



FIGURE 7.1 The ABC Behavior Model: Antecedents Trigger the Behavior, and Consequences Maintain and Reinforce the Behavior

Figure 7.1 shows that antecedents and consequences are both factors that contribute to the occurrence of a behavior. Antecedents trigger a behavior; and consequences maintain, strengthen, or decrease a behavior. Antecedents and consequences also influence each other. Let us consider an example to show how to apply the ABC model:

Emily, a preschooler, has frequent temper tantrums in her classroom, which are difficult to soothe. Her temper tantrums seem to occur at different times of day, and appear to be related to different events, such as disliking an activity. However, her tantrums do occur more regularly in the mornings during the arrival times. It seems to Ms. Smith and Ms. Brown, the classroom teacher and teacher's assistant, that Emily's temper tantrums are a habit and a pattern that is now difficult to break. It sometimes takes Ms. Brown 20 minutes to calm Emily down and help her join her peers in the classroom. Ms. Smith, however, is able to soothe Emily immediately every time that she attempts to soothe her. Recently, Emily has become defiant, and has begun refusing to participate in certain activities; the refusal is often followed by an outburst of temper tantrums.