

Thriving through Friendships: Improving Social Outcomes for Young Adults with ASD

UCLA



PEERS[®] Clinic

www.semel.ucla.edu/peers

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Founder and Director, UCLA PEERS Clinic

Program Director, Autism Center of Excellence, Core D

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Overview of Presentation

- Social deficits among adults with ASD
- Consequences of social deficits
- Treatment priorities related to social outcomes for adults with ASD
- Evidence-based treatments for adults with ASD
- Overview of PEERS[®] method for teaching social skills
- Clinical examples:
 - Starting conversations
 - Letting someone know you like them
- Research overview
- Resources



Social Deficits Common Among Adults 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
 - 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 underemployment and unemployment
- Less post-secondary education
- More dependence on caregivers
- Less likely to live independently
- Less likely to have a driver's license
- Greater social isolation
- Fewer close meaningful friendships
- Poor friendship quality
- Fewer romantic relationships
- Higher incidence of comorbidities
 - Anxiety, depression



(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)

Friendships Among Young Adults with ASD

- Very few close reciprocal friendships
- Poor friendship quality
- Increased social isolation upon entering adulthood
- Less involvement in social activities
- More online friends than real life friends

- Peer rejection
 - ADHD, impulse control issues, dysregulation
- Social neglect
 - Anxiety, depression



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

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

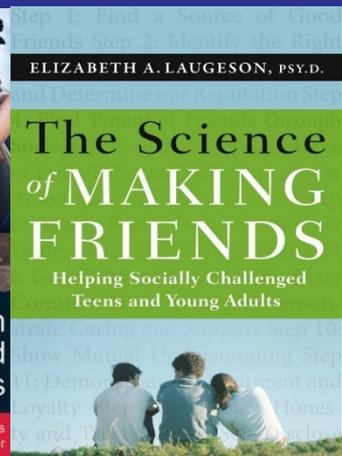
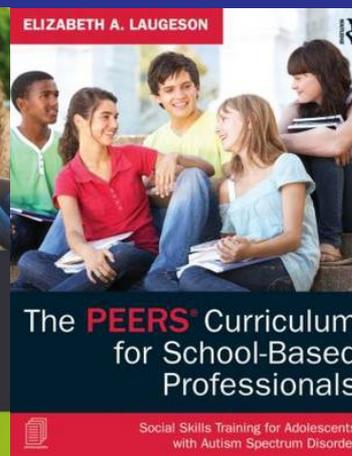
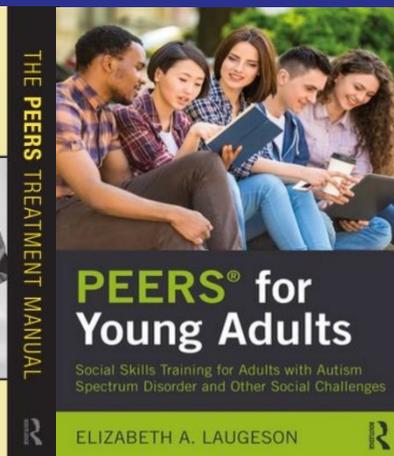
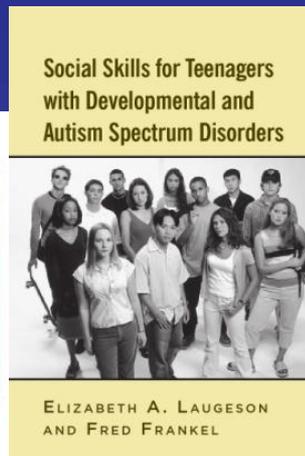
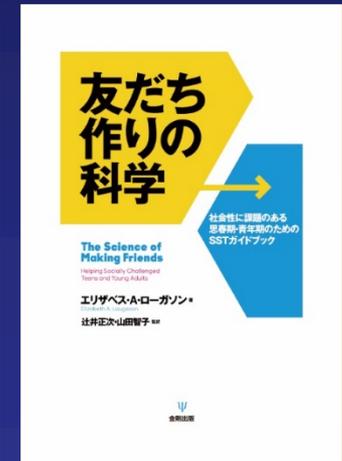
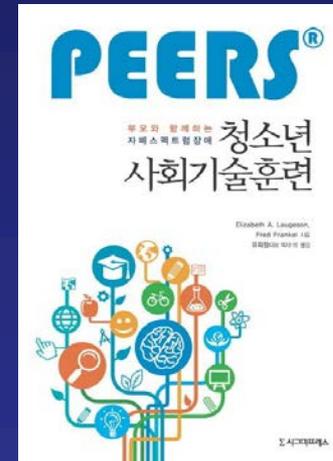
- Lack of evidence-based treatments to improve social skills in adults with ASD
- Most interventions are focused on young children
- Research funding has historically ignored adults with ASD
- Among the limited evidence-based interventions for adults, most have focused on young adults (18-24)
- Social 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®

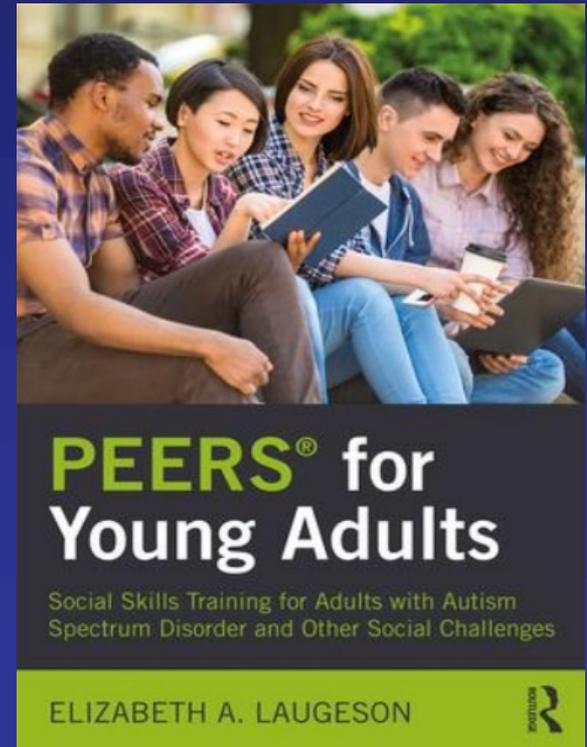
- International program
 - Developed at UCLA in 2004
 - Adolescent program has been translated into over a dozen languages
 - Used in over 35 countries
- Evidence-Based Social Skills Programs:
 - PEERS® for Preschoolers
 - PEERS® for Adolescents
 - PEERS® for Young Adults



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

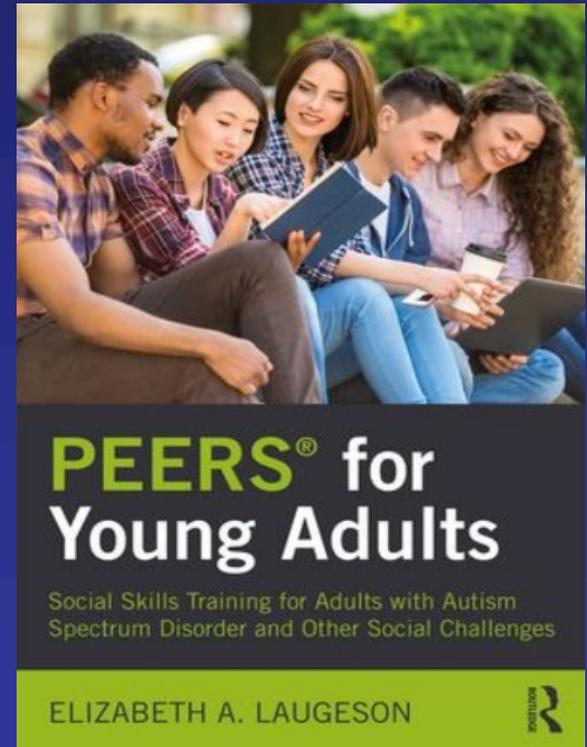


PEERS[®] for Young Adults

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)

Clinical Example: Starting Conversations

QUESTIONS:

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

INSERT VIDEO

What do many young adults with ASD do to meet new people?

PEERS[®] Clinical Example: Starting 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
6. Assess interest
 - Are they looking at you?
 - Are they facing you?
 - Are they talking to you?
7. Introduce yourself (optional)

INSERT VIDEO

Clinical Example: Asking Someone On a Date

QUESTIONS:

What are most young adults with ASD told to do to ask someone on a date?

INSERT VIDEO

What do many young adults with ASD do to ask someone on a date?

PEERS[®] Clinical Example: Asking Someone On a Date

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

INSERT VIDEO

PEERS[®] Evidence-Base for Positive Social Outcomes in ASD

J Autism Dev Disord (2009) 39:596–606
DOI 10.1007/s10803-009-0666-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

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

Elizabeth A. Laugesen · Fred Frankel · Catherine Magill · Ashley R. Dillon

J Autism Dev Disord (2009) 39:596–606
DOI 10.1007/s10803-012-2331-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

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

Short Report

Predicting treatment success in social skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: The UCLA PEERS 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

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:2508–2518
DOI 10.1007/s10803-012-2508-8

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 Gantman^{1,2} · Steven K. Kapp^{1,3} · Kately Orenski^{1,4} · Ruth Ellingsen^{1,2}

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:2508–2518
DOI 10.1007/s10803-012-2511-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

A Replication and Extension of the PEERS[®] for Young Adults Social Skills Intervention: Examining Effects on Social Skills and Social Anxiety in Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Alexis J. McVey¹ · Bridget K. Dolan¹ · Kirsten S. Willard^{1,2} · Sheryl Plecia^{1,3} · Jeffrey S. Karst^{1,4} · Christina L. Canino¹ · Christina Calzoan¹ · Elizabeth M. Vogt¹ · Nikita S. Gordon¹ · Amy Vaughan Van Hecke¹

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:2508–2518
DOI 10.1007/s10803-012-2511-5

BRIEF REPORT

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

Alexis J. McVey¹ · Hillary Schmitz¹ · Angela Hammond¹ · Bridget K. Dolan¹ · Kirsten S. Willard^{1,2} · Sheryl Plecia^{1,3} · Jeffrey S. Karst^{1,4} · Audrey M. Carson^{1,4} · Christina Calzoan¹ · Elizabeth Vogt¹ · Amy Vaughan Van Hecke¹

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:1130–1141
DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1330-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

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 Magill

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:1130–1141
DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1330-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

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. McKlinides · Rheanna Kennel · Scott Breckman

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:1130–1141
DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1330-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

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 Lovel · Shannon Bates

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:1350–1360
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 Gantman · Steven K. Kapp · Kately Orenski · Elizabeth A. Laugeson

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:1350–1360
DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1350-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

Parents Perceive Improvements in Socio-emotional Functioning in Adolescents with ASD Following Social Skills Treatment

Danielle N. Lardo¹ · Madison Bertolin¹ · Eliana L. Sudikoff¹ · Cierra Keith¹ · Barbara Braddock² · David A. S. Kaufman¹

Article

Examination of a Parent-Assisted, Friendship-Building Program for Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorders With ADHD

Denise M. Gardner¹, Alyson C. Gerdes¹, and Kelsey Weinberger¹

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
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DOI: 10.1177/1083426915584888

J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:1900–1910
DOI 10.1007/s10803-012-1900-1

ORIGINAL PAPER

A Replication and Extension of the PEERS Intervention: Examining Effects on Social Skills and Social Anxiety in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Kirsten A. Schohl¹ · Amy V. Van Hecke¹ · Audrey Meyer Carson¹ · Bridget Dolan¹ · Jeffrey Karst¹ · Sheryl Stevens

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-Hee 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

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
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DOI: 10.1177/1083426915584888

LONG-TERM TREATMENT OUTCOMES FOR PARENT-ASSISTED SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING FOR ADOLESCENTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: THE UCLA PEERS PROGRAM

JOSEF MANDELBERG
ELIZABETH A. LAUGESON

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.I. : ASD IN ADULTHOOD: COMORBIDITY AND INTERVENTION

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Kaely Orenski^{1,4} · Ruth Ellingsen^{1,5}



The Help Group 
Autism Research Alliance

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)

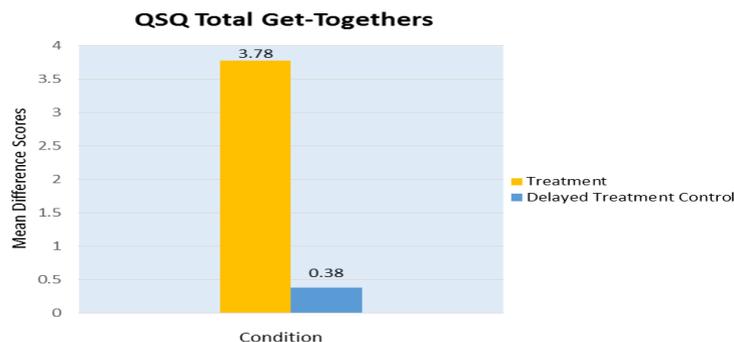
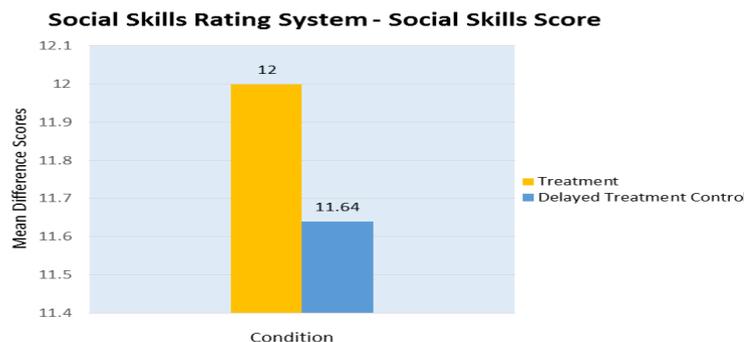
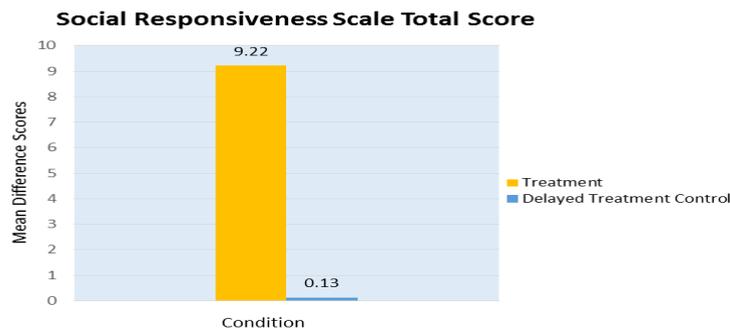


Table 2. Mean difference scores, standard deviations and significance for outcome variables

Variable	Group		p	d
	TX (n = 9)	DTC (n = 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

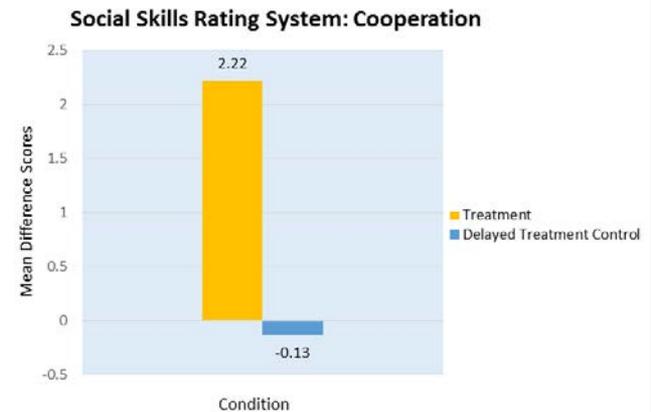
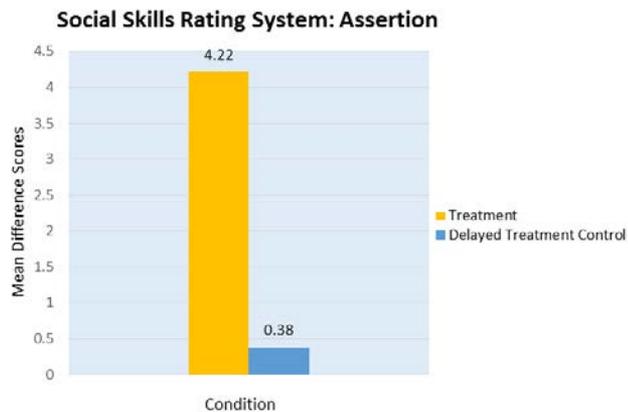
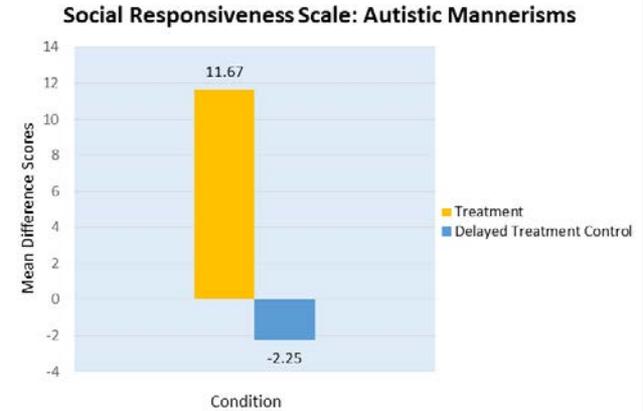
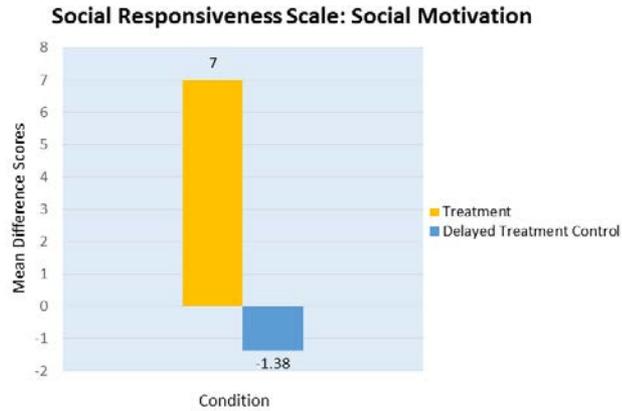
Difference scores measure change in scores from T1 to T2

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

PEERS[®] Research Snapshot:

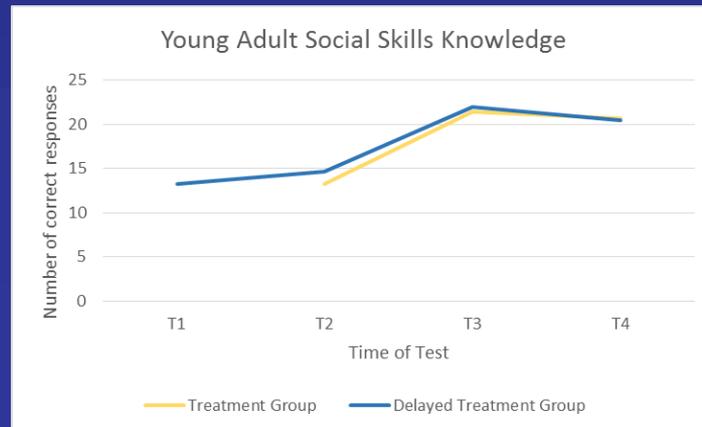
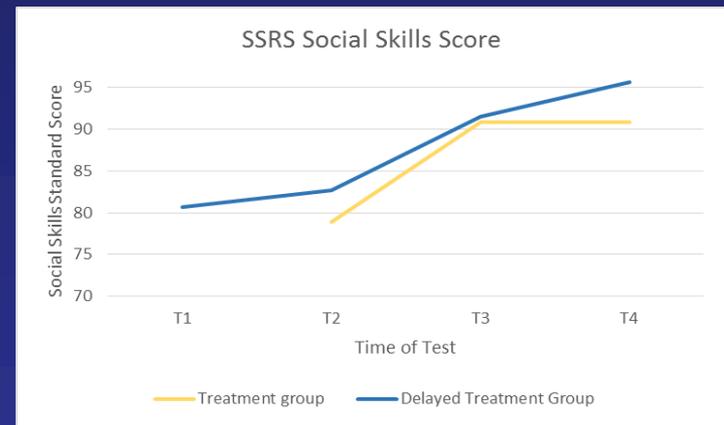
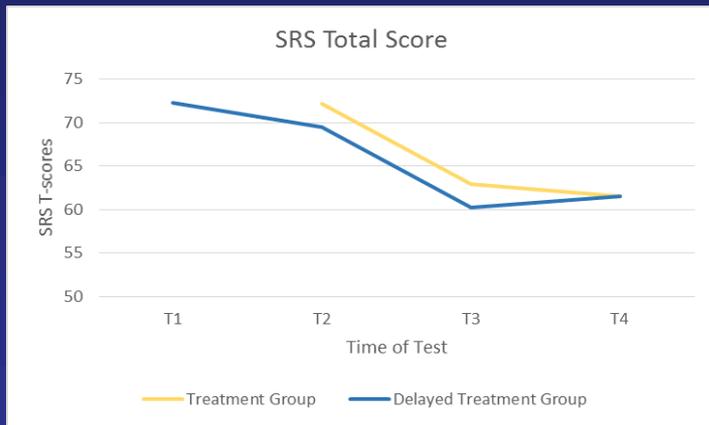
Caregiver-Assisted for Young Adults with ASD

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



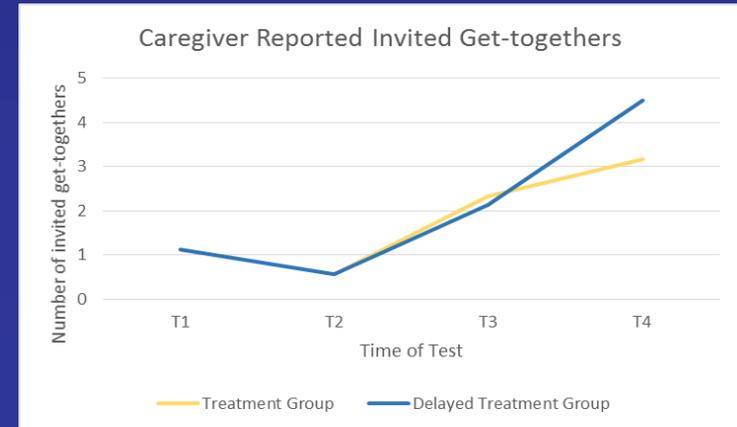
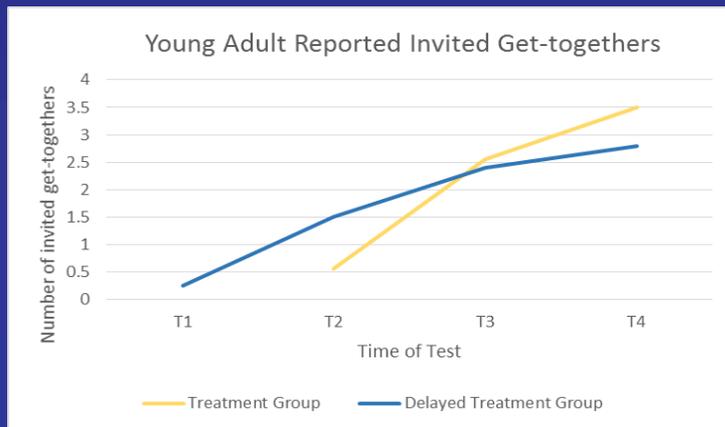
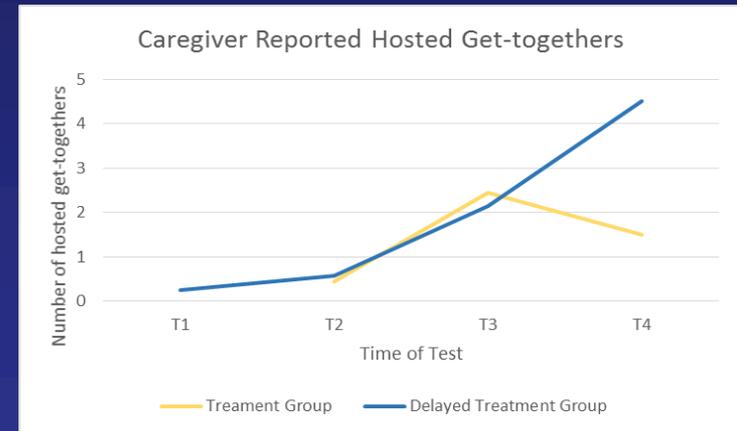
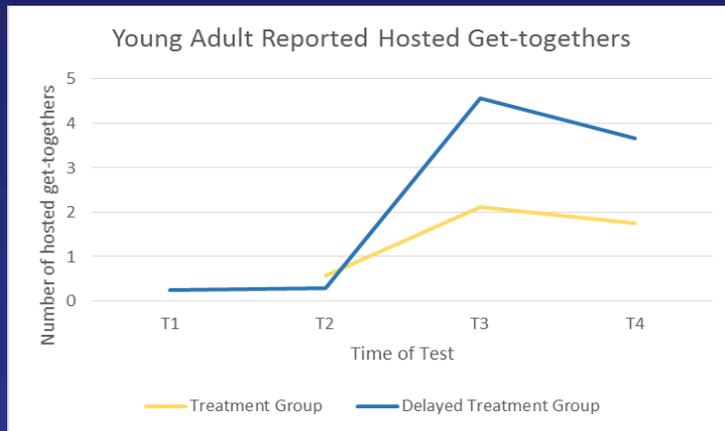
PEERS[®] Research Snapshot: Caregiver-Assisted for Young Adults with ASD

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



PEERS[®] Research Snapshot: Caregiver-Assisted for Young Adults with ASD

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



Final Thoughts

- Improving social outcomes in young adults with ASD is possible
- Evidence-based treatments to improve friendship and romantic relationships exist
 - Developed at UCLA
 - Disseminating treatments worldwide
 - Certified trainings are available
 - Published manuals and books available to the public
- More evidence-based treatment are needed to improve social outcomes in adults across the lifespan with ASD:
 - Employment
 - Romantic relationships
 - Sexual health and safety
 - Independent living



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

Cross Cultural Validation and Replication of PEERS®



SEOUL
NATIONAL
UNIVERSITY



THE UNIVERSITY
OF HONG KONG



大阪大学
OSAKA UNIVERSITY



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY



Erasmus
University
Rotterdam



MARQUETTE
UNIVERSITY



NYU

Virginia Tech.
VT



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



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

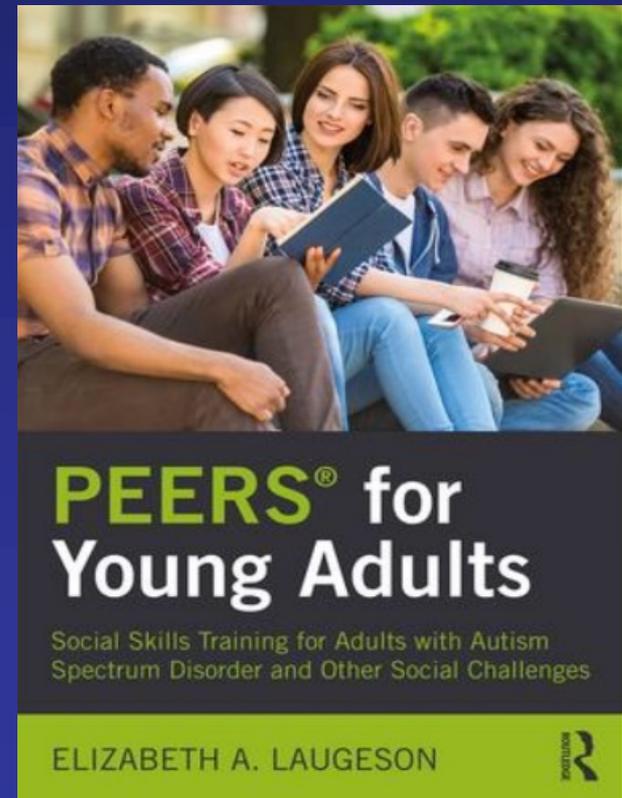
Proposed Curriculum

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



PEERS[®] for Young Adults Caregiver-Assisted Treatment

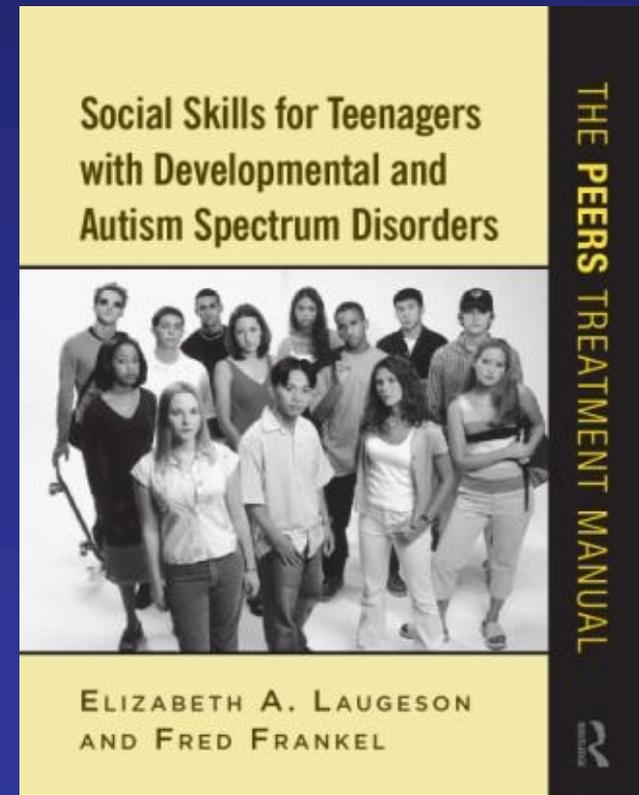
- Certified Trainings at UCLA:
 - July 30 – August 1, 2018
 - Research scholarships are available
- 16-week curriculum
- Weekly 90-minute young adult sessions and caregiver sessions
- Social coaching handouts
- Addresses core deficits for ASD
- Focuses on friendship and relationships skills and handling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



PEERS[®] for Adolescents

Parent-Assisted Treatment

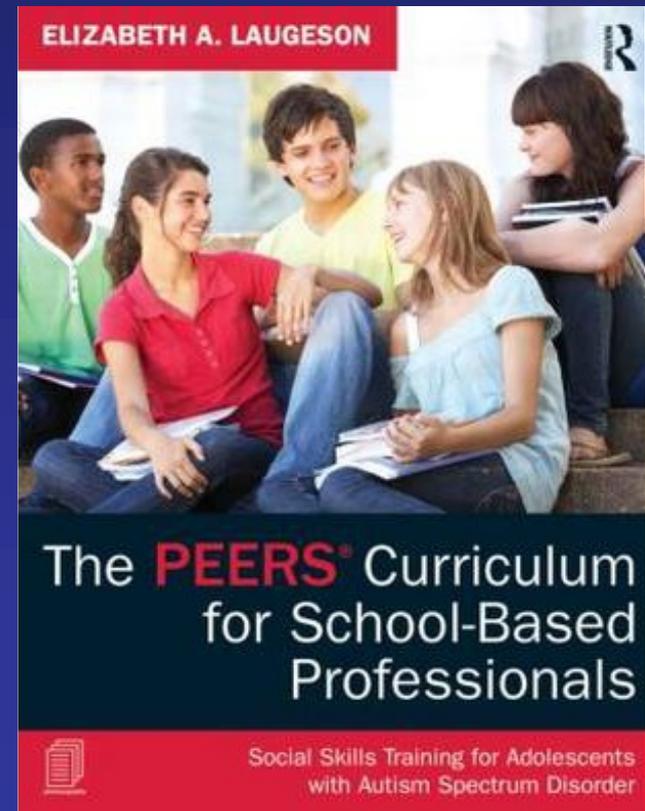
- Certified Trainings at UCLA:
 - September 5 -7, 2018
 - Research scholarships are available
- 14-week curriculum
- Weekly 90-minute teen sessions and parent sessions
- Parent handouts
- Addresses core deficits for ASD
- Focuses on friendship skills and handling peer rejection and conflict
- Teaches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

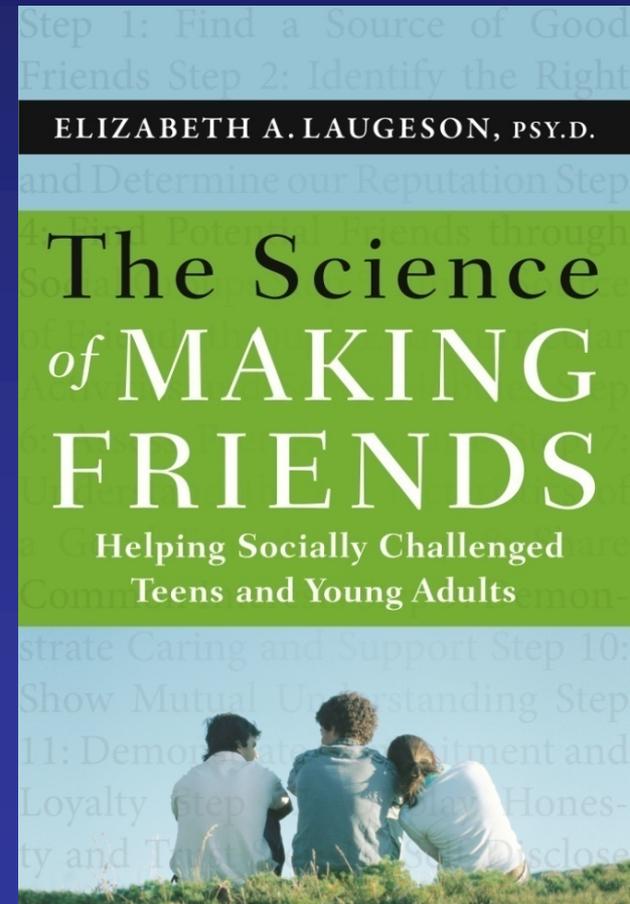
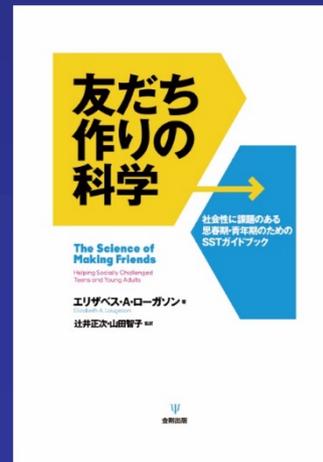


The Science of Making Friends:

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



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- **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



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www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/

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