

Featured Certificant

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To this day, the story of Helen Keller makes me cry. I watched it recently with my 11 year old daughter and she caught me tearing up. I was in the fourth grade the first time I read the book and was completely fascinated by the techniques used and results achieved by Ann Sullivan. I knew what I wanted to do when I grew up. In the Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) community I am Eileen Coudreaut Quinn, I now go by Eileen Quinn. My husband Brian and I own and manage a private consulting and training company that provides comprehensive behavioral services to people of all ages in the Philadelphia suburbs of Pennsylvania. I have three children, twin boys age 14, Sean and Brett and the daughter I mention above, Tara. I have been in the field of Behavior Analysis for 27 years and I still love what I do.



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I grew up the second of five kids. Not formally schooled, my stay-at-home mother (who had all five of us within the short span of six years!) used a behavioral approach to raising her children and managing the household. The early lessons she taught continue to be a strong influence on how I approach my work.

I spent the bulk of my childhood tumbling on mats. I was a competitive gymnast for five years. I practiced three hours a day, five days a week, 11 months out of the year. My coach, Hank Alviti, was competitive, driven and compassionate. His team of gymnasts was undefeated for almost 20 consecutive years. From him, I learned that discipline and goal setting leads to success.

In 1979, I enrolled in the Psychology department at the State University of New York at Cortland. Also at that time, I took a job working as a research assistant to Paul Luyben, PhD. Working alongside Paul, I learned about single subject research design and data collection and had the unique opportunity to attend and later assist him in presentations at ABA and AABT conferences.

Eager to apply what I learned in school, in 1983, I took a position as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at The Putnam Association for Retarded Citizens (PARC) in Carmel, New York, a sheltered workshop. I created, implemented, and evaluated productive and behavioral goals for 30 adults with dual diagnosis. With energy to spare, and a lingering question about my vocational goals, I took an evening position counseling adults with mental illness at a halfway house in Mahopac, New York. There, my question about behavioral versus talk therapy was answered when, on more than one occasion, my advice to a particular client was rebutted with, "That's the same advice three other counselors gave me." After several loops (and at my wits end), I suggested we clean her bedroom



together. I thought a change in environment and activity might affect her outlook. To this day, I don't know if it did. I left that job and started researching employment opportunities that would further my interest in behavioral work.

I called Paul Luyben who pointed me to the May Institute in Cape Cod. Under the supervision of Steve Luce, PhD and other well-established behavior analysts, I worked at the institute for two years as a Senior Teacher of children with autism in a research oriented ABA environment. I found my calling. In 1990, I left Cape Cod and moved to Illinois to study and earn a Masters Degree in Behavior Analysis and Therapy at Southern Illinois University (SIU) in Carbondale. My teachers included Gina Green, PhD (my advisor); Anthony Cuvo, PhD; and Roger Poppen, PhD.

While studying at SIU, I was also given three incredible opportunities to apply what I was learning. I worked as an Independent Living Specialist for The Evaluation and Developmental Center. This work involved teaching independent living skills to adults with developmental disabilities who were on the path to living on their own. My practicum experience involved working and learning about biofeedback for Clients with Chronic Pain. Finally, I did an internship that, along with Ann Sullivan, my mother, Mr. Alviti, Paul Luyben and Gina Green, introduced me to my next mentor: Martin McMorrow.

Marty and I met at Choate Mental Health Center (formally called Anna State Hospital) where we worked in the department of Behavioral Programming and Measurement. Our work involved developing programs for people with mental illness and/or developmental disabilities. Our projects included: Development of a Medication Management Program for the facility; development of a program to enable elderly clients to orient themselves in a congregate living environment; teaching people with severe mental disabilities to self-manage reinforcers; and development of a transition program for people moving from the institution to more integrated environments. With Marty, I published an article on self-medication in the Journal of Psychosocial Nursing.*



During my tenure at SIU, I also met and fell in love with my husband, Brian. He was upside down, practicing gymnastics; naturally it caught my eye.

With a Masters Degree in hand, in 1991, Brian and I moved to St. Louis. There, I accepted a position at The

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Judevine Center for Autism. My charter was to design and develop a work training program for adults with developmental disabilities who exhibited frequent and severe behaviors. The Judevine therapy philosophy was "child led" with a focus on "gentle teaching." While providing a wonderful opportunity to

experience a new approach, this work harkened the long nights of loopy discussions at the halfway house in Mahopac, NY. I knew it wasn't right for me, but I leverage this experience when I teach parents and professionals on the theory and application of ABA.

As I was leaving Judevine, my husband's work took us to Philadelphia where I joined up again with Steve Luce, this time at the Bancroft School in Haddonfield, New Jersey. In this role, I was responsible for developing an improved behaviorally oriented residential program for children with autism and children with traumatic brain injury.

From there, an opportunity to co-direct the development of a supportive employment program for adults with autism led me to Remed Recovery Care Centers in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania where I worked with Scott Helsinger. Climbing up the ladder gave me exposure to managing people and the associated administrative duties. While perhaps rewarding for traditional professionals, for me, ladder ascension left me frustrated and yearning for the rubber-meets-the-road work of ABA. After a year of my grumbling, my husband urged me to start my own consulting business.

So I did.

And then I learned I was pregnant with twins.

Struggling to make ends meet, Brian in the finance sector during a down market and me in the shoot-from-the-hip-because-I've-never-done-this-before startup business, we decided to combine forces. Using his talents in business operations and new business development and my expertise in ABA, we opened Quinn Developmental Services (QDS).

We designed our new company to align with our value system while achieving our personal and professional goals. First and foremost: no daycare for our kids. This meant opening shop in the laundry room and, more often than not, included scenes like this: me doing an intake over the phone with a child on my hip while my husband bounced another on his knee as he reconciled monthly invoices. It wasn't easy. Money was tight and there were days when we didn't know if we'd have enough to buy the case of baby formula we needed for the next month.

In addition to the work experience I accumulated through the years, I had the distinct honor to chair the Association for Behavior Analysis on multiple occasions; present at ABA conferences; speak at an Invited Address at FABA; and reunite with and support my mentor Dr. Luyben in an invited address at SUNY at Cortland. But the most rewarding of all accomplishments is raising my three children with my husband, Brian. We never strayed from our original decree: no day care. Even if it meant schlepping three little kids to a funding meeting. And it has worked for us. Gymnasts, all three of them, today they work alongside us as QDS counselors in an autism gymnastics camp we sponsor.



Quinn Developmental Services is now 14 years old. We specialize in Autism, Aspergers, ADHD, ADD, traumatic brain injuries, developmental delays, selective mutism, and various psychiatric diagnoses. Still a private training and consulting practice in ABA, we employ up to 20 subcontractors at any given time. We are well known and held in high esteem by parents, professionals and funders as one of the most thorough and competent companies in ABA in the Philadelphia area. Our assessments, intensive and thorough interventions, data driven evaluations, extensive empowerment training for support systems and workshops are targeted to all age ranges beginning at two years through 65+. Our mission then and now is to take behavior analysis into everyday environments and to continuously build on the methodology and applications of our programs.

Brian tells me, "Ann Sullivan would be proud."

* Coudreaux-Quinn, E., Emmons, M.A., McMorrow, M. *Self-Medication During Inpatient Psychiatric Treatment. Journal of Psychosocial Nursing* 1992; 30: 32-36.