From Play Dates to Romantic Dates: Social Skills Training for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder Across the Lifespan

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Overview of Presentation

• Social deficits among individuals with ASD
• Consequences of poor social skills
• Overview of PEERS® method
  • PEERS® for Preschoolers
    – Example: Joining Play
  • PEERS® for Adolescents
    – Example: Entering a Conversation
  • PEERS® for Young Adults
    – Example: Flirting and Dating
• Research for youth with ASD
• Resources
Social Deficits Among Youth with ASD

- Less social initiation
  - Fewer peer entry attempts
- Poor play skills
  - More parallel play
  - Less interactive and imaginative play
- Poor social motivation
  - Less engagement with peers
- Poor social awareness
  - Difficulty understanding social cues
- Poor social communication
  - Problems with conversations
- Poor social cognition
  - Difficulty understanding the perspectives of others

(Bauminger & Kasari, 2000; Carter, Davis, Klin, & Volkmar, 2005; Chamberlain, Kasari, & Rotheram-Fuller, 2007; Paul, 2003; Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008)
Consequences of Social Deficits

• Significant impact regardless of cognitive functioning and language abilities
  – Pervasive and persistent
  – Worsen as social demands and expectations increase with age

• Consequences:
  – Peer rejection
  – Social neglect
  – Lack of reciprocal relationships
  – Loneliness and isolation
  – Co-morbid mood and anxiety symptoms
  – Academic and employment underachievement later in life

Social Skills Treatments in ASD

- Emphasis on early intervention
  - Few evidence-based social skills treatments
  - Emphasis on language delays rather than social skills
- Limitations of existing treatments
  - Not tailored for youth without intellectual disabilities
  - Few treatments for teens and adults
  - Lack of active parent or teacher involvement
  - Limited generalization to naturalistic social settings
  - Rarely focused on friendship skills

(DeRosier, Swick, Davis, McMillen, & Matthews, 2011; Frankel & Whitham, 2011; Matson, Matson, & Rivet, 2007; Frankel, Myatt, Sugar, Whitham, Gorospe, & Laugeson, 2011; Rao, Beidel, Murray, 2008; Rogers, 2000; White, Keonig, & Scahill, 2007)
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 social coaching

(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)
Background about PEERS®

• International program
  – Adolescent program has been translated into six languages
  – Used in over a dozen countries

• NICE
  – National Institute for Health and Care Excellence - UK
  – Best example of an evidence-based social skills intervention for youth with ASD

• Cochrane Reports
  – Reichow, Steiner, & Volkmar (2012)
  – 1 of 5 evidence-based social skills interventions for individuals 6-21 years of age with ASD

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

(Sanderson & Laugeson, PIs)
(Park & Laugeson, PIs)

- 16-week manualized social skills program
- 4-6 year old children with ASD without intellectual disabilities
- Puppet-facilitated lessons
- Teaches ecologically valid friendship skills
- Parent-assisted
- Parents act as social coaches to increase generalizability and durability of gains
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
- 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

[Topic in WHITE will be covered in the lecture]
PEERS® Social Skill: Joining a Game

1. Watch the game
   - Figure out what they’re playing
   - Know the rules

2. Move closer

3. Ask to play
   - Look at your friend
   - Smile
   - Say, “Can I play?” using names
   - If your friend says yes:
     • Join the game
   - If your friend says no:
     • Keep cool and find something else to do
Open-Trial Results: Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale-2

Higher scores indicate more autism-related symptoms.
Open-Trial Results: Social Responsiveness Scale-2

Higher scores indicate more social impairment.
Open-Trial Results:
Social Skills Improvement Scale

Higher scores indicate better social skills.
Open-Trial Results: Social Skills Improvement Scale

Higher scores indicate more problem behaviors.
Open-Trial Results:

Quality of Play Questionnaire

Number of play dates in the past month

- Total: Pre and Post comparison
- Host: Pre and Post comparison
- Guest: Pre and Post comparison
PEERS® for Adolescents

• Parent-assisted 14-week program
  – 90 minute weekly concurrent parent and teen sessions
  – Published Korean manual
• Teacher-facilitated 16-week program
  – Daily 30-50 minute lessons with comprehensive parent handouts
• Focuses on friendship skills and handling peer conflict and rejection
• Teaches ecologically valid social skills
Summary of PEERS® Social Skills

Friendship Skills:
• Finding and choosing friends
• Conversational skills
• Starting and entering conversations
• Exiting conversations
• Electronic communication
• Get-togethers
• Dating etiquette (adults only)
  – Letting someone know you like them
  – Asking someone on a date
  – Organizing and planning a date
  – General dating do’s and don’ts
  – Taking no for an answer
  – Politely turning someone down for a date

[Topics in WHITE will be covered in the lecture]
Summary of PEERS® Social Skills

Managing Conflict and Rejection:

• Handling arguments
• Handling teasing and embarrassing feedback
• Managing chronic bullying
• Minimizing rumors and gossip
• Handling cyber bullying
• Changing a bad reputation
• Handling peer pressure (adults only)
Clinical Example

QUESTIONS:

What are most teens told to do when trying to meet a new group of people?

What is a common social error made by teens with ASD when entering group conversations?
Bad Role-Play: Entering Group Conversations

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)
PEERS® Social Skill: 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

The Science of Making Friends (Laugeson, 2013)
Good Role-Play: Entering Group Conversations

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)
Clinical Example

QUESTIONS:

What are most people with autism told to do to let someone know they like them romantically?

What do people with autism often do to let someone know they like them?
PEERS® Social Skill:
Letting Someone Know You Like Them

Flirt with them

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

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
• Causally mention that you like them
PEERS® Social Skill: Letting Someone Know You Like Them

Give compliments

• SPECIFIC compliments for people you don’t know well
  – Example: “That was really interesting!”
• GENERAL compliments ONLY if you know them well
  – Example: “You’re so smart!”
• Avoid too many physical compliments
• Physical compliments should be from the neck-up
PEERS® Social Skill: Asking Someone on a Date

1. Trade information
2. Mention your common interests
3. Ask what they’re doing at some general time (e.g., this weekend)
4. Assess their interest
5. Use common interests as a cover story for going out
6. If interested:
   a. Choose a day and general time
   b. Exchange contact information
7. Contact them to finalize plans
8. If NOT interested:
   a. Keep your cool
   b. Casually say, “Okay”
   c. Change the subject

Video courtesy of [www.wrongplanet.net](http://www.wrongplanet.net)
Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training to Improve Friendships in Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Elizabeth A. Laugeson · Fred Frankel · Catherine Mogill · 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 Mogill

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 Oremski · 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. Schahl · 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 Schahl · Ryan J. McKendies · Rheaanna Remmel · Scott Brockman

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

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, Soochurl Cho, Min-Sup Shin, Bung-Nyun Kim, Jae-Won Kim, Subin Park, and 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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Long-term Follow-up Study
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel, 2013)

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

SSRS Total Social Skills

Clinical Severity
- Average
- Decreased

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01
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
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
SRS - Social Responsiveness Total Score

All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - p<0.01, N=27
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
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
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
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 6:00 – 7:30 PM
    • 18-30 years of age
    • Autism Spectrum Disorder

UCLA PEERS® Clinic
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PEERS® Manual and Training

- Published manual
- **PEERS® Certified Training**
  - 3-4 day training (20 hours total)
  - UCLA
    - MARCH 25 – 27, 2015
- **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

(Laugeson & Frankel, 2014)
PEERS® School-Based Manual

- Evidence-based treatment for ASD
  - Middle school
  - High school
- 16-week curriculum
- 30-50 minute daily lesson plans
- Teacher-facilitated in the classroom
- Focuses on friendship skills
- Strategies for handling peer rejection/conflict
- Includes weekly comprehensive parent handouts

(Laugeson, 2014)
The Science of Making Friends: Helping Socially Challenged Teens and Young Adults

- Parent book
- 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

(Laugeson, 2013)
For more information:

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