

Social Skills Strategies For Children with Special Needs

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UCLA PEERS® Clinic
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MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR CARE AT HOME SINCE 1957

Social Deficits Among Individuals with Special Needs

- **Poor social communication**
 - Problems with topic initiation
 - Use repetitive themes
 - One-sided conversations
- **Poor social awareness**
 - Difficulty understanding social cues
- **Poor social motivation**
 - Less involvement in social activities
 - Lack of peer entry attempts
- **Poor social cognition**
 - Difficulty understanding the perspectives of others
- **Social neglect**
- **Peer rejection**
- **Poor friendship quality**



(Volkmar & Klin, 1998; Bauminger & Kasari, 2000; Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004; Koning & Magill-Evans, 2001; LeCouteur et al., 1989; Marks, Schrader, Longaker, & Levine, 2000; Ghazuddin & Gerstein, 1998; Twachtman-Cullen, 1998; Hemphill & Siperstein, 1990; Church, Alisanki, Amanullah, 2000; Constantino, 2005)

Importance of Friendships

Having one or two close friends:

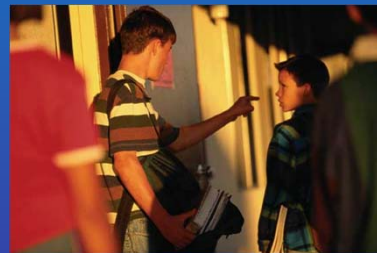
- Predicts later adjustment in life
- Can buffer the impact of stressful life events
- Correlates positively with:
 - Self-esteem
 - Independence
- Correlates negatively with:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety



(Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smiroldo, & Bamburg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)

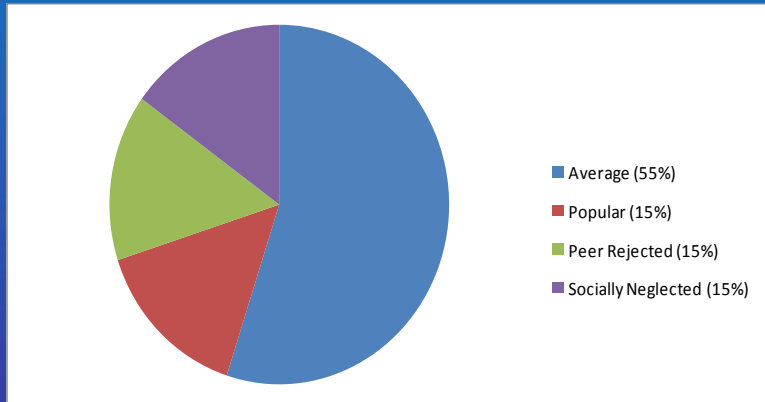
Identifying Peer Rejected and Socially Neglected Youth

- Peer rejection
 - Teasing and bullying
 - Bad reputations
 - ADHD, Mood disorders
- Social neglect
 - Isolated and withdrawn
 - Ignored and unnoticed
 - Anxiety, Depression
- Both lack close reciprocal friendships



(Volkmar & Klin, 1998; Bauminger & Kasari, 2000; Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004; Koning & Magill-Evans, 2001; LeCouteur et al., 1989; Marks, Schrader, Longaker, & Levine, 2000; Ghaziuddin & Gerstein, 1996; Twatchman-Cullen, 1998; Hemphill & Siperstein, 1990; Church, Alisanki, Amanullah, 2000)

Categories of Peer Acceptance in Adolescence



The Science of Making Friends
(Laugeson, 2013)

Limitations of Social Skills Training

- Do not use evidence-based curriculum
- Fails to tailor teaching methods to shared strengths and weaknesses
- Do not teach ecologically valid social skills
- Do not include homework assignments
- Skills do not generalize to other settings
- Do not include parents and/or teachers in the treatment

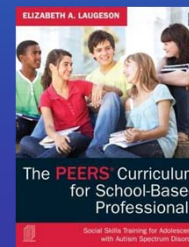
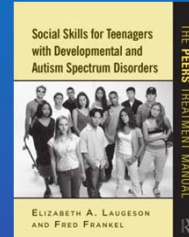


(Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2007; DiSalvo & Oswald, 2002; Rogers, 2000; Rao, Beidel, Murray, 2008)

PEERS®

Program for the Education & Enrichment of Relational Skills

- Research launched in 2004 at UCLA
- Manualized group treatment
- Parent-assisted program
 - Concurrent parent and teen/young adult sessions
 - 14 week 90 minute weekly sessions
- Teacher-facilitated program
 - Daily lessons in the classroom
 - 16 week 30-60 minute daily lessons
- Evidence-based
 - Teens in middle and high school
 - ASD, ADHD, ID, FASD
 - Young adults with ASD



PEERS® Evidence-Based Methods for Teaching Social Skills

- Small group format
- Lesson
 - Concrete rules and steps of social etiquette
 - Ecologically valid social skills
- Role-play demonstrations
 - Model social behavior
 - Appropriate and inappropriate demonstrations
 - Perspective taking questions
- Behavioral rehearsal exercises
 - Practice with coaching
- Homework assignments
 - Practice in natural social settings
 - Helps generalize skills
- Parent and/or teacher coaching

Photo of PEERS courtesy of Associated Press



(Matson, 1984; Davies & Rogers, 1985; Fleming & Fleming, 1982; Mesibov, 1994; Gresham, Sugai, & Herner, 2001; Grallinski & Kopp, 1993; Rubin & Sloman, 1984; Frankel & Myratt, 2003; Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008; Laugeson et al., 2008)

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Parent Session Format

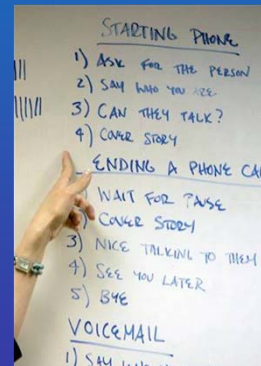
1. Homework review
 - Troubleshoot use of skills
 - Individualize treatment
2. Lesson
 - Parent lesson on facilitating play dates/get-togethers
 - Source of friends
 - Review child lesson
3. Parent coached play (for pre-school group)
 - In vivo performance feedback to parents during mock play dates
4. Wrap up
 - Review lesson and homework assignments



Development of PEERS® Rules and Steps of Social Behavior

- Ecologically valid social skills
 - DO'S
- Common social errors committed
 - DON'TS
- Create rules around ecologically valid skills and common social errors
- Break steps down into concrete parts

Photo of PEERS® courtesy of Associated Press



PEERS® for Preschoolers

- 4-6 year old high-functioning children
- Parent-assisted
 - Separate and joint concurrent parent and child sessions
 - Parent-education and parent-training
 - Developed by Laugeson, Park, & Sanderson at UCLA
- Puppet-facilitated Lessons
- Focuses on play skills and friendship skills
- Teaches ecologically valid social skills
- 16-week curriculum
 - 90-minute once weekly sessions



PEERS® for Preschoolers Curriculum

- Listening and following directions
- Meeting and greeting friends
- Sharing and giving a turn
- Asking for a turn
- Keeping cool
- Being a good sport
- Showing and telling during play



PEERS[®] for Preschoolers Curriculum

- Asking a friend to play
- Joining a game
- Playing something different
- Helping friends and asking for help
- Body boundaries
- Using an inside voice
- Using polite words



Overview of PEERS[®] for Adolescents Curriculum

Photo of PEERS courtesy of Associated Press

- Conversational skills
- Electronic communication
- Choosing appropriate friends
- Appropriate use of humor
- Peer entry strategies
- Peer exit strategies
- Get-togethers
- Good sportsmanship
- Peer rejection
- Peer conflict
- Graduation



(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014)

Clinical Example: Starting Individual Conversations

QUESTIONS:

What are most people told to do to start conversations?

What do socially neglected people often do to start conversations?

What do peer rejected people often do to start conversations?



The Science of Making Friends DVD and Mobile App
(Laugeson, 2013)

Individual Conversations: Bad Role Play

Perspective Taking Questions:

•What was that like for Ben?

•What did Ben think of Alex?

•Will Ben want to talk to Alex again?



The Science of Making Friends DVD and Mobile App
(Laugeson, 2013)

Rules and Steps for Starting Individual Conversations

1. Casually look over
2. Use a prop
3. Find a common interest
4. Mention the common interest
 - Make a comment
 - Ask a question
 - Give a compliment
5. Trade information
 - Ask the person about him/herself
 - Answer your own questions
 - Ask follow-up questions
 - Ask open-ended questions
6. Assess interest
7. Introduce yourself



The Science of Making Friends DVD and Mobile App
(Laugeson, 2013)

Individual Conversations: Good Role Play

Perspective Taking Questions:

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Will Ben want to talk to Alex again?



The Science of Making Friends DVD and Mobile App
(Laugeson, 2013)

Clinical Example: Entering Group Conversations

QUESTIONS:

What are most people told to do to join conversations and meet new people?

What do socially neglected people often do to join conversations?

What do peer rejected people often do to join conversations?



The Science of Making Friends DVD and Mobile App
(Laugeson, 2013)

Entering Group Conversations: Bad Role-Play

Perspective Taking Questions:

•What was that like for the group?

•What did the group think of Yasamine?

•Will the group want to talk to Yasamine again?



The Science of Making Friends DVD and Mobile App
(Laugeson, 2013)

Steps for Entering Group Conversations

1. Watch / Listen
 - Watch from a distance
 - Using a prop is helpful
 - Listen for the topic
 - Identify common interests
 - Make periodic eye contact
 - Watch to see if you know someone
 - Make sure they're talking nicely
2. Wait
 - Wait for a pause in the conversation
3. Move closer
 - Arm's length away
4. Join the Topic
 - Make a comment or ask a question that is ON TOPIC



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(Laugeson, 2013)

Entering Group Conversations: Good Role-Play

Perspective Taking Questions:

- What was that like for the group?
- What did the group think of Yasamine?
- Will the group want to talk to Yasamine again?



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Clinical Example: Assessing Interest

QUESTION:

Do most people with special needs know when they are accepted or not accepted into a conversation?



Assessing Interest During Conversational Entry

- **Verbal signs:**
 - *Are they talking to you?*
 - Good: Talking nicely, asking you questions
 - Bad: Giving short answers, not asking you questions
- **Eye contact:**
 - *Are they looking at you?*
 - Good: Smiling, nodding, making eye contact
 - Bad: Look confused, making faces, rolling eyes, no eye contact
- **Body language:**
 - *Are they facing you?*
 - Good: OPEN the circle, turn toward you
 - Bad: CLOSE the circle, give the cold shoulder, turn away



(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014)

Clinical Example: Exiting Conversations

QUESTION:

What do most people with special needs do when not accepted into conversations?



Exiting Conversations When Never Accepted

1. Keep your cool
2. Look away
3. Turn away
4. Walk away



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(Laugeson, 2013)

Exiting Conversations When Initially Accepted & Then Excluded

1. Keep your cool
2. Look away
3. Wait for a BRIEF pause
4. Use a BRIEF cover story for leaving
 - “Gotta go.”
 - “See ya.”
 - “Take care.”
5. Walk away



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Exiting Conversations When Fully Accepted

1. Wait for a pause
2. Give a SPECIFIC cover story for leaving
3. Say see you later
4. Say goodbye
5. Walk away



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(Laugeson, 2013)

PEERS® Evidence-Base: Parent-Assistance for Teens and Adults

J Autism Dev Disord (2009) 39:596–606
DOI 10.1007/s10803-008-0664-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training to Improve Friendships
in Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Elizabeth A. Laugeson · Fred Frankel ·
Catherine Mogil · Ashley R. Dillon

J Autism Dev Disord
DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1319-1

ORIGINAL PAPER

Evidence-Based Social Skills Training for Adolescents
with Autism Spectrum Disorders: The UCLA PEERS Program

Elizabeth A. Laugeson · Fred Frankel ·
Alexander Gattman · Ashley R. Dillon ·
Catherine Mogil

J Autism Dev Disord
DOI 10.1007/s10803-015-2504-8



S.I. · ASD IN ADULTHOOD: COMORBIDITY AND INTERVENTION

A Randomized Controlled Trial to Improve Social Skills in Young
Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The UCLA PEERS®
Program

Elizabeth A. Laugeson^{1,2} · Alexander Gattman^{1,2} · Steven K. Kapp^{1,3} ·
Kately Orenski^{1,4} · Ruth Ellingsen^{1,5}

J Autism Dev Disord
DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1350-6

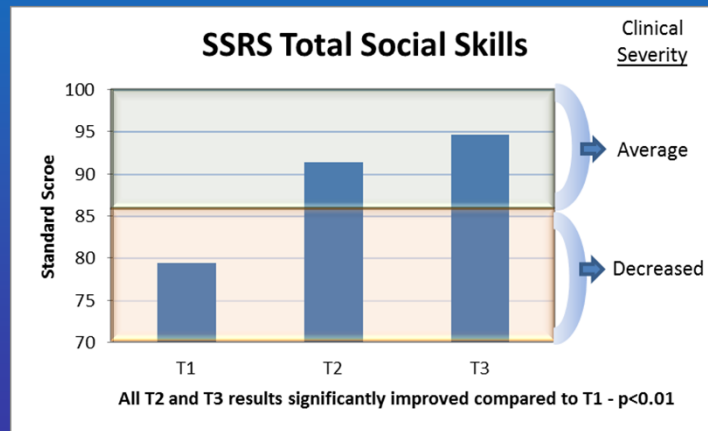
ORIGINAL PAPER

Social Skills Training for Young Adults with High-Functioning
Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Randomized Controlled Pilot
Study

Alexander Gattman · Steven K. Kapp ·
Kately Orenski · Elizabeth A. Laugeson

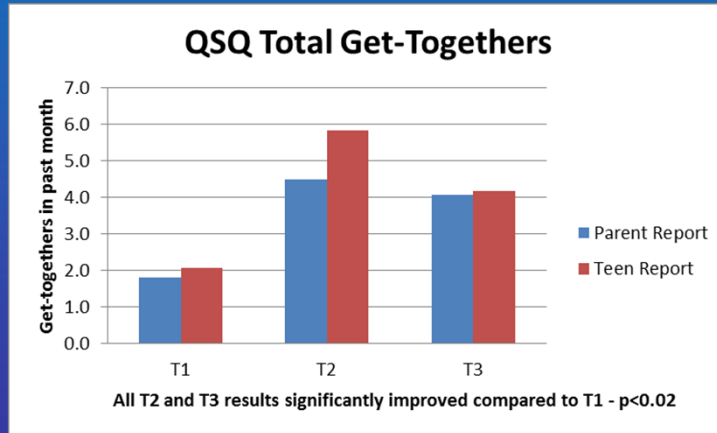
PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study

(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel 2013)



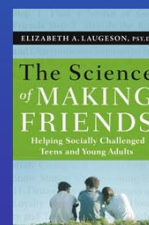
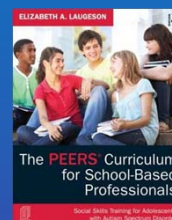
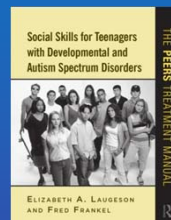
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PEERS® Resources

- Published manuals
- Parent book
- PEERS® Certified Training
 - 3-4 day training (20 hours total)
- UCLA PEERS® Training Research Scholarships
 - Graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and research faculty
 - 2-3 scholarships awarded each training
 - Submission: CV and 2 page LOI
 - Held at the UCLA Semel Institute
 - (310) 26-PEERS
 - peersclinic@ucla.edu



PEERS® Virtual Coach

Organization for Autism Research
(Laugeson, PI)

- High-functioning adolescents with ASD
- N = 36
- Test the effectiveness of a “virtual coach” using a mobile application (FriendMaker)
- Compare three groups:
 - PEERS parent-assisted treatment as usual
 - PEERS parent-assisted with virtual coach
 - Delayed treatment control



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Questions?



GROW

with Shield HealthCare

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