The Science of Making Friends for Teens and Young Adults with ASD: The UCLA PEERS® Program

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Overview of Webinar

- Social deficits associated with ASD
- Importance of friendship
- Consequences of social deficits
- Overview of PEERS®
- Effective methods for teaching social skills
- Ecologically valid social skills
  - Conversational skills
  - Starting individual conversations
  - Handling teasing
- Brief summary of research findings
- Resources
Social Deficits Associated with ASD

- **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
Why Target 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
Consequences of Peer Rejection

One of the **strongest predictors** of:

- Mental health problems
  - Depression
  - Anxiety
- Juvenile delinquency
- Poor academic performance
- Early withdrawal from school
- Substance abuse
- Suicidal ideation and attempts
Identifying Peer Rejected and Socially Neglected Youth with ASD

- **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  - Isolated and withdrawn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
• 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
Evidence-Based Methods for Teaching Social Skills

- Small group format
- Didactic lessons
  - Concrete rules and steps of social etiquette
  - Ecologically valid social skills
- Role-play demonstrations
  - Model social behavior
  - Appropriate and inappropriate demonstrations
- Behavioral rehearsal exercises
  - Practice with coaching
- Homework assignments
  - Practice in natural social settings
  - Helps generalize skills
- Parent/caregiver or teacher coaching
Development of Rules and Steps of Social Behavior

- Ecologically valid social skills
  - DO’S

- Common social errors committed by those with social difficulties
  - DON’TS

- Create rules around ecologically valid skills and common social errors

- Break steps down into concrete parts
Summary of Skills

Making and Keeping Friends:
- Finding and choosing good friends
- Conversational skills
- Starting and ending conversations
- Electronic communication
- Good sportsmanship
- Get-togethers
- Dating etiquette (adults only)

Handling Conflict and Rejection:
- Arguments
- Teasing
- Cyber bullying
- Rumors and gossip
- Physical bullying
- Bad reputations
- Handling peer pressure (adults only)
QUESTION:

What are common social errors committed by teens and adults with ASD when talking to others?
Conversational Skills: Bad Example

Perspective Taking Questions:

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Social Error: 
Conversation Hogging

PEERS® Rule:
Don’t be a conversation hog

Common Social Errors for Youth with ASD:

- One-sided conversations
  - Elicit fewer extended responses from others
  - Fail to identify common interests

- Use repetitive themes
  - Perseverate on personal interests
  - Disregard the other person’s interests
Conversation Hogging: Perspective Taking Questions

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Conversational Skills: Bad Example

Perspective Taking Questions:

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Social Error: Policing

PEERS® Rule:
Don’t police

Common Social Errors for Youth with ASD:

- Poor social cognition
  - Difficulty predicting social world
- Dichotomous thinking
  - Black-and-white thinking
- Rule-driven
- Notice rule violations
- Feel compelled to point out rule violations
Policing: Perspective Taking Questions

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Conversational Skills: Bad Example

Perspective Taking Questions:

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Social Error: Getting Too Personal

PEERS® Rule:
Don’t get too personal at first

Common Social Errors for Youth with ASD:

- Poor social cognition
  - Difficulty taking on the perspectives of others
  - Difficulty picking up on social cues
- Ask personal questions of others
- Share too much information
Getting Too Personal: Perspective Taking Questions

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Clinical Example: Starting Conversations

QUESTIONS:

What are most teens and adults with ASD told to do to meet new people?

What are common social errors committed by teens and adults with ASD when starting conversations?
Starting an Individual Conversation: Bad Example

Perspective Taking Questions:

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Staring an Individual Conversation

1. Find a common interest
   - Make a comment
   - Ask a question
   - Give a compliment

2. Trade information
   - Ask the person about him/herself
     - Usually related to common interest
   - Answer your own questions
   - Ask follow-up questions
Starting an Individual Conversation: Good Example

Perspective Taking Questions:

- What was that like for Ben?
- What did Ben think of Alex?
- Is Ben going to want to talk to Alex again?
Clinical Example: Handling Teasing

QUESTIONS:

What are most teens and adults told to do to handle teasing?

What do most teens and adults with ASD do to handle teasing?
Handling Teasing

- Do not walk away, ignore the person, or tell an adult
- Don’t show you’re upset or tease back
- Act like what the person said did not bother you
- Provide a SHORT COMEBACK that shows what the person said was lame:
  - Whatever!
  - Anyway…
  - So what?
  - Big deal!
  - Who cares?
  - Yeah and?
  - And your point is?
  - Am I supposed to care?
  - Is that supposed to be funny?
  - (Shrug shoulders)
  - (Roll eyes)
- Then walk away or remove yourself
Handling Teasing: Perspective Taking Questions

- What was that like for Alex?
- What did Alex think of Ben?
- Is Alex going to want to tease Ben again?
Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training to Improve Friendships in Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders

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

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

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

Predicting treatment success in social skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: The UCLA Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills

Ya-Chih Chang1, Elizabeth A Laugeson1, Alexander Gantman1, Ruth Ellingsen1, Fred Frankel1 and Ashley R Dillon2

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

Alexander Gantman · Steven K. Kapp · Kaely Orenski · Elizabeth A. Laugeson
A Replication and Extension of the PEERS Intervention: Examining Effects on Social Skills and Social Anxiety in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Kirsten A. Schohl · Amy V. Van Hecke · Audrey Meyer Carson · Bridget Dolan · Jeffrey Karst · Sheryl Stevens

Measuring the Plasticity of Social Approach: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of the PEERS Intervention on EEG Asymmetry in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Amy Vaughan Van Hecke · Sheryl Stevens · Audrey M. Carson · Jeffrey S. Karst · Bridget Dolan · Kirsten Schohl · Ryan J. McKindles · Rheanna Remmel · Scott Brockman

Parent and Family Outcomes of PEERS: A Social Skills Intervention for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Jeffrey S. Karst · Amy Vaughan Van Hecke · Audrey M. Carson · Sheryl Stevens · Kirsten Schohl · Bridget Dolan

A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Korean Version of the PEERS® Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training Program for Teens With ASD

Hee-Jeong Yoo, Geonho Bahn, In-Hee Cho, Eun-Kyung Kim, Joo-Hyun Kim, Jung-Won Min, Won-Hye Lee, Jun-Seong Seo, Sang-Shin Jun, Guiyoung Bong, Soochul Cho, Min-Sup Shin, Bung-Nyun Kim, Jae-Won Kim, Subin Park, and Elizabeth A. Laugeson
The ABC’s of Teaching Social Skills to Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom: The UCLA PEERS® Program

Elizabeth A. Laugeson · Ruth Ellingsen · Jennifer Sanderson · Lara Tucci · Shannon Bates

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

Alexander Gantman · Steven K. Kapp · Kaely Orenski · Elizabeth A. Laugeson
Long-Term Treatment Outcomes for Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training for Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorders: The UCLA PEERS Program

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PEERS® Research:
Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

- Data was collected 1-5 years post-treatment
- 53 of 82 potential subjects
  - 64% response rate
- No significant differences between participants and non-participants at baseline
- Mean age at follow-up:
  - 17.5 years old
  - 11.4 grade level
- Mean time to follow-up:
  - 29 months
PEERS® Research:
Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

**SSRS Total Social Skills**

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
PEERS® Research:
Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

SSRS Problem Behaviors

Standard Score

T1  T2  T3

Clinical Severity
Elevated
Average

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
PEERS® Research:
Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

SSRS Subscales

All T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
PEERS® Research:
Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

SRS - Social Responsiveness Total Score

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01, N=27
PEERS® Research: Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

SRS - Subscales

All T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.02, N=27
PEERS® Research:
Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

QSQ Total Get-Togethers

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.02
PEERS® Research:
Long-term Follow-up Study for Teens with ASD

**TASSK Social Skills Knowledge**

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
• 14-week parent-assisted program
• Weekly 90-minute teen and parent sessions
• PEERS® Certified Training for Mental Health Professionals
  – UCLA
  – 3-4 days (24 hours total)
  – Live group observations
  – Research scholarships available
  – www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/
PEERS® Curriculum
School-Based Professionals

• 16-week curriculum
• Daily lesson plans
• Teacher-facilitated
• Includes weekly comprehensive parent handouts
• PEERS® Certified Training for Educators
  – UCLA
  – 3 days (24 hours total)
  – Research scholarships available
  – www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/
The Science of Making Friends
Parent Book

- Parent book covering skills taught in PEERS®
- Friendship skills
- Handling peer rejection and conflict
- Parent section
  - Narrative lessons
  - Social coaching tips
- Teen and young adult chapter summaries
- Chapter exercises
- Companion DVD
- Mobile App: FriendMaker
Autism Ontario Resource: Social Matters

- Autism Ontario is a leader in bringing evidence-based social skill programing to Ontario

- Social Matters is a 2011 publication from Autism Ontario

- The aim of the document is to improve social skills interventions for Ontarians with ASD

- Social Matters provides a thorough overview of social skills programing in Ontario

- Survey results and review of current research literature is included

- Recommendations are provided regarding the advocacy and creation of social skill interventions in Ontario
Autism Ontario Professional Training: PEERS® Certified Training Seminar

March 4 – 6, 2015
8:30 AM – 4:45 PM
Mississauga, ON

Early Bird Cost: $630 (Before Dec. 31, 2014)
Regular Cost: $675 (After Dec. 31, 2014)

For more information contact:
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