridgment of the parent dictionary in 10,000 entries, the *APA Concise Dictionary of Psychology*, was released in 2008. Whereas the original dictionary offered a deeply layered approach to the lexicon of the field, *Concise*, through an editorial process of reduction and synthesis, offered an equally informative exploration of the fundamental vocabulary, but with broader general appeal. This version is now available both in print and as an app for iPhone, iPad, and Android.

A collegiate version, the popular *APA College Dictionary of Psychology*, in 5,000 entries, followed in 2009, offering an even more highly concentrated, easily portable, and economical alternative for the student of psychology—whether he or she is at the advanced placement level in high school, a college undergraduate enrolled in Intro Psych, or an undergraduate considering or making psychology his or her major field of study.

Thus, the *APA Dictionary of Clinical Psychology* is the latest offspring in the dictionary branch of the APA Reference family—one that we hope will prove a convenient and highly focused alternative for the women and men at the very heart of the psychological enterprise: the clinicians who interpret the theory, read the research, and who, ultimately, are directly involved in the care and treatment of patients, whether they work in health and mental health clinics; in independent and group practices; or as consultants to professionals in such fields as medicine, law, social work, and consumer relations. Students—especially those in training as clinicians—will likewise find this dictionary a well-focused and economical alternative to the broader coverage of the parent work.

As with *Concise* and *College*, the *APA Dictionary of Clinical Psychology* is primarily a derivative: In order to delimit an appropriately representative universe of terms for inclusion in a clinical dictionary, APA reference staff culled those entries (largely in the 2006 parent work) that either directly or closely relate to clinical psychology—whether they are terms specific to the assessment, evaluation, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of emotional and behavioral disorders; to clinical training and supervision, or to clinical research and practice; or they are terms more generally relevant to various biological, cognitive, developmental, and personality/social psychological underpinnings of physical and mental health. As with the two previous derivatives, we have retained much of the historical lexicon in this first edition of *Clinical* on the assumption that it remains useful for reading in the older literature of the late 19th and early and mid-20th centuries.

In addition, we have slightly expanded coverage, with some updating of pharmacological entries and of etymological information, as well as a very limited “preview” of some of the new clinical entries that will appear in the second edition of the full *APA Dictionary of Psychology*.

Finally, we take another opportunity to recognize the earlier contributions of the full editorial board of the *APA Dictionary of Psychology*, whose efforts remain the foundation upon which this clinical psychology dictionary rests.

Gary R. VandenBos, PhD  
Editor in Chief  
APA Publisher



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# Quick Guide to Format

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<b>Headword</b>	<b>bariatrics</b> <i>n.</i> a field of medicine that focuses on the study of overweight: its causes, prevention, and treatment.	<b>Part-of-speech label</b>
<b>Etymology</b>	<b>Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI)</b> a self-report, 21-item measure used to assess the severity of anxiety in adults and to discriminate anxiety from depression. [Aaron T. Beck (1921– ), U.S. Psychiatrist]	<b>Abbreviation</b>
<b>Plural form</b>	<b>benny</b> <i>n.</i> ( <i>pl.</i> <b>bennies</b> ) slang for an amphetamine tablet. See AMPHETAMINES.	
<b>Alternative name</b>	<b>behavior hierarchy</b> a ranking of possible responses based on the relative probabilities of their being elicited, with more probable behaviors ranked higher than less probable behaviors. Also called <b>behavioral hierarchy</b> .	
<b>Etymology</b>	<b>behaviorism</b> <i>n.</i> an approach to psychology, [formulated in 1913 by U.S. psychologist John B. Watson (1878–1958), based on the study of objective, observable facts rather than subjective, qualitative processes, such as feelings, motives, and consciousness. To make psychology a naturalistic science, Watson proposed to limit it to quantitative events, such as stimulus–response relationships, effects of conditioning, physiological processes, and a study of human and animal behavior, all of which can best be investigated through laboratory experiments that yield objective measures under controlled conditions. Historically, behaviorists held that mind was not a proper topic for scientific study since mental events are subjective and not independently verifiable. With its emphasis on activity as an adaptive function, behaviorism is seen as an outgrowth of FUNCTIONALISM. See DESCRIPTIVE BEHAVIORISM; METHODOLOGICAL BEHAVIORISM; NEOBEHAVIORISM; RADICAL BEHAVIORISM.	<b>Cross-references</b>
<b>Hidden entry</b>	<b>biogenesis</b> <i>n.</i> the origin of living things from other living things. <b>Biogenetics</b> is the scientific study of the principles and processes governing the production of living organisms from other living organisms, including the mechanisms of heredity. <b>biogenetic</b> <i>adj.</i>	<b>Derived word</b>
<b>Sense number</b>	<b>body narcissism</b> <b>1.</b> an exaggerated preoccupation or fascination with one's own body and its	
<b>Sense number</b>	erogenous zones. See also NARCISSISM. <b>2.</b> in psychoanalytic theory, the <b>PRIMARY NARCISSISM</b> of the young infant.	<b>Cross-reference</b>



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# Aa

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**AA** abbreviation for ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS.

**AAAP** abbreviation for AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY.

**AAAPP** abbreviation for AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF APPLIED AND PREVENTIVE PSYCHOLOGY.

**AACP** abbreviation for AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGISTS.

**AACS** abbreviation for AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CLINICAL SEXOLOGISTS.

**AAI** abbreviation for ADULT ATTACHMENT INTERVIEW.

**AAIDD** see AMERICAN ASSOCIATION ON INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.

**AAMI** abbreviation for AGE-ASSOCIATED MEMORY IMPAIRMENT.

**AAMR** abbreviation for American Association of Mental Retardation. See AMERICAN ASSOCIATION ON INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.

**AAP** abbreviation for ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY.

**AASECT** abbreviation for AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SEX EDUCATORS, COUNSELORS AND THERAPISTS.

**ABA** abbreviation for APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS.

**A-B-A-B design** a SINGLE-CASE EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN in which a baseline or other initial condition (A) is followed by a different condition (B), which is followed by a return to the initial condition (A), which is then followed by a return to the second condition (B).

**A-B-A design** a SINGLE-CASE EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN in which a baseline or other initial condition (A) is followed by a different condition (B) and then by a return to the initial condition (A).

**abaissement** *n.* a mental state in which the threshold of consciousness lowers and unconscious thoughts become conscious, as when slipping into sleep and becoming aware of dream content. [from French, in full: *abaissement du niveau mental*, first recognized and defined by French physician and psychologist Pierre Janet (1859–1947)]

**abandonment** *n.* desertion of a dependent by a parent or primary caregiver. Dependents are usually children but may be entire families or individuals who are ill. —**abandon** *vb.*

**abandonment reaction** a feeling of emotional deprivation, loss of support, and loneliness experienced by children who have been deserted or neglected by one or both parents.

Abandonment reaction is also experienced by adults who have lost a loved one on whom they have depended.

**abasement need** a need to surrender oneself to another person, accept blame or punishment, or confess and atone. See also MASOCHISM. [defined by U.S. psychologist Henry A. Murray (1893–1988)]

**abasia** *n.* severe impairment or complete loss of the ability to walk due to problems in motor coordination. —**abasic** *adj.*

**abatement** *n.* a reduction or lessening in the severity of pain or other symptoms of illness or disorder.

**ABCDE technique** a procedure used in RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY, on the basis of ABC THEORY, which suggests that Activating events (i.e., adversities) are mediated by irrational Beliefs in determining inappropriate emotional and behavioral Consequences. ABCDE technique involves Disputing these beliefs (i.e., under the guidance of a therapist), which results in several types of Effects (e.g., rational beliefs, appropriate feelings, desirable behaviors).

**ABC theory** the theory underlying RATIONAL EMOTIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY, which suggests that Activating events (i.e., adversities) are mediated by irrational Beliefs in determining inappropriate behavioral Consequences. See also ABCDE TECHNIQUE. [devised by U.S. psychologist Albert Ellis (1913–2007)]

**A-B design** the simplest SINGLE-CASE EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN, in which the DEPENDENT VARIABLE is measured throughout the pretreatment or baseline period (the A phase) and then again following the treatment period (the B phase). Numerous variations of this basic design exist, such as the A-B-A design, A-B-A-B design, A-B-B-A design, and A-B-BC-B design. The latter involves two treatment periods (the B phase and the C phase) and is intended to assess the effect of B both in combination with C and apart from C.

**abdominal migraine** recurrent, severe episodes of abdominal pain that may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting. The episodes last from 1 to 72 hours and occur most frequently in children.

**aberrant response** an abnormal or atypical behavior, commonly targeted during a behavioral intervention.

**aberration** *n.* any deviation, particularly a sig-

## abience

A

nificant or undesirable one, from the normal or typical. See also MENTAL ABERRATION.

**abience** *n.* a response or behavior that results in movement away from a stimulus, either by physical withdrawal from the stimulus or by an action designed to avoid the stimulus entirely. Compare ADIENCE. —**abient** *adj.*

**Abilify** *n.* a trade name for ARIPIPIRAZOLE.

**ability level** an index of achievement or performance that reports the absolute or relative ability of the organism being evaluated.

**ability trait** a personality trait that involves an individual's capacity to attain his or her goals. It is one of three classes of SOURCE TRAITS in CATTELL'S PERSONALITY TRAIT THEORY, the other two being DYNAMIC TRAITS and TEMPERAMENT TRAITS.

**abiotrophy** *n.* loss of function or loss of resistance to a disease through degeneration or failure of body tissues, organs, or systems. Abiotrophy is used particularly to refer to premature degeneration caused by a genetic defect, as in Huntington's disease. —**abiotrophic** *adj.*

**ablation** *n.* the removal or destruction of part of a biological tissue or structure by a surgical procedure or a toxic substance, usually for treatment or to study its function. When the entire tissue or structure is excised, the process is called **extirpation**.

**ablution** *n.* **1.** a largely obsolete therapeutic technique utilizing water (such as wrapping wet towels around the body or immersing in water) to calm agitated patients. It was abandoned with the advent of psychotropic drugs. **2.** a symbolic cleansing of the body, or of possessions, with the intent of purification.

**abnormal** *adj.* relating to any deviation from what is considered typical, usual, or healthy, particularly if the deviation is considered harmful or maladaptive. In statistics, for example, abnormal scores are those that are outside the usual or expected range. The term, however, is most often applied to behavior that differs from a culturally accepted norm, especially when indicative of a mental disorder. —**abnormality** *n.* —**abnormally** *adv.*

**abnormal behavior** behavior that is atypical or statistically uncommon within a particular culture or that is maladaptive or detrimental to an individual. Such behavior is often regarded as evidence of a mental or emotional disturbance, ranging from minor adjustment problems to severe mental disorder.

**abnormality** *n.* **1.** the state or condition of being ABNORMAL. **2.** a defect or malformation in structure or function.

**abnormal psychology** the branch of psychology devoted to the study, prevention, assessment, and treatment of maladaptive behavior. See also PSYCHOPATHOLOGY.

**aboiement** *n.* the involuntary, uncontrollable production of animalistic sounds. Aboiement

(French, "barking") is a symptom sometimes occurring in schizophrenia and Tourette's disorder.

**abortifacient** *n.* any agent that induces abortion. Also called **abortient**.

**abortion** *n.* the expulsion from the uterus of an embryo or fetus before it is able to survive independently. An abortion may be either spontaneous, in which case it occurs naturally and is also called a **miscarriage**, or induced, in which case it is produced deliberately by artificial means such as drugs or surgery and done for therapeutic reasons or as an elective decision. The practice is controversial and may involve **abortion counseling**, the provision of guidance, advice, information, and support on issues concerning termination of pregnancy and the alternatives of adoption or raising the child.

**aboulia** *n.* see ABULIA.

**ABPP** abbreviation for AMERICAN BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY.

**abreaction** *n.* the therapeutic process of bringing forgotten or inhibited material (i.e., experiences, memories) from the unconscious into consciousness, with concurrent emotional release and discharge of tension and anxiety. See also CATHARSIS.

**ABS** abbreviation for the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities' (formerly American Association on Mental Retardation's) Adaptive Behavior Scale, in separate editions for school and adult service settings. See ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR SCALE.

**abscess** *n.* a contained but often enlarging area of infection that includes pus and dead tissue. A brain abscess raises INTRACRANIAL PRESSURE and can cause substantial neurological deficits, such as poor coordination, decreased sensation, confusion, and other altered mental states.

**absence** *n.* a brief LOSS OF CONSCIOUSNESS or period of mental inattentiveness, particularly when associated with a seizure (see ABSENCE SEIZURE), with no memory for the event afterward.

**absence seizure** a type of GENERALIZED SEIZURE, formerly called **petit mal seizure**, in which the individual abruptly ceases activity and cannot afterward remember the event. The absences usually last from 5 to 15 s, during which the individual is unresponsive and motionless, staring blankly. Seizures of this type typically begin between ages 4 and 12 and rarely persist into adulthood.

**absent-mindedness** *n.* a state of heedlessness or inattention marked by a tendency to be occupied by one's own thoughts and not to be fully aware of concurrent situations or the external reality of the moment.

**absolute error** the degree to which an observation is inaccurate without specification of whether it errs by being too high or too low. Absolute error is computed as the average absolute difference between the intended or expected

value and the actual value. This measure may also describe the overall accuracy of a set of movements with a well-defined goal. Compare CONSTANT ERROR; RANDOM ERROR.

**absolute judgment** a psychophysical judgment in which a single stimulus is placed in a particular category (e.g., “bright,” “loud”), as opposed to one in which several stimuli are compared to one another or to a given standard (e.g., “brighter,” “louder”).

**absorption** *n.* **1.** the uptake of fluid and dissolved substances into a cell across the plasma membrane. For example, an administered drug moves through various biological membranes from its site of administration to its target organ. Absorption into the target organ is dependent on a number of factors, including the method of ADMINISTRATION (e.g., oral, intravenous); the properties of the drug (e.g., molecular size, ability to cross lipid membranes); the amount of drug administered; and the characteristics or state of the individual (e.g., body mass, sex, age, presence of disease, presence of other drugs). **2.** an extreme involvement or preoccupation with one object, idea, or pursuit, with inattention to other aspects of the environment. See also TELLEGEN ABSORPTION SCALE.

**abstinence** *n.* the act of refraining from the use of something, particularly alcohol or drugs, or from participation in sexual or other activity. In most instances, abstinence from drugs or alcohol is the primary goal of substance abuse treatment. See also SUBSTANCE WITHDRAWAL. —**abstinent** *adj.*

**abstinence delirium** a form of DELIRIUM that occasionally accompanies withdrawal from alcohol or drugs of abuse. See ALCOHOL WITHDRAWAL DELIRIUM; DELIRIUM TREMENS.

**abstinence rule** see RULE OF ABSTINENCE.

**abstinence syndrome** the characteristic set of physiological and behavioral events that accompanies withdrawal from dependence-inducing substances.

**abstract attitude** a COGNITIVE STYLE that involves the ability to grasp essentials and common properties, to keep different aspects of a situation in mind and shift from one to another, to predict and plan ahead, and to think symbolically and draw conclusions. These capacities are often impaired in people with certain neurological or psychological disorders. Also called **categorical attitude**. Compare CONCRETE ATTITUDE. See also ABSTRACT THINKING. [defined by German-born U.S. neurologist Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965)]

**abstract conceptualization** the process of forming abstract concepts, which may be general and apply to numerous particular instances (e.g., “dog” or “fish”) or wholly intangible and have no specific material referent (e.g., “liberty” or “youth”). See ABSTRACTION; CONCEPTUALIZATION.

**abstract intelligence** the intellectual ability to think in terms of abstract concepts. Also called **abstract ability**. See ABSTRACT THINKING. Compare CONCRETE INTELLIGENCE.

**abstraction** *n.* **1.** the formation of general ideas or concepts by extracting similarities from particular instances. The precise cognitive processes by which this occurs remain a subject of investigation. **2.** such a concept, especially a wholly intangible one, such as “goodness” or “truth.” —**abstract** *vb.*

**abstract representation** in cognitive theory, a MENTAL REPRESENTATION of a stimulus in an abstract or essential form that is not tied to any one of its variable surface forms. For example, the letter *A* can be thought about at an abstract level with no reference to specific surface forms, such as *a*, *A*, or **a**.

**abstract thinking** thinking characterized by the use of abstractions and generalizations. Compare CONCRETE THINKING. See also ABSTRACT ATTITUDE; CATEGORICAL THOUGHT.

**abulia (aboulia)** *n.* extreme loss of initiative and willpower, resulting in an inability to make decisions or initiate voluntary actions. —**abulic** *adj.*

**abuse** **1.** *n.* interactions in which one person behaves in a cruel, violent, demeaning, or invasive manner toward another person or an animal. The term most commonly implies physical mistreatment but also encompasses sexual and psychological (emotional) mistreatment. **2.** *vb.* to subject a person or animal to such treatment. **3.** *n.* see SUBSTANCE ABUSE. **4.** *n.* colloquially, the misuse of a substance to an extent that it causes the individual difficulty, whether or not it meets the *DSM-IV-TR* definition of substance abuse. See also ALCOHOL ABUSE. —**abuser** *n.*

**abuse potential** the ability of a drug to reinforce drug-taking behavior. Factors that determine abuse potential include route of drug administration (e.g., intravenous, inhalation, oral) and the speed of onset, duration, and nature of the drug effect. These factors are themselves determined by complex interactions between the individual, the substance, and the social environment. Substances with a high abuse potential include intravenous heroin, crack cocaine, morphine, and smoked opium. Substances with a low abuse potential include the hallucinogens and marijuana. Also called **abuse liability**.

**academic intervention** the active involvement of school officials and teachers in developing and implementing an effective plan for the prevention or remediation of inappropriate and disruptive student behavior. Successful programs of intervention are most often individualized, child focused, and minimally restrictive. Academic intervention is the antithesis of reactive strategies, such as loss of privileges and time out.

**academic skills disorder** in *DSM-III* and ear-

## acalculia

A

lier editions, a disorder that in *DSM-IV-TR* is classified as a LEARNING DISORDER.

**acalculia** *n.* loss of the ability to perform simple arithmetic operations that results from brain injury or disease, usually to the PARIETAL LOBE. It is an acquired condition, whereas DYS CALCULIA is developmental.

**acamprosate** *n.* an analog of the inhibitory neurotransmitter GAMMA-AMINOBUTYRIC ACID (GABA) used in the management of alcohol dependence. Although exact mechanisms of action are unclear, acamprosate may act by directly binding to the GABA receptor complex (see GABA<sub>A</sub> RECEPTOR; GABA<sub>B</sub> RECEPTOR); it may also act by inhibiting the actions of the excitatory amino acid GLUTAMATE, for example by inhibiting NMDA RECEPTORS. When administered in combination with behavioral treatments, it has some efficacy in reducing alcohol intake or increasing alcohol-free periods in people recovering from alcohol dependence. U.S. trade name: **Campral**.

**acarophobia** *n.* a persistent and irrational fear of skin parasites (mites), ants, worms, and, by extension, small objects such as pins and needles. The condition is believed to be related to the sensation of insects crawling on or under the skin, which occurs in alcoholism, cocaine use, narcotic addiction, and delirium resulting from meningitis, encephalitis, rheumatic fever, or diphtheria. See also FORMICATION; LILLIPUTIAN HALLUCINATION. —**acarophobic** *adj.*

**acataphasia (akataphasia)** *n.* the use of inappropriate or grammatically incorrect words and expressions. It is a speech disturbance frequently found in individuals with schizophrenia or APHASIA. See also AGRAMMATISM.

**acathisia** *n.* see AKATHISIA.

**accelerated interaction** the intensification of group processes and emotional interaction that occurs in experiential groups when the group sessions are continuous and secluded. See MARATHON GROUP; TIME-EXTENDED THERAPY.

**acceleration-deceleration injury** a form of HEAD INJURY caused by the head suddenly being placed into motion or abruptly stopped, as, for example, when the individual is in a car accident. The sudden motion or stop causes diffuse stretching and tearing of white matter tracts in addition to bleeding and other neurological effects. The injury may have a variety of consequences, including personality change, attention problems, memory disorders, and EXECUTIVE DYSFUNCTION.

**acceptance** *n.* **1.** a favorable attitude toward an idea, situation, person, or group. In the context of psychotherapy and counseling, it is the receptive, nonjudgmental attitude of therapists or counselors, which conveys an implicit respect and regard for their clients as individuals. **2.** willing acknowledgment of validity or correctness. In the context of recovery from substance abuse and other addictions, it is essential for a person

to accept that he or she has a problem before any interventions can be effective.

**acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)** a form of COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY based on the premise that ineffective strategies to control thoughts and feelings actually lead to problem behaviors. It helps clients to abandon these ineffective control strategies and instead willingly experience difficult thoughts and feelings as a necessary part of a worthy life. Clients then clarify their personal values and life goals, and learn to make life-enhancing behavioral changes accordingly. ACT has been applied to a wide variety of problems, including depression, anxiety, stress, and substance abuse.

**access** *vb.* to retrieve or recall a memory.

**accessible** *adj.* **1.** receptive or responsive to personal interaction and other external stimuli. A client in psychotherapy, for example, is thought to be accessible if he or she responds to the therapist in a way that facilitates the development of rapport and, ultimately, fosters the examination of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral issues. **2.** retrievable through memory or other cognitive processes. **3.** a characteristic of a building and its facilities and fixtures, or of any site, that makes it easy to approach, enter, or use, particularly by people with disabilities. **4.** in a tissue, reachable by means of standard surgical or diagnostic procedures. —**accessibility** *n.*

**accessory symptoms** see SECONDARY SYMPTOMS.

**accidental stimulus** any stimulus that intrudes into a dream, such as the sound of a telephone ringing or a muscle cramp. Such stimuli may be incorporated into dreams. Compare DREAM STIMULUS.

**accident prevention** the use of scientifically tested methods to reduce the number and severity of accidents. These include the systematic study of accidents and the circumstances in which they occur; the identification and control of workplace hazards; the evaluation and redesign of systems and processes; and the use of training programs, instruction, and other forms of safety education.

**accident proneness** a chronic susceptibility to accidents. This concept has been heavily debated since its introduction around 1920, and many question the existence of a fixed accident-prone personality. However, several individual variables and sociological and situational factors have been identified as important predictors of accident involvement, including aggressiveness, impulsiveness, thrill and adventure seeking, workload and cognitive demand, and stress.

**acclimatization** *n.* adjustment or adaptation to new circumstances or environmental conditions, particularly the physiological changes that improve an individual's ability to tolerate environmental alterations. Also called **acclimation**. —**acclimatize** *vb.*