Friendship 101: How to Make and Keep Friends for Youth with Special Needs

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Overview of Lecture

• Social deficits among youth with special needs
• Importance of improving friendships
• Consequences of peer rejection
• Effective methods of social skills instruction
• PEERS intervention strategies
  – Entering conversations
  – Handling arguments
  – Handling teasing
• Summary of long-term research findings
• Resources
Social Deficits Among Youth 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 social engagement
  - Less involvement in social activities
  - Lack of peer entry attempts
- Poor social cognition
  - Difficulty understanding the perspectives of others

Consequences of Social Deficits for Youth with Special Needs

- Social neglect and isolation
  - Withdrawn
  - Seen as shy by others
  - Go unnoticed
  - Not engaging others socially
  - Anxious, depressed, ASD

- Peer rejection
  - Teased and bullied
  - Unsuccessful attempts to socially engage others
  - Bad reputation
  - ADHD, impulse control disorders, ASD

- Peer conflict
  - Arguments may result in termination of friendship

- Lack of close reciprocal friendships
  - Poor friendship quality

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

(Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smiroldo, & Bamburg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)
Consequences of Peer Rejection During Adolescence

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Low self-esteem
- Substance abuse
- Poor academic performance
- Early withdrawal from school
- Suicidal ideation and attempts

(Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smiroldo, & Bamburg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)
Categories of Peer Acceptance in Adolescence

- Average (55%)
- Popular (15%)
- Peer Rejected (15%)
- Socially Neglected (15%)

The Science of Making Friends (Laugeson, 2013)
Limitations of Social Skills Training

- Social skills training is common for children with special needs
- Very few programs for adolescents and adults with special needs
- Most programs do not use evidence-based curricula
- Often fail to tailor teaching methods to the cognitive style of participants
- 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
- Do not assess durability of treatment gains over time
Background about PEERS®

• International program
  – Developed at UCLA in 2004
  – Adolescent program has been translated into over a dozen languages
  – Used in over 70 countries

• Evidence-Based Social Skills Programs:
  – PEERS® for Preschoolers
  – PEERS® for Adolescents
  – PEERS® for Young Adults

• Research Programs:
  – PEERS® for Careers
  – PEERS® for Dating
  – PEERS® L-Dopa
Unique Aspects of PEERS®

- One of the only evidence-based social skills programs
  - ONLY evidence-based social skills program for teens and adults with ASD and other social challenges

- Parent or caregiver assisted
  - Parents and other caregivers are trained as social coaches

- Only teaches ecologically valid social skills
  - Teaches rules and steps followed by socially successful people

- Cross-culturally adapted across the globe
  - Seven scientific papers published outside of the U.S.
Evidence-Based Methods for Teaching Social Skills

- Small group format
  - 10-12 teens or young adults
- Didactic lessons
  - Concrete rules and steps of social etiquette
  - Ecologically valid social skills
  - Socratic method of teaching
- Social coaches
  - Concurrent lessons with parents/caregivers
  - Aides generalization of skills
  - Individualizes treatment
- Role-play demonstrations
  - Model social behavior
  - Appropriate and inappropriate demonstrations
  - Perspective taking questions
- Behavioral rehearsal exercises
  - Practice skills in session with treatment team
- Homework assignments
  - Practice in natural social settings
  - Helps generalize skills
  - In vivo social coaching from parent, caregivers, or teachers

(Matson, 1984; Davies & Rogers, 1985; Fleming & Fleming, 1982; Mesibov, 1984; Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Gralinski & Kopp, 1993; Rubin & Sloman, 1984, Frankel & Myatt, 2003; Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008; Laugeson et al., 2008)
PEERS® Targeted Social Skills

Friendship and Romantic Relationship Skills:

- Finding and choosing good friends and romantic partners
- Conversational skills
- Starting and entering conversations
- Exiting conversations
- Electronic communication
- Appropriate use of humor
- Get-togethers
- Good sportsmanship
- Dating etiquette
  - Letting someone know you like them
  - Asking someone on a date
  - Organizing and planning a date
  - General dating do’s and don’ts
Managing Conflict and Rejection Skills:

- Dating etiquette
  - Taking no for an answer
  - Politely turning someone down for a date
  - Handling unwanted sexual pressure
- Handling arguments
- Changing a bad reputation
- Handling direct bullying
  - Teasing and embarrassing feedback
  - Physical bullying
- Handling indirect bullying
  - Cyber bullying
  - Rumors and gossip
Clinical Example: Making Friends
Entering Group Conversations

QUESTIONS:

What are most young people told to do to meet new people?

What do peer rejected youth do to meet new people?

What do socially neglected youth do to meet new people?

Role play videos: www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources
PEERS® Steps for Entering Group Conversations

1. Listen to the conversation
2. Watch from a distance
3. Use a prop
4. Identify the topic
5. Find a common interest
6. Move closer
7. Wait for a pause
8. Mention the topic
   – Make a comment
   – Ask a question
   – Give a compliment
9. Assess interest
   – Are they looking at you?
   – Are they facing you?
   – Are they talking to you?
10. Introduce yourself (optional)

Role play videos: [www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources)
Clinical Example: Managing Conflict
Handling Arguments

QUESTIONS:

What are most young people told to do when in an argument?

What do many young people with social challenges do when in an argument?

Photo of PEERS® courtesy of LA Times
PEERS® Steps for Handling Arguments

1. Keep your cool
2. Listen
3. Repeat what they said
4. Explain your side using “I” statements
5. Say you’re sorry
6. Try to solve the problem

Role play videos: www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources
Clinical Example: Managing Rejection
Handling Teasing

QUESTIONS:

What are most young people told to do in response to teasing?

What do most young people with social challenges do in response to teasing?

Photo of PEERS® courtesy of Associated Press
PEERS® Rules for 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

Role play videos: [www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources)
PEERS® Evidence-Base in the United States

- A Randomized Controlled Trial to Improve Social Skills in Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The UCLA PEERS® Program
- Evidence-Based Social Skills Training for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders: The UCLA PEERS® Program
- Social Skills Training for Young Adults with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Study
- A Replication and Extension of the PEERS® Intervention: Examining Effects on Social Skills and Social Anxiety in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders
- The UCLA PEERS School-Based Program: Treatment Outcomes for Improving Social Functioning in Adolescents and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Those with Cognitive Deficits
- Predicting treatment success in social skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: The UCLA Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills
- Brief Report: Does Gender Matter in Intervention for ASD? Examining the Impact of the PEERS® Social Skills Intervention on Social Behavior Among Females with ASD
- The ABC’s of Teaching Social Skills to Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom: The UCLA PEERS® Program
- Examination of a Parent-Assisted, Friendship-Building Program for Adolescents With ADHD
- Changes in Depressive Symptoms Among Adolescents with ASD Completing the PEERS® Social Skills Intervention
**PEERS® Evidence-Base Outside United States**

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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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, Gulyoung Bong, Soochul Cho, Min-Sup Shin, Bong-Nyun Kim, Jae-Won Kim, Subin Park, and Elizabeth A. Laugeson

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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

A Randomized Controlled Trial evaluating the Hebrew Adaptation of the PEERS® Intervention: Behavioral and Questionnaire-Based Outcomes

Shai Joseph Rabin, Sandra Israel-Yaacov, Elizabeth A. Laugeson, Irit Mor-Snir, and Ofer Golan

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**Empirisch onderzoek**

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Gabrine Jagersma, Sakiha Idris, Sophie Jacobs, Bjorn Jaime Van Pelt, Kirstin Greaves-Lord

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**Journal of Education & Social Policy**

Examining the Efficacy of an Adapted Version of the UCLA PEERS® Program with Canadian Adolescents

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**Journal of Education & Social Policy**

Learning How to Make Friends for Chinese Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Hong Kong Chinese Version of the PEERS® Intervention

Kathy Kar-Man Shum1,2, Wai Kwan Cho1,2, Louderes Mei Ol Lam1,2, Elizabeth A. Laugeson1,2, Wai Shan Wong1,2, Louisa S. K. Law1,2

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**Original Paper**

Age as a Moderator of Social Skills Intervention Response Among Korean Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Jung Kyung Hong1, Mlae Oh2, Gulyoung Bong3, Ja-Hyun Kim4, Geonho Bahn3, In-Hee Cho4, Hee Jeong Yoo1,5

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**Multicentre, randomised waitlist control trial investigating a parent-assisted social skills group programme for adolescents with brain injuries: protocol for the friends project**

Rose Gilmore,1,2 Leanne Szkowski,1 Jenny Ziviani,3 Sarah McIntyre,4 Hayley Smithers Sheedy,4 Nicola Hilton,3 Tracey Williams,9 Kirsten Quinn,6 Anne Marie Sarandrea,6 Elizabeth Luegeson,7 Mark Chatfield1

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PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

- Data was collected 1-5 years post-treatment
  - T1 – Pre-test
  - T2 – Post-test
  - T3 – 1-5 year follow-up

- 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 Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

**SSRS Total Social Skills**

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

SSRS Problem Behaviors

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

SSRS Subscales

All T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - *p*<0.01
PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

SRS - Social Responsiveness Total Score

Clinical Severity
- Severe
- Mild-Moderate
- Normal

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01, N=27
PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

SRS - Subscales

All T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.02, N=27
PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

QSQ Total Get-Togethers

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.02
PEERS® Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

TASSK Social Skills Knowledge

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
PEERS® for Adolescents
Parent-Assisted Treatment

- Certified Trainings at UCLA:
  - January 15-17, 2020
  - March 22-24, 2020
- 14-week curriculum
- Weekly 90-minute teen sessions and parent sessions
- Parent handouts
- Addresses core deficits for ASD
- Focuses on friendship skills and handling peer rejection and conflict
- Teaches ecologically valid social skills
PEERS® for Adolescents
School-Based Curriculum

- Certified Trainings at UCLA
  - June 24-26, 2020
- Teacher-facilitated curriculum
- 16-week program
- Daily lesson plans
- Focuses on friendship skills and strategies for handling peer rejection and conflict
- Includes weekly comprehensive parent handouts
PEERS® for Young Adults
Caregiver-Assisted Treatment

• Certified Trainings at UCLA:
  – February 10-12, 2020

• 16-week curriculum
• Weekly 90-minute young adult sessions and caregiver sessions
• Social coaching handouts
• Addresses core deficits for ASD
• Focuses on friendship and relationships skills and handling peer rejection and conflict
• Teaches ecologically valid social skills
The Science of Making Friends: Helping Socially Challenged Teens and Young Adults
(Laugeson, 2013)

- Parent book
- Friendship skills
- Handling peer rejection and conflict
- Parent section
  - Narrative lessons
  - Social coaching tips
- Chapter summaries for teens and young adults
- Chapter exercises / homework
- Companion DVD
  - Role-play videos
- Mobile App: FriendMaker
  - Virtual social coach
UCLA PEERS®
Clinical Programs

• Preschool Groups
  – Tuesdays 3:30 – 5:00 PM
    • Children 4-6 years of age
    • Autism Spectrum Disorder

• Adolescent Groups
  – Middle and high school
  – Wednesdays 4:30 – 6:00 PM
    • Autism Spectrum Disorder
  – Wednesdays 6:30 – 8:00 PM
    • ADHD, depression, anxiety, etc.

• Young Adult Groups
  – Mondays 4:30 – 6:00 PM
  – Mondays 6:30 – 8:00 PM
    • 18-35 years of age
    • Autism Spectrum Disorder and other social challenges

UCLA PEERS® Clinic
(310) 26-PEERS
peersclinic@ucla.edu
www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/
UCLA PEERS®
Research Studies

- **PEERS L Dopa**
  - Adolescents and young adults with ASD
  - Ongoing recruitment for RCT

- **PEERS for Careers**
  - Young adults with ASD
  - Ongoing recruitment for RCT

- **PEERS for Dating**
  - Young adults with ASD
  - Ongoing recruitment for RCT

UCLA PEERS® Clinic
(310) 26-PEERS
peersclinic@ucla.edu
www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/
• Two-day intensive topical boot camps:
  - Saturday 9 AM – 3 PM
  - Sunday 9 AM – 3 PM

• Offered 6 times per year at UCLA around the topics of:
  - Friendship
  - Conversation Skills
  - Dating
  - Handling Bullying
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