

Dating 101: Teaching Ecologically Valid Strategies for Developing Romantic Relationships for Youth with Autism and Other Social Challenges



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Overview of Presentation

- Social deficits among adults with ASD and other social challenges
- Consequences of social deficits
- Limitations of existing services and research
- Evidence-based treatments for adults with ASD
- Overview of PEERS[®] method for teaching social skills
- Research overview
- Ecologically valid strategies for developing romantic relationships
- Current and future research
- Resources



Social Deficits Common Among Adults with ASD and Other Social Challenges

- 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
 - More social isolation
- Poor social cognition
 - Difficulty understanding the perspectives of others



(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; Constantino, 2005)

Poor Social Outcomes Among Adults with ASD

- Higher incidence of mental health problems
- Higher underemployment and unemployment
- Less post-secondary education
- More dependence on caregivers
- Less likely to live independently
- Greater social isolation
- Fewer close meaningful friendships
- Fewer romantic relationships



(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; Constantino, 2005)

Romantic Relationships for Young Adults with ASD

- Fewer romantic relationships
- Less likely to marry
- Greater incidence of stalking behavior
- Less sexual knowledge and awareness
- Greater risk for sexual exploitation and victimization
- Higher risk for financial exploitation



(Stokes et al., 2005; Stokes et al., 2007; Howlin et al., 2013; Orsmond et al., 2013; Howlin et al., 2014; Tobin et al., 2013; Reichow et al., 2010)

Lack of Services and Research for Adults with ASD and Other Social Challenges

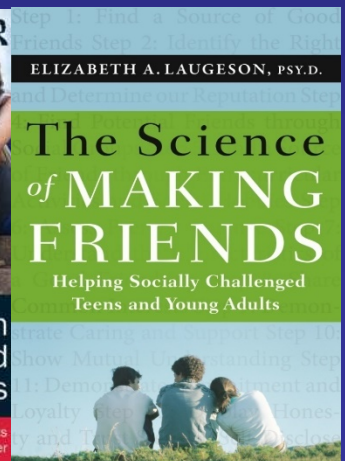
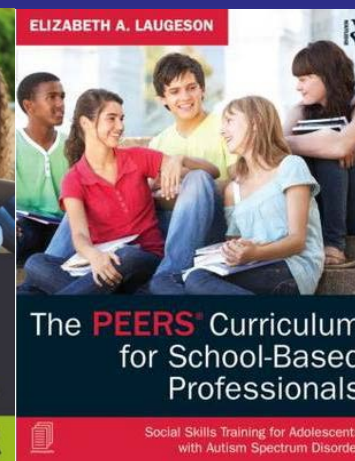
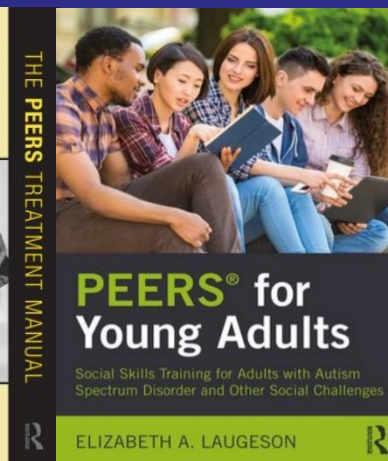
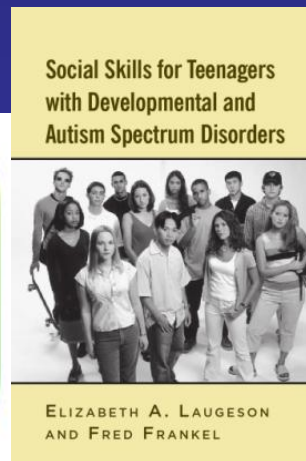
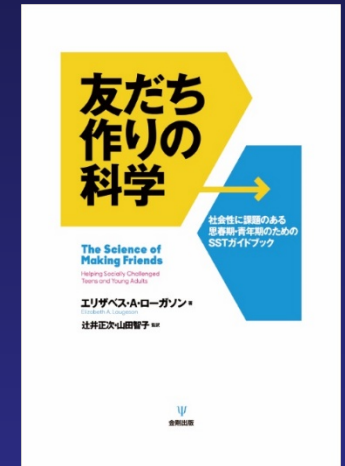
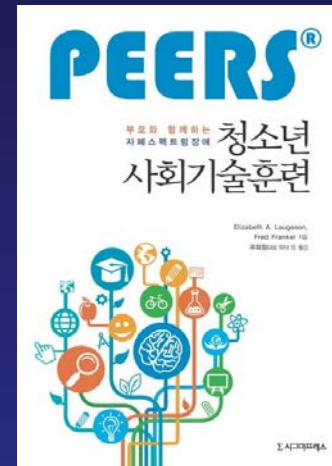
- Lack of evidence-based treatments to improve social skills in adults
- Most interventions are focused on young children
- Research funding has historically ignored adults with ASD and other social challenges
- Among the limited evidence-based interventions for adults, most have focused on young adults (18-24)
- Social demands change and increase over the lifespan
- Interventions are failing to meet the changing and increasing social demands across development
- Access to services greatly diminishes after the age of 21



(Eaves et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2011;
Howlin et al., 2004; Hendricks et al., 2009)

Background about PEERS®

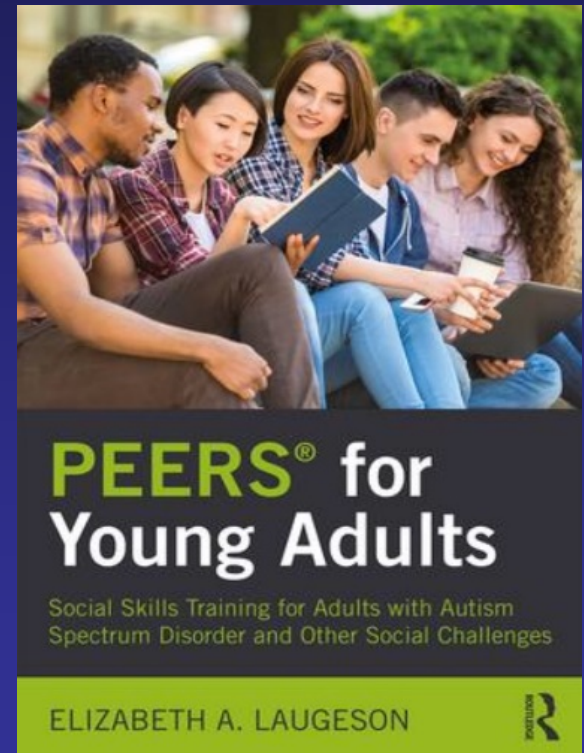
- International program
 - Developed at UCLA in 2004
 - Adolescent program has been translated into over a dozen languages
 - Used in over 35 countries
- Evidence-Based Social Skills Programs:
 - PEERS® for Preschoolers
 - PEERS® for Adolescents
 - PEERS® for Young Adults



PEERS[®] for Young Adults

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
- Dating etiquette
 - Letting someone know you like them
 - Asking someone on a date
 - Organizing and planning a date
 - General dating do's and don't

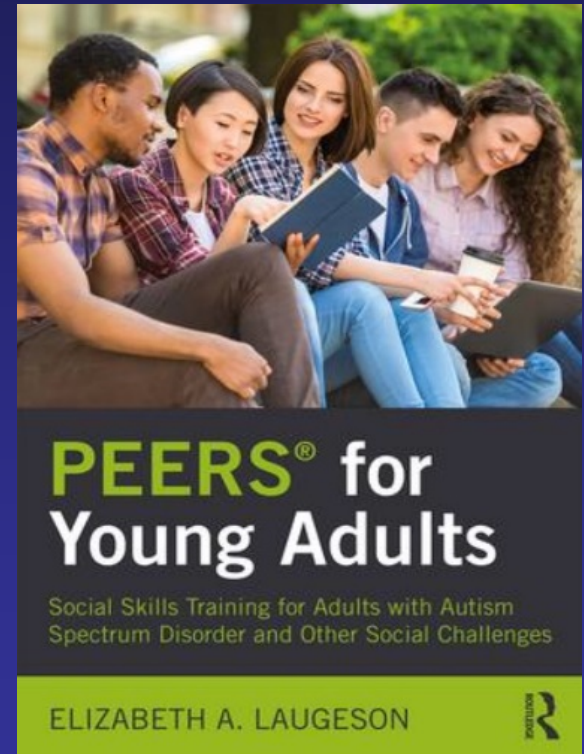


PEERS® for Young Adults

Targeted Social Skills

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
- Handling direct bullying
 - Teasing and embarrassing feedback
 - Physical bullying
- Handling indirect bullying
 - Cyber bullying
 - Rumors and gossip



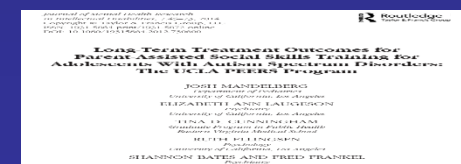
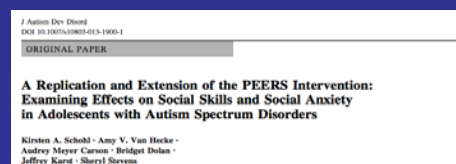
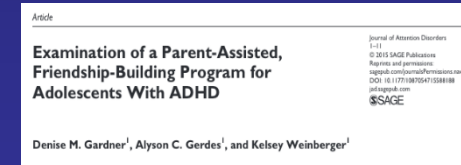
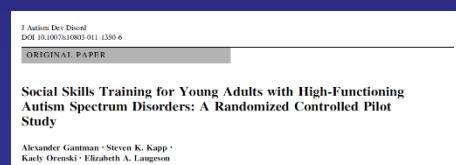
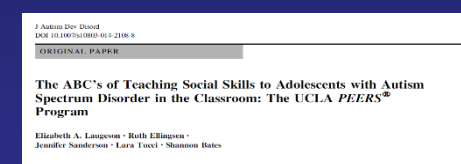
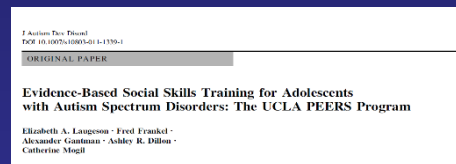
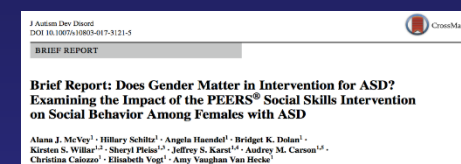
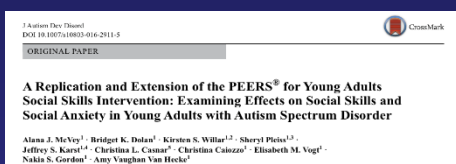
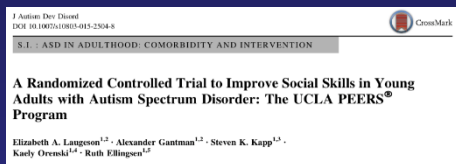
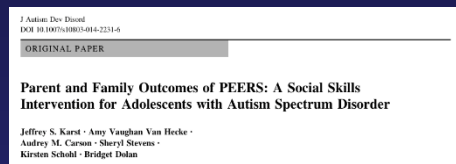
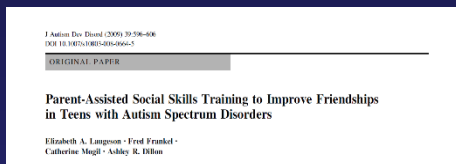
PEERS[®] Evidence-Based Methods for Teaching Social Skills

- Small group format
 - 10-12 adults
- Concurrent social coaching groups
 - Caregiver-assisted
- Didactic lessons
 - Concrete rules and steps of social etiquette
 - Ecologically valid social skills
 - Socratic method of teaching
- Role-play demonstrations
 - Model social behavior
 - Appropriate and inappropriate demonstrations
 - Perspective taking questions
- Behavioral rehearsal exercises
 - Practice skills with coaching
- Homework assignments
 - Practice in natural social settings
 - Helps generalize skills
 - In vivo caregiver coaching
- Homework review
 - Individualize the treatment



(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® Evidence-Base



Randomized Controlled Trial with Young Adults with ASD

(Laugeson, Gantman, Kapp, Orenski, & Ellingsen 2015)

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



S.1. : ASD IN ADULTHOOD: COMORBIDITY AND INTERVENTION

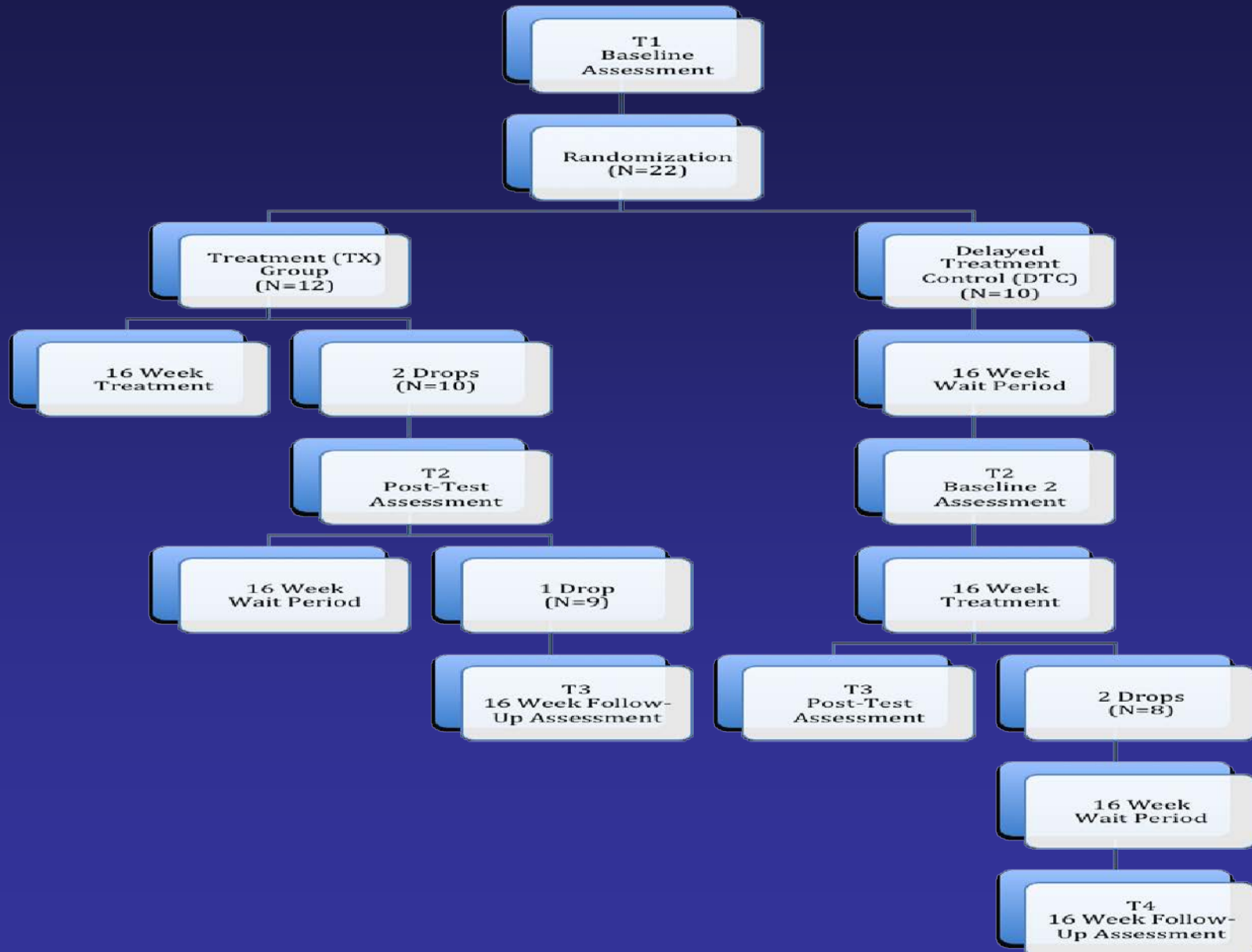
A Randomized Controlled Trial to Improve Social Skills in Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The UCLA PEERS® Program

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



Randomized Controlled Trial with Young Adults with ASD

(Laugeson, Gantman, Kapp, Orenski, & Ellingsen 2015)



PEERS® Research Snapshot:

Caregiver-Assisted for Young Adults with ASD

(Laugeson, Gantman, Kapp, Orenski, & Ellingsen 2015)

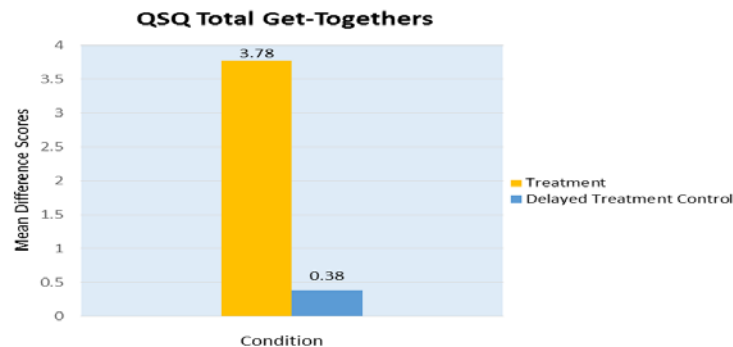
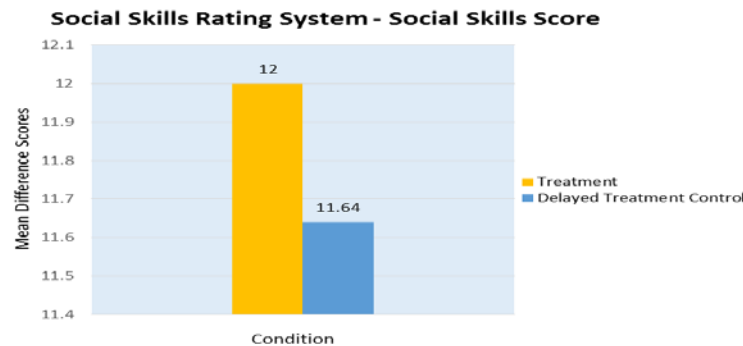
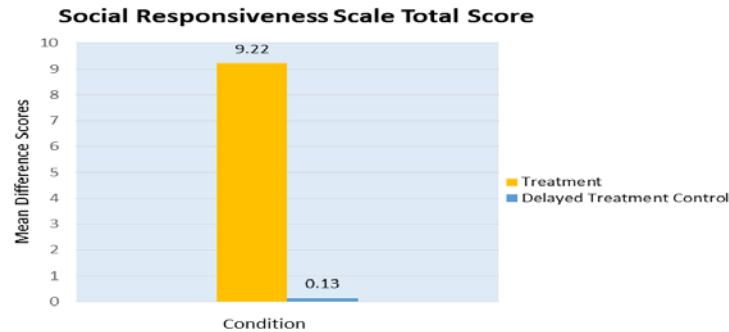


Table 2. Mean difference scores, standard deviations and significance for outcome variables

Variable	Group		<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	TX (<i>n</i> = 9)	DTC (<i>n</i> = 8)		
<i>Young adult measures</i>				
TYASSK	8.22 (3.46)	0.87 (2.10)	<.001**	2.57
QSQ total get-togethers	3.56 (2.40)	1.13 (1.36)	<.03*	0.92
QSQ hosted get-togethers	1.55 (2.13)	0.13 (0.35)	<.09+	0.93
QSQ invited get-togethers	2.00 (2.06)	1.00 (1.41)	>.10	0.57
<i>Caregiver measures</i>				
SRS total score	-9.22 (6.18)	-0.13 (7.57)	<.02*	1.32
SRS social motivation	-7.00 (6.76)	1.38 (6.67)	<.03*	1.25
SRS autistic mannerisms	-11.67 (5.45)	2.25 (11.65)	<.01**	1.53
SRS social communication	-9.00 (7.63)	-2.00 (7.17)	<.07+	0.95
SRS social awareness	-6.33 (6.96)	-2.38 (7.69)	>.10	0.54
SRS social cognition	-6.56 (7.55)	0.38 (9.44)	>.10	0.81
SSRS social skills score	12.00 (1.00)	11.64 (4.96)	<.03*	1.23
SSRS cooperation	2.22 (2.82)	-0.13 (1.36)	<.05*	1.06
SSRS assertion	4.22 (3.60)	0.38 (1.41)	<.02*	1.40
SSRS responsibility	1.78 (2.91)	0.00 (1.60)	>.10	0.76
SSRS self-control	1.78 (3.42)	0.38 (2.56)	>.10	0.46
QSQ total get-togethers	3.78 (1.64)	0.38 (0.52)	<.001**	1.76
QSQ hosted get-togethers	2.00 (2.00)	0.00 (0.53)	<.02*	1.37
QSQ invited get-togethers	1.78 (1.86)	0.38 (0.74)	<.07+	0.99
EQ total score	2.67 (5.74)	1.50 (6.57)	>.10	0.19

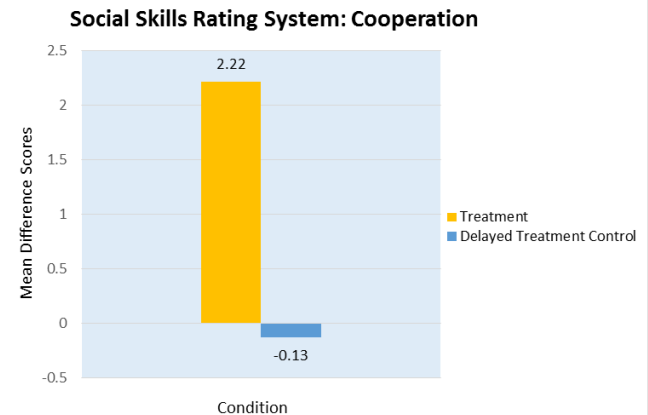
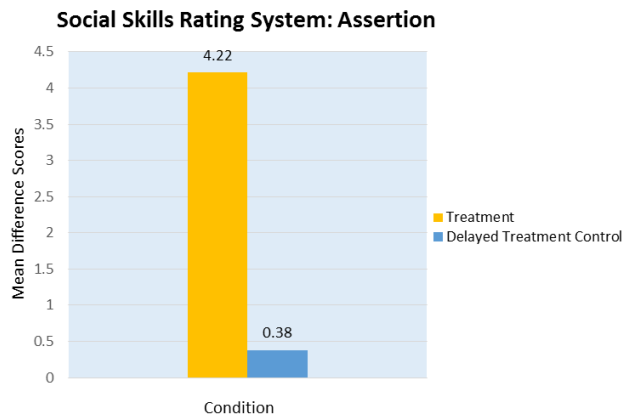
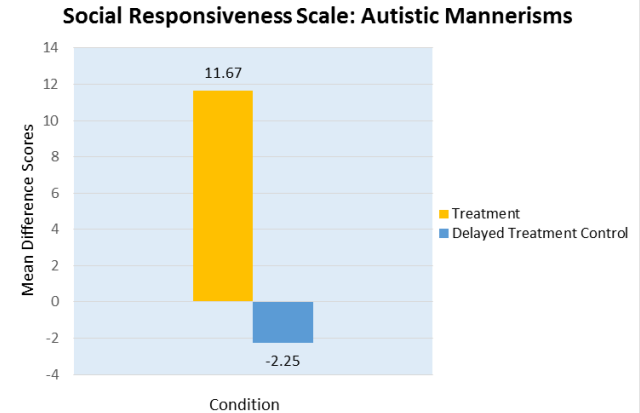
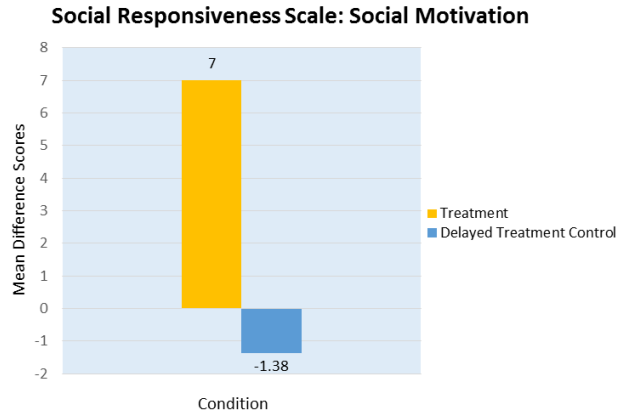
Difference scores measure change in scores from T1 to T2

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .1$

PEERS® Research Snapshot:

Caregiver-Assisted for Young Adults with ASD

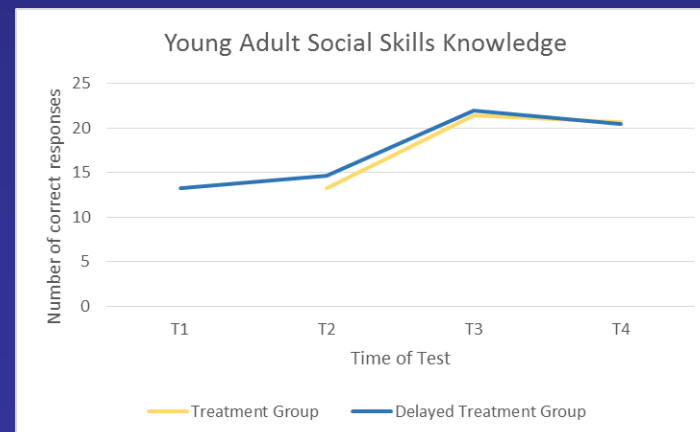
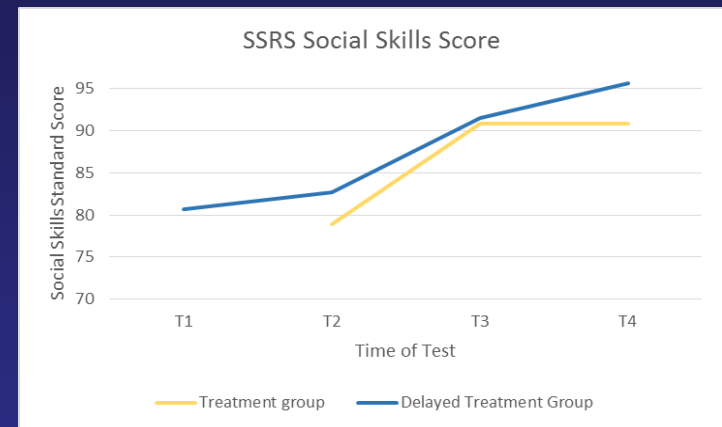
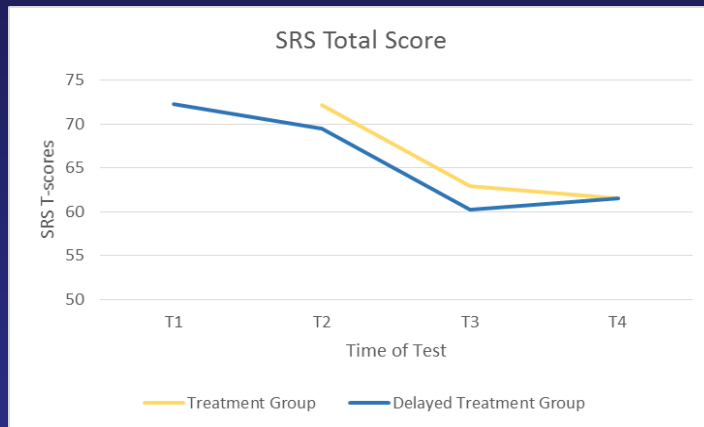
(Laugeson, Gantman, Kapp, Orenski, & Ellingsen 2015)



PEERS[®] Research Snapshot:

Caregiver-Assisted for Young Adults with ASD

(Laugeson, Gantman, Kapp, Orenski, & Ellingsen 2015)

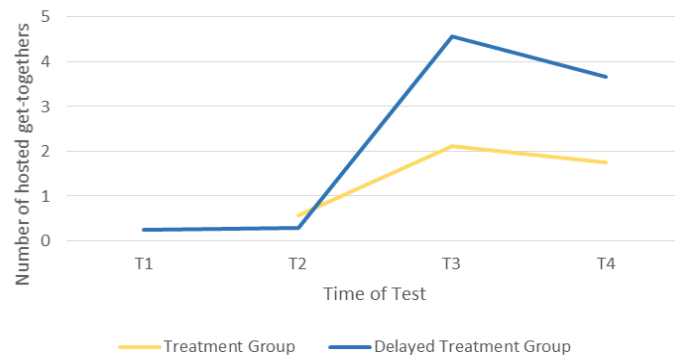


PEERS[®] Research Snapshot:

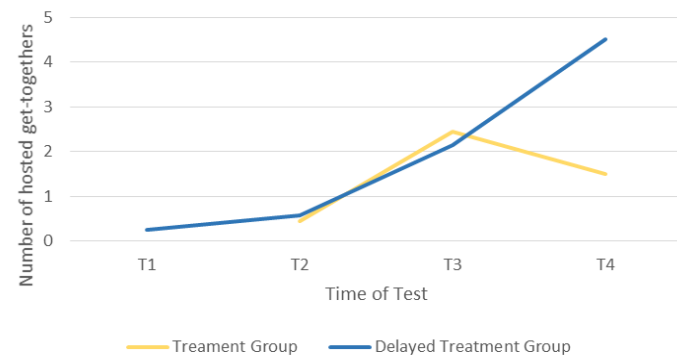
Caregiver-Assisted for Young Adults with ASD

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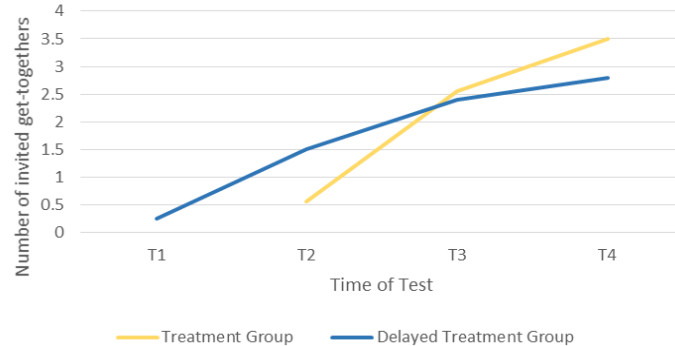
Young Adult Reported Hosted Get-togethers



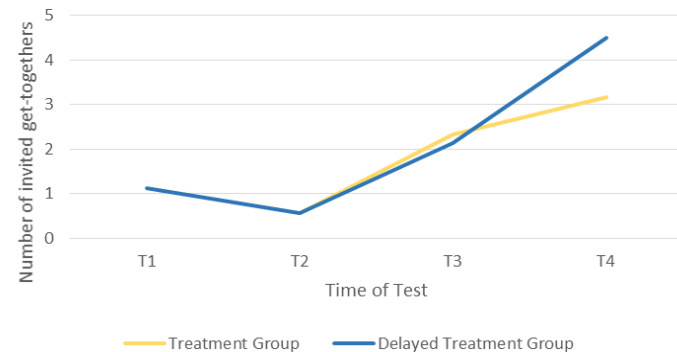
Caregiver Reported Hosted Get-togethers



Young Adult Reported Invited Get-togethers



Caregiver Reported Invited Get-togethers



Clinical Example:

Letting Someone Know You Like Them

QUESTIONS:

What are most people with ASD and other social challenges told to do to let someone know they like them romantically?

What do people with ASD and other social challenges often do to let someone know they like them?



PEERS[®] Social Skill

Letting Someone Know You Like Them: Speak to a Mutual Friend

- Ask if the person is dating anyone
- Ask if the person might be interested in you
- Ask if they think the person might go out with you
- Casually mention that you like them



PEERS® Social Skill
Letting Someone Know You Like Them:
Flirting (Bad Example)

PEERS® Social Skill:

Letting Someone Know You Like Them:

Flirt with your Eyes

1. Make eye contact
2. Give a slight smile
 - Not a big smile
 - No teeth
3. Look away
4. Repeat

PEERS[®] Social Skill

**Letting Someone Know You Like Them:
Giving Compliments (Bad Example)**

PEERS® Social Skill

Letting Someone Know You Like Them: Giving Compliments

- SPECIFIC compliments for people you don't know well
- GENERAL compliments ONLY if you know them well
- Avoid too many physical compliments
- Physical compliments should be from the neck-up

Clinical Example:

Asking Someone on a Date

QUESTIONS:

What are most people with ASD and other social challenges told to do to ask someone on a date?

What do people with ASD and other social challenges often do to ask someone on a date?



PEERS® Social Skill: Asking Someone on a Date

BEFORE ASKING THEM OUT:

- Figure out their dating status
- Let them know you like them
- Flirt with them
- Trade information multiple times
- Find common interests



**PEERS® Clinical Example:
Asking Someone On a Date
(Bad Example)**

PEERS® Clinical Example: Asking Someone On a Date

1. Wait for an appropriate time
2. Trade information
3. Mention your common interests
4. Ask what they're doing at a certain time
 - “Well, what are you doing this weekend?”
5. Assess their interest
6. Use common interest as a cover story for going out
7. Exchange contact information
8. Tell them when you'll follow-up

Current Research Opportunity

UCLA Treatment Study for Individuals with Autism

The purpose of this 16-week study is to examine the combined effects of medication (L-DOPA or placebo) plus a specialized behavioral intervention aimed towards increasing social skills.

**You are eligible to participate
if you:**

- Are between 13-30 years
- Have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

Participants will receive:

- PEERS (social skills training)
(1 session/week for 16 weeks)
- Comprehensive diagnostic & cognitive evaluation
- Neurological testing
- L-DOPA or placebo (inactive medication)
- Questionnaires, interviews,
psychological and laboratory
testing
- Up to \$550 if complete all visits

**For more information, contact UCLA at
310 267 4798 or autismresearch@ucla.edu**



James McCracken, MD
autismresearch@ucla.edu ♦ www.autism.ucla.edu

Protocol ID: IRB#17-001168 UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 3/12/2018 Through: 8/13/2018 Committee: Medical IRB 3

Future Research Opportunities: PEERS for Dating

- 16-week group-based social skills intervention focused on developing and maintaining romantic relationships for adults with ASD
- Concurrent dating coach sessions
- Recruitment begins Winter 2019

Proposed Curriculum

1. Choosing and finding appropriate people to date
2. Starting conversations
3. Maintaining conversations
4. Entering and exiting conversations
5. Electronic communication
6. Online dating
7. Letting someone know you like them
8. Asking someone on a date
9. Handling rejection
10. Going on dates
11. Dating do's and don'ts
12. Handling sexual pressure
13. Relationship boundaries
14. Physical contact and sexual activity
15. Conflict resolution



Future Research Opportunities: College to Career Transition Program

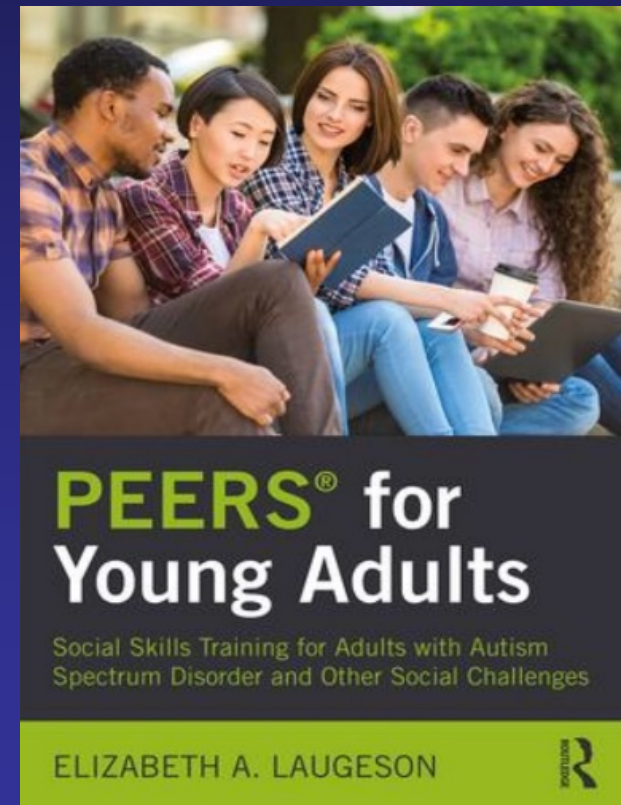
- PEERS for Careers (Fall Quarter 2018)
 - 10 week course
 - Two 90-minute weekly classes
 - 3 unit class
 - Focused on employment skills
 - Concurrent career coaching group with undergraduate students
- UCLA Internship (Winter Quarter 2019)
 - On-campus employment opportunities
 - Support via UCLA CAN Clinic
 - Ongoing career coaching from undergraduate students
- Externship (Spring Quarter 2019)
 - Off-campus employment opportunities
 - Support via UCLA CAN Clinic
 - Ongoing career coaching from undergraduate students



PEERS[®] for Young Adults

Caregiver-Assisted Treatment

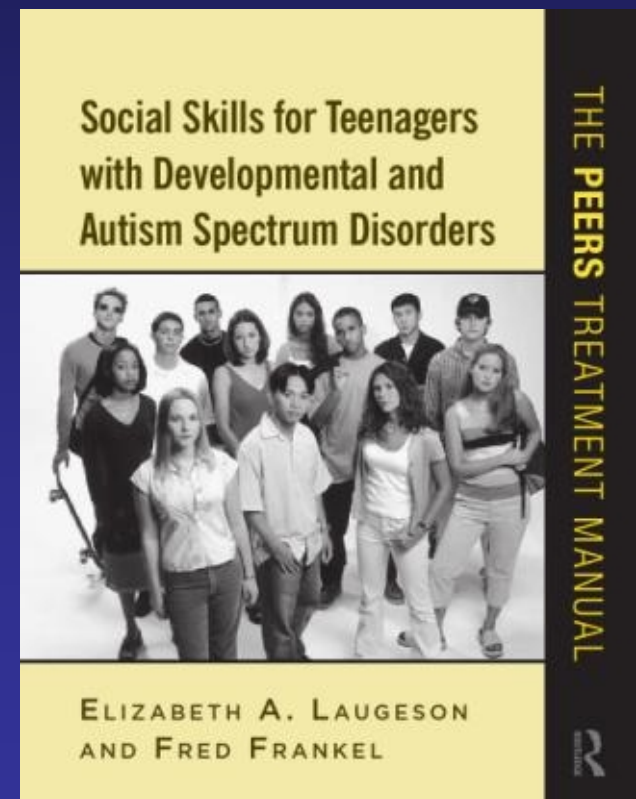
- Certified Trainings at UCLA:
 - July 30 – August 1, 2018
 - February 11-13, 2019
 - Research scholarships are available
- 16-week curriculum
- Weekly 90-minute young adult sessions and caregiver sessions
- Social coaching handouts
- Addresses core deficits for ASD
- Focuses on friendship and relationships skills and handling peer rejection and conflict
- Teaches ecologically valid social skills



PEERS® for Adolescents

Parent-Assisted Treatment

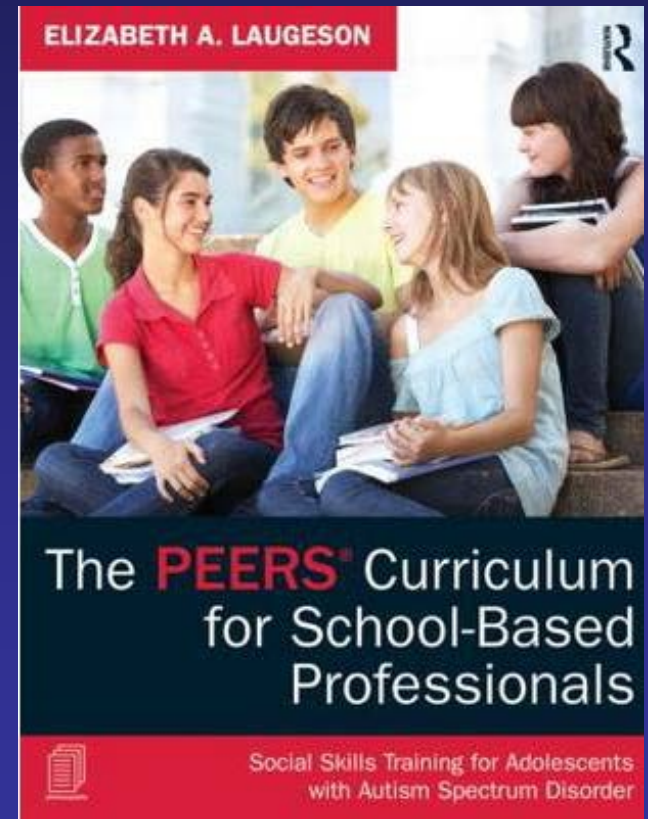
- Certified Trainings at UCLA:
 - September 5-7, 2018
 - December 5-7, 2018
 - Research scholarships are available
- 14-week curriculum
- Weekly 90-minute teen sessions and parent sessions
- Parent handouts
- Addresses core deficits for ASD
- Focuses on friendship skills and handling peer rejection and conflict
- Teaches ecologically valid social skills



PEERS® for Adolescents

School-Based Curriculum

- Certified Training at UCLA
 - June 27-29, 2018
 - Research scholarships are available
- 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
- Evidence-based treatment for ASD
 - Middle school
 - High school

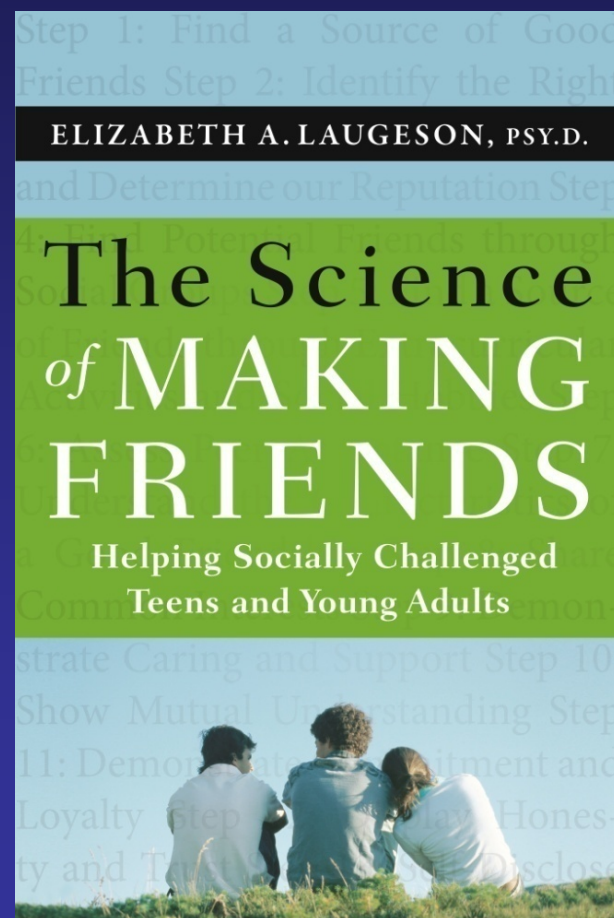


The Science of Making Friends:

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





Find us on
Facebook

PEERS[®] Clinic

www.semel.ucla.edu/peers

Role-Play Video Library

www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources

www.routledge.com/cw/laugeson

UCLA PEERS[®] Clinic

- **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
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www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/

Acknowledgements

Funding Support

NIMH U54-MH-068172 (Sigman, PI)
NIH T32 MH17140 (Leuchter, PI)
Semel Scholar Award (Laugeson, PI)
Friends of the Semel Institute (Laugeson, PI)
Organization for Autism Research (Gantman, PI)
Shapell & Guerin Family Foundation (Laugeson, PI)
Organization for Autism Research (Laugeson, PI)
Lang Family Foundation (Laugeson, PI)



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Fred Frankel, Ph.D., ABPP (co-developer)
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Josh Mandelberg, M.D.
Steven Kapp, Ph.D.
Kaeli Orenski, Psy.D.
Mina Park, Ph.D.
Enjey Lin, Ph.D.
Jilly Chang, Ph.D.
Jennifer Sanderson, Psy.D.
Ruth Ellingsen, Ph.D.
Aarti Nair, Ph.D.
Vindia Fernandez, Ph.D.
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