

Supporting Autistic Students in Making Social Connections: *The UCLA PEERS[®] Model*



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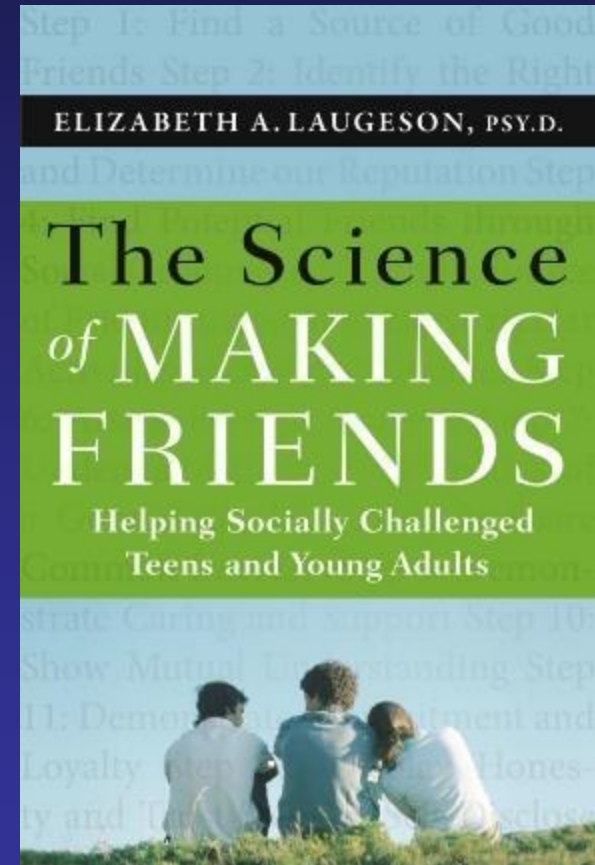
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Disclosure Statement

Dr. Moody is being compensated by the WNYRCASD and The Summit Center and has no other financial or nonfinancial disclosures to report.

Overview

- Common social challenges among autistic youth
- Consequences of social challenges and peer rejection
- PEERS[®] intervention strategies
 - Starting and entering conversations
 - Handling teasing
- Research summary
 - Meta-Analysis on PEERS[®]
- Resources



Common Social Challenges Among Autistic Youth

Photo of PEERS® courtesy of Associated Press

- Social communication differences
- Difficulty interpreting social cues and social landscape
- Lower social engagement
- Poor social cognition
- Challenges with conflict resolution



Consequences of Social Challenges for Autistic Youth

- Very few close reciprocal friendships
- Poor friendship quality
- Social isolation and loneliness
- High rates of peer victimization



Consequences of Peer Rejection During Adolescence

- Depression, anxiety
- Low self-esteem
- Poor academic performance
- Substance abuse
- Suicidal ideation and attempts

Photo of PEERS® courtesy of Associated Press



Why Target Friendships?

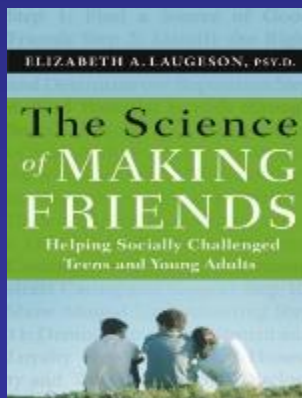
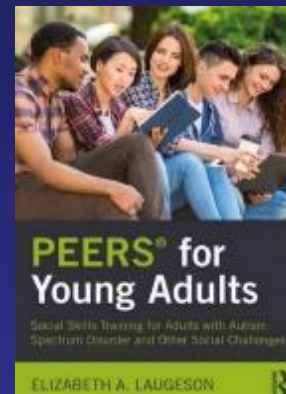
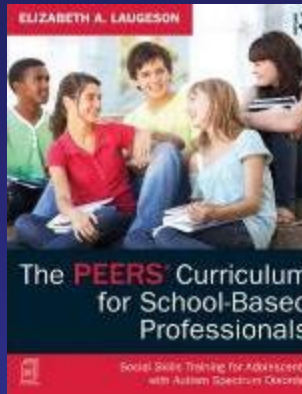
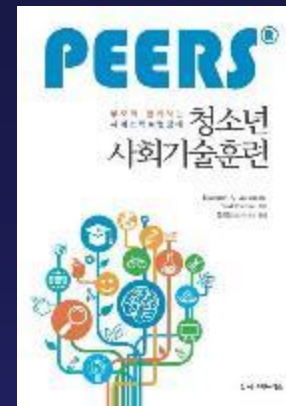
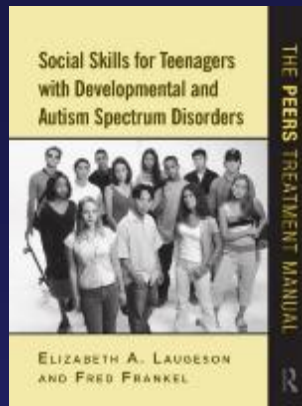
Having one or two close friends:

- Predicts later adjustment in life
- Can buffer the impact of stressful life events
- Correlates positively with:
 - Self-esteem
 - Independence
- Correlates negatively with:
 - Depression
 - Anxiety



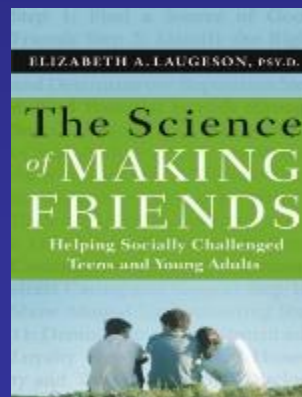
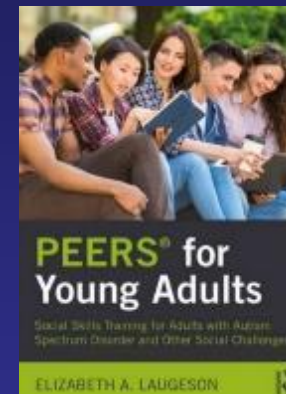
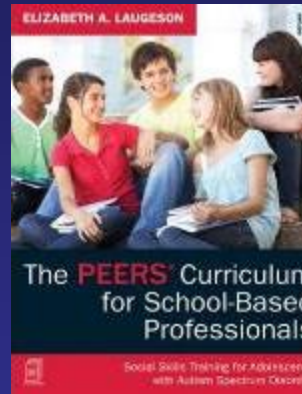
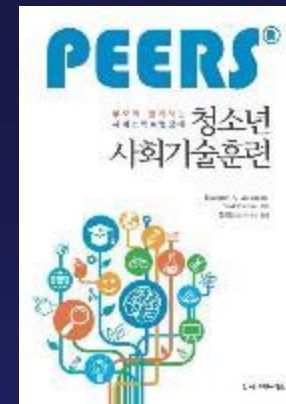
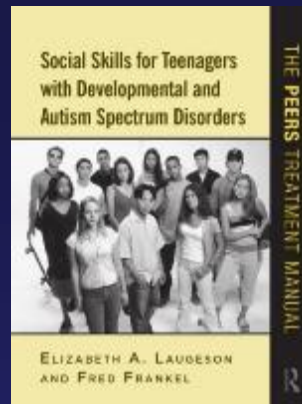
Background about PEERS®

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



Unique Aspects of PEERS®

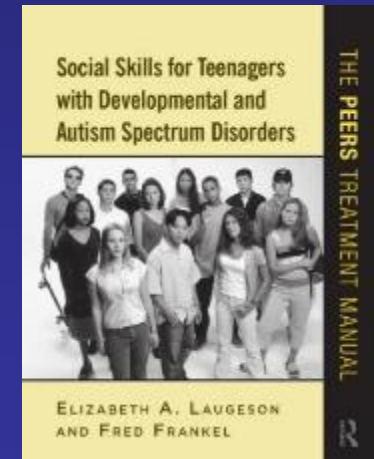
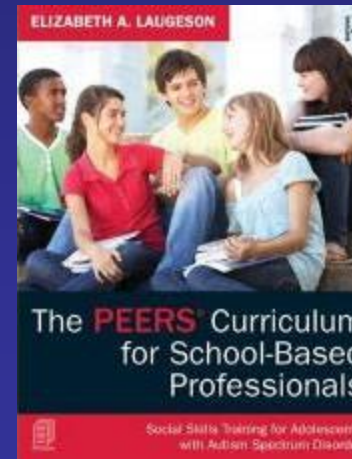
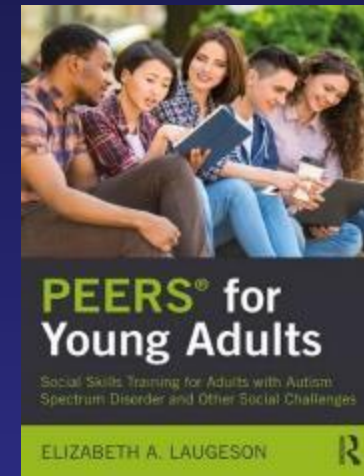
- One of the only evidence-based social skills programs
- Only teaches ecologically valid social skills
 - Teaches rules and steps followed by socially successful people
- Parent or caregiver assisted
- Cross-culturally adapted across the globe



PEERS® Targeted Social Skills

Friendship and Romantic Relationship Skills:

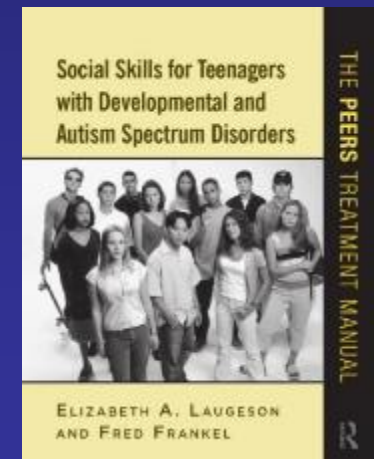
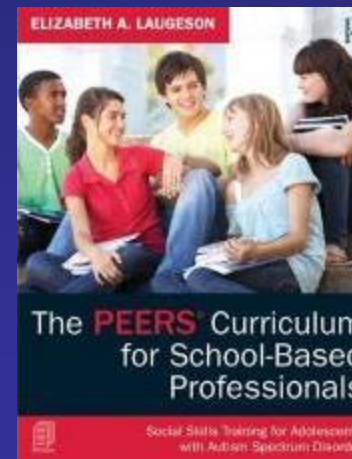
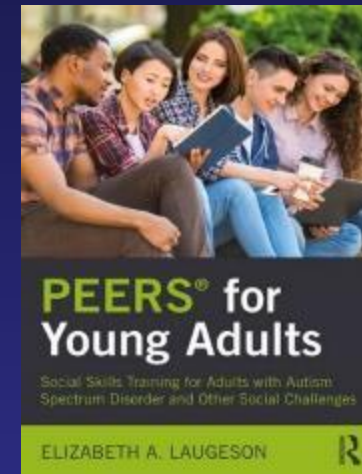
- Finding and choosing good friends
- Finding and choosing romantic partners (adults)
- Conversational skills
- Starting and entering conversations
- Exiting conversations
- Electronic communication
- Appropriate use of humor
- Get-togethers
- Good sportsmanship (teens)
- Dating etiquette (adults)
 -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



PEERS[®] Targeted Social Skills

Managing Conflict and Rejection Skills:

- Dating etiquette (adults)
 - Taking no for an answer
 - Politely turning someone down for a date
 - Handling unwanted dating pressure
- Handling arguments
- Changing a bad reputation (teens)
- 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
- Didactic lessons
 - Concrete rules and steps of social etiquette
 - Ecologically valid social skills
 - Socratic method of teaching
- Role-play demonstrations
 - Appropriate and inappropriate demonstrations
 - Perspective taking questions
- Behavioral rehearsal exercises
 - Practice skills with coaching
- Homework assignments
- Caregiver-assisted



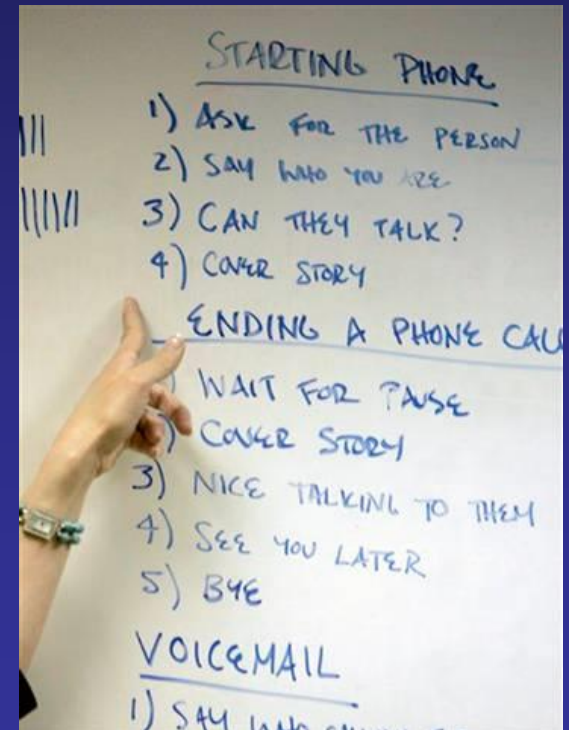
(Matson, 1984; Davies & Rogers, 1985; Fleming & Fleming, 1982; Mesibov, 1984; Gresham, Sugai, & Horner, 2001; Gralinski & Kopp, 1993; Rubin & Sloman, 1984, Frankel & Myatt, 2003; Rao, Beidel, & Murray, 2008; Laugeson et al., 2008)

Development of PEERS®

Rules and Steps of Social Behavior

Photo of PEERS® courtesy of Associated Press

- Ecologically valid social skills
 - “socially helpful”
- Common social errors committed by autistic youth
 - “socially risky”
- Decode and create clear strategies/rules related ecologically valid skills and common social errors
- Break steps down into concrete parts



What to Expect from PEERS®

The Importance of Choice

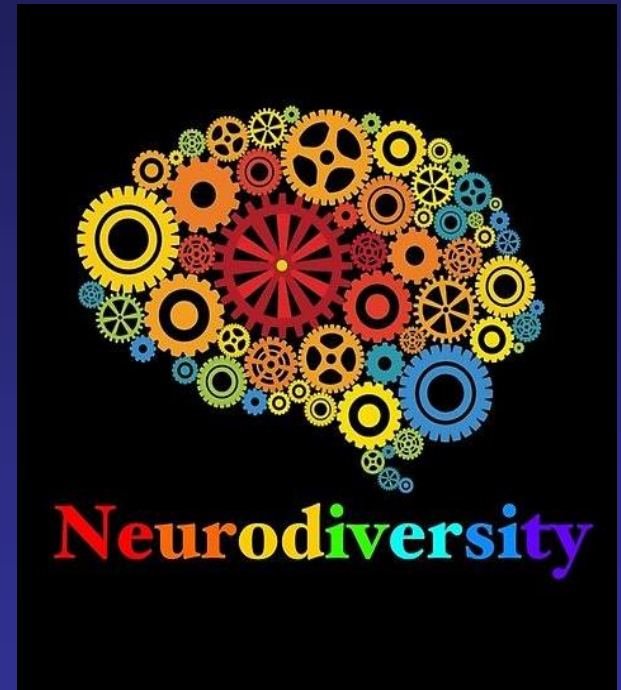
- Each week we review strategies related to making and keeping friends that have been shown to be:
 - Socially helpful
 - Socially risky
- Learning and/or using the strategies taught in PEERS® should NOT be about changing a person
- Learning and using these skills should be about enhancing social interactions so others can appreciate who we already are
- Ultimately, learning and/or using the strategies taught in PEERS® will be YOUR CHOICE



What to Expect from PEERS[®]

The Role of Neurodiversity

- Neurodiversity means people have different ways of thinking
- We should respect the role of neurodiversity when learning new social strategies
- Differences do not make us less or more than
- There are strengths in neurodiversity
- PEERS[®] is a strengths-based approach



PEERS[®] Neuroaffirming Pledge

- We value neurodiversity, acceptance, and authenticity
- We honor the diverse ways people experience the world
- We respect each person's unique perspectives and communication styles
- We recognize there is no one right way to connect with others
- If using the strategies taught in PEERS[®] feels like camouflaging or masking, and/or they don't align with your goals, then you do not have to use them
- Learning and using the skills taught in PEERS[®] is a PERSONAL CHOICE



Audience Questions

Building on the idea of choice, PEERS® has a strong value of ensuring that the teens and adults are intrinsically socially motivated.

- Why would it be important to confirm that youth WANT to learn ecologically valid social skills when enrolling in social skills programming?
- What could be the harm in including youth in social skills treatment who do not want to be there?

Importance of Intrinsic Social Motivation

- Social skills programs should be voluntary
- Participants should be intrinsically motivated to learn the skills
- Including youth that do not want to learn the skills will also result in:
 - “Too cool for school” syndrome
 - Unwillingness to learn and benefit from the program
 - Negative contagion
 - Unsafe environment for others to learn
- Not ethical to force the learning of social skills onto others
 - It is also NOT ethical to withhold treatment from those that want to learn social skills



Starting and Entering Conversations

QUESTION

If your goal is to make and keep friends, what are most people told to do to meet new people?





Starting Individual Conversations In-Person

Socially Risky Behavior

QUESTION:

If your goal is to make and keep friends, what are some socially risky behaviors to avoid when starting an individual conversation **IN-PERSON**?





Starting Individual Conversations In-Person

Socially Helpful Behavior

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 (only if you haven't met and they seem interested)





Entering Group Conversations In-Person

Socially Risky Behavior

QUESTION:

If your goal is to make and keep friends, what are some socially risky behaviors to avoid when entering a group conversation **IN-PERSON?**





Entering Group Conversations In-Person

Socially Helpful Behavior

1. Watch and listen
 - Use a prop
 - Identify the topic
 - Find a common interest
2. Move closer
3. Wait for a pause
4. Mention the topic
5. Introduce yourself

Handling Teasing

QUESTIONS:

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

Do those strategies usually work?

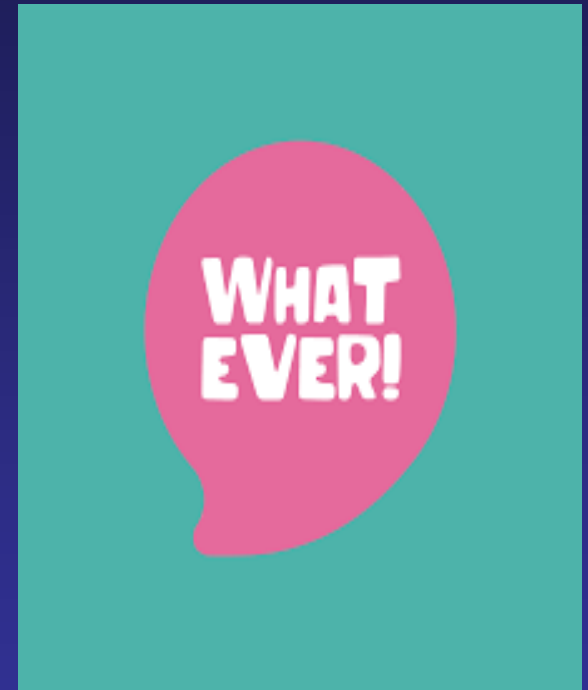




Handling Teasing

Socially Helpful Behavior

- Act like what the person said did not bother you
- Provide a **SHORT COMEBACK** that shows what the person said was stupid:
 - Whatever!
 - So what?
 - Big deal!
 - Who cares?
 - Yeah and?
 - And your point is?
 - Am I supposed to care?
 - Is that supposed to be funny?
 - Tell me when you get to the funny part
 - Tell me when you get to the punchline
 - Anyway... (Good comeback to walk away on)
- Then walk away or remove yourself



Teasing Comebacks (Gabe)

Role play videos: www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources

Teasing Comebacks (Elina)

Role play videos: www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources



Research

return

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PEERS[®] Research Snapshot: Meta-Analysis of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents (Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman, & Bent, 2021)

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-021-04885-1>

ORIGINAL PAPER



Improving Social Knowledge and Skills among Adolescents with Autism: Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of UCLA PEERS[®] for Adolescents

Shuting Zheng¹ · Hosanna Kim¹ · Emma Salzman¹ · Katy Ankenman¹ · Stephen Bent^{1,2,3}

Accepted: 12 January 2021

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Overview of Results from Meta-Analysis of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents: Social Skills Knowledge (TASSK)

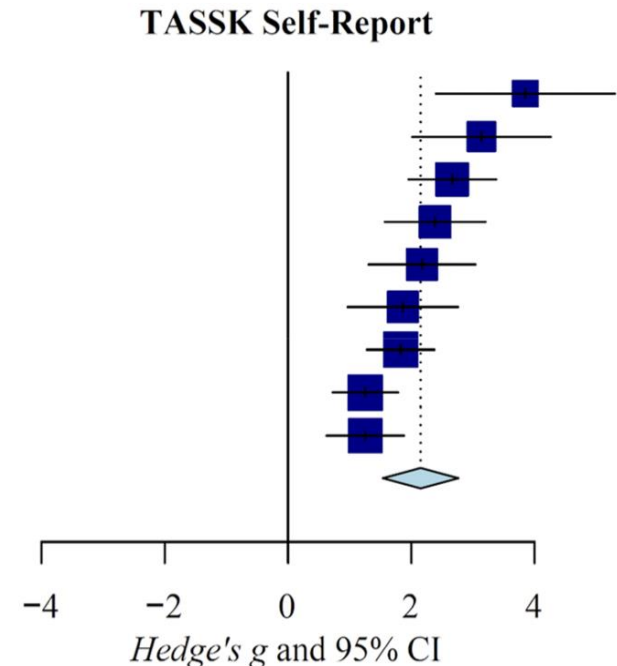
(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman, & Bent, 2021)

Fig. 3 Forest plot for pooled effect size on TASSK adolescent self-report

Large Effect Sizes

Study Names	<i>g</i> (95% CI)
Matthews et al., 2018	3.85 [2.40, 5.30]
Laugeson et al., 2012	3.14 [2.01, 4.27]
Schohl et al., 2014	2.66 [1.95, 3.38]
Rabin et al., 2018	2.39 [1.57, 3.20]
Laugeson et al., 2009	2.17 [1.30, 3.04]
Yamada et al., 2020	1.86 [0.97, 2.76]
Laugeson et al., 2014	1.83 [1.28, 2.37]
Shum et al., 2019	1.25 [0.72, 1.78]
Yoo et al., 2014	1.25 [0.62, 1.88]
Total	2.15 [1.54, 2.77]

Heterogeneity: $I^2 = 71\%$



Hedge's *g*: 0.2 = Small effect size; 0.5 = Medium effect size; 0.8 = Large effect size

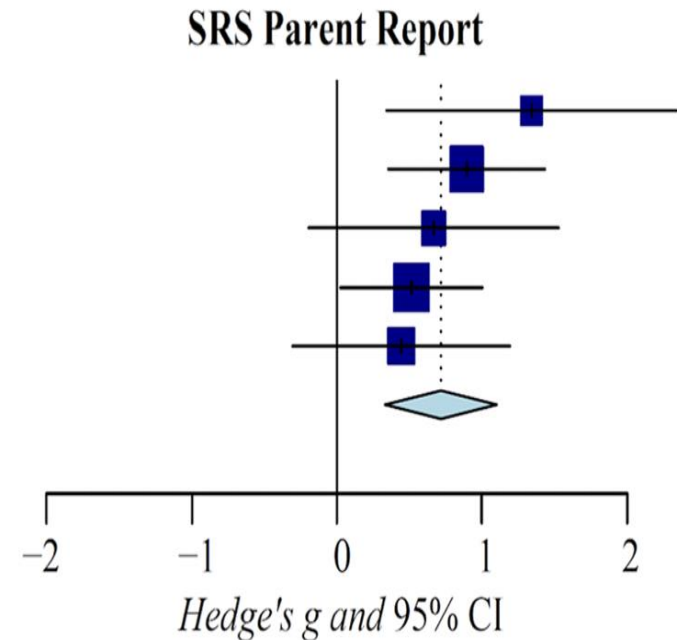
Overview of Results from Meta-Analysis of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents: Social Responsiveness (SRS-2)

(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman, & Bent, 2021)

Fig. 5 Forest plot for pooled effect size on SRS parent report. The effect sizes were reversed to positive numbers to show improvements in favor of the PEERS group, i.e., lower scores or decreases in social communication impairments in the PEERS groups

Study Names	<i>g</i> (95% CI)
Laugeson et al., 2012	1.34 [0.34; 2.35]
Schohl et al., 2014	0.90 [0.36; 1.44]
Matthews et al., 2018	0.67 [-0.20; 1.53]
Shum et al., 2019	0.52 [0.03; 1.00]
Yamada et al., 2020	0.44 [-0.31; 1.19]
Total	0.72 [0.33; 1.10]

Medium to Large Effect Sizes



Hedge's *g*: 0.2 = Small effect size; 0.5 = Medium effect size; 0.8 = Large effect size

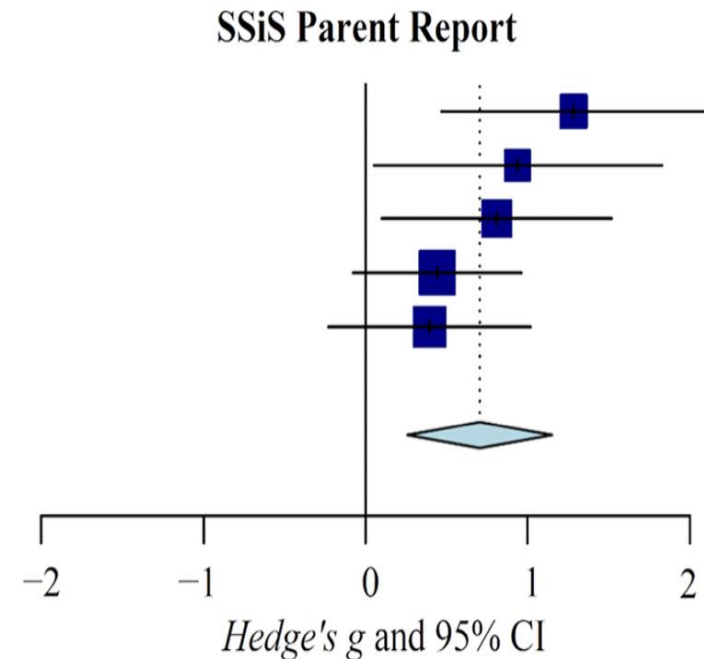
Overview of Results from Meta-Analysis of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents: Overall Social Skills (SSiS)

(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman, & Bent, 2021)

Fig. 4 Forest plot for pooled effect size on SSiS parent report

Medium to Large Effect Sizes

Study Names	<i>g</i> (95% CI)
Laugeson et al., 2012	1.29 [0.47, 2.10]
Matthews et al., 2018	0.94 [0.05, 1.83]
Laugeson et al., 2009	0.81 [0.10, 1.52]
Schohl et al., 2014	0.44 [-0.08, 0.96]
Rabin et al., 2018	0.40 [-0.23, 1.02]
Total	0.71 [0.26, 1.15]
Heterogeneity: $I^2 = 4\%$	



Hedge's *g*: 0.2 = Small effect size; 0.5 = Medium effect size; 0.8 = Large effect size

Overview of Results from Meta-Analysis of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents: Social Engagement – Self-Report (QSQ-A)

(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman, & Bent, 2021)

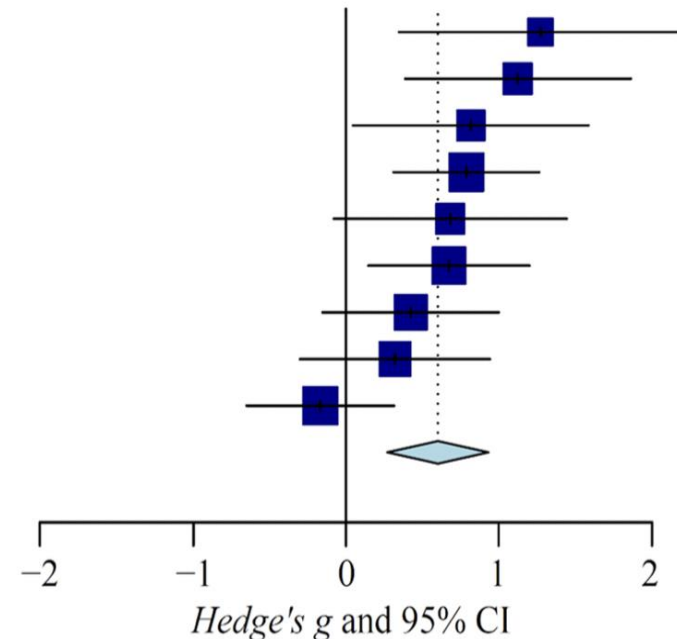
Fig. 6 Forest plot for pooled effect size on QSQ adolescent self-report

Small to Large Effect Sizes

Study Names	<i>g</i> (95% CI)
Matthews et al., 2018	1.27 [0.35; 2.20]
Laugeson et al., 2009	1.12 [0.39; 1.86]
Laugeson et al., 2012	0.82 [0.05; 1.59]
Laugeson et al., 2014	0.79 [0.31; 1.27]
Yamada et al., 2020	0.68 [−0.08; 1.45]
Schohl et al., 2014	0.68 [0.15; 1.20]
Yoo et al., 2014	0.42 [−0.15; 1.00]
Rabin et al., 2018	0.32 [−0.30; 0.94]
Shum et al., 2019	−0.17 [−0.65; 0.32]
Total	0.60 [0.27; 0.93]

Heterogeneity: $I^2 = 49\%$

QSQ Adolescent Self Report



Hedge's *g*: 0.2 = Small effect size; 0.5 = Medium effect size; 0.8 = Large effect size

PEERS[®] Research Snapshot: Long-term Follow-up Study

(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates, & Frankel 2013)

*Journal of Mental Health Research
in Intellectual Disabilities*, 7:45-73, 2014
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DOI: 10.1080/19315864.2012.730600



Long-Term Treatment Outcomes for Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training for Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorders: The UCLA PEERS Program

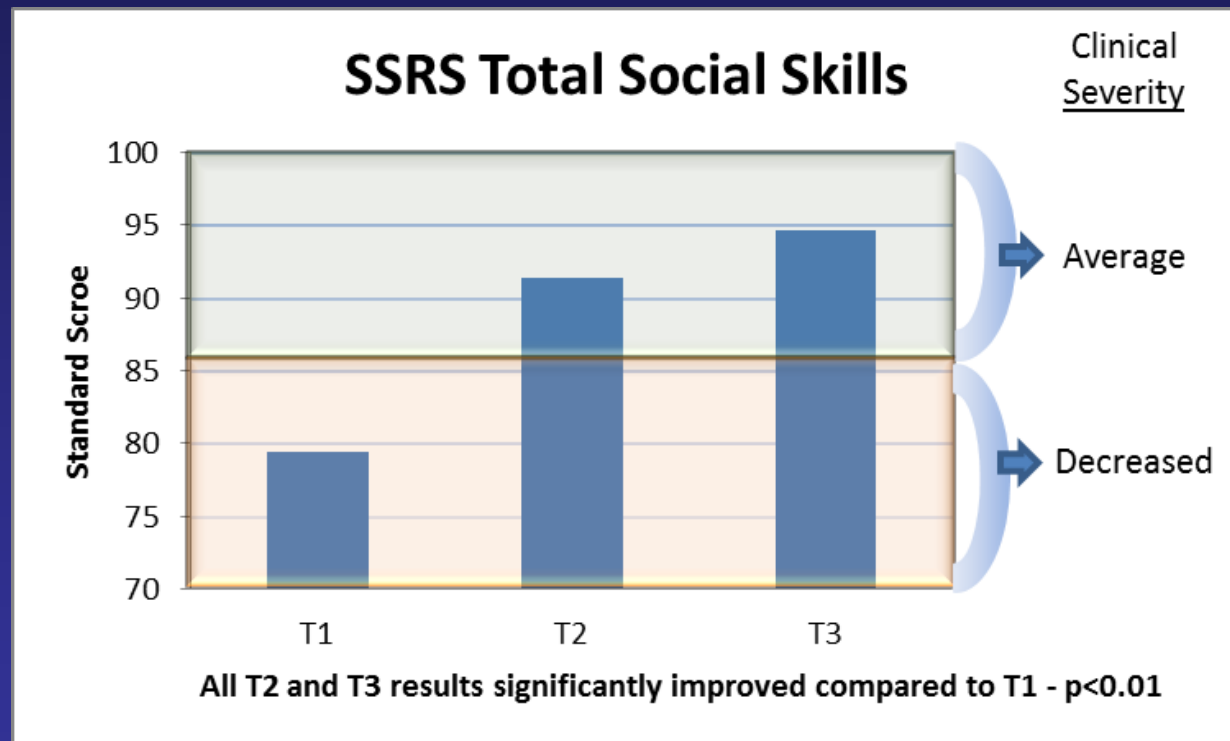
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PEERS[®] Research Snapshot: In-Person vs Telehealth Delivery

(Estabillo, Moody, Poulhazan, Adery, Denluck, & Laugeson, 2022)

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05580-5>

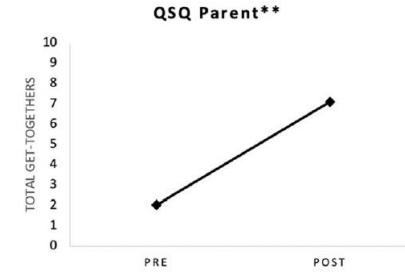
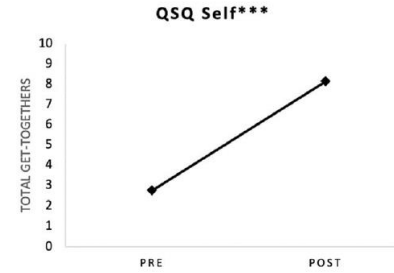
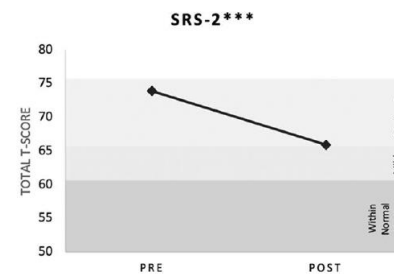
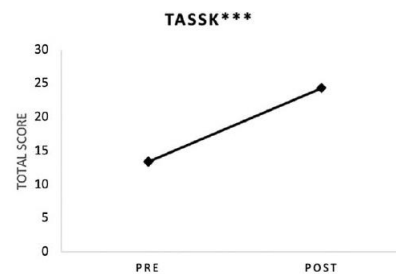
S.I. :EXPANDING TELEHEALTH OPPORTUNITIES IN NEURODEVELOPMENTAL DISORDERS



Efficacy of PEERS[®] for Adolescents via Telehealth Delivery

Jasper A. Estabillo^{1,2} · Christine T. Moody¹ · Solene J. Poulhazan¹ · Laura H. Adery¹ · Elizabeth M. Denluck^{1,3} · Elizabeth A. Laugeson¹

Accepted: 18 April 2022
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School Based PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents

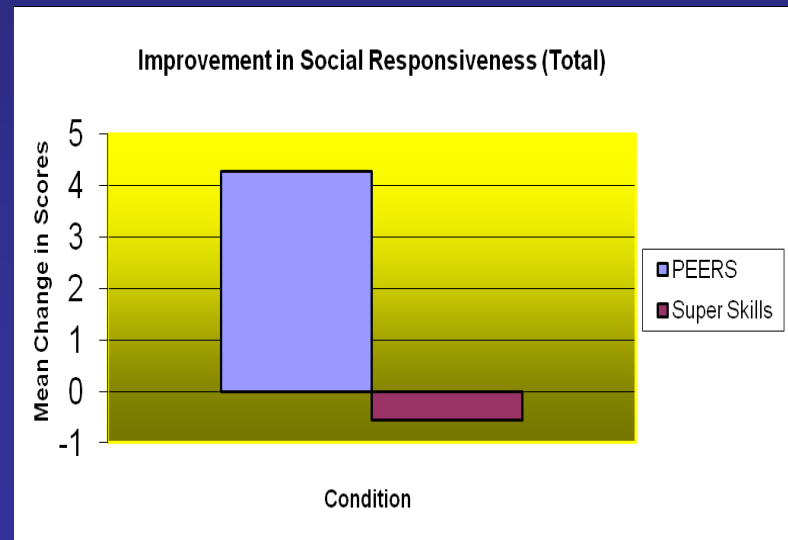
(Laugeson, Ellingsen, Sanderson, Tucci, & Bates 2014)

J Autism Dev Disord
DOI 10.1007/s10803-014-2108-8

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 Tucci · Shannon Bates



PEERS[®] Research Evidence

<https://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/research>

Journal of Education & Social Policy Vol. 3, No. 4, October 2016

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

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Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders (2020) 50:976–997
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-04325-1>

ORIGINAL PAPER

Examining the Treatment Efficacy of PEERS in Japan: Improving Social Skills Among Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Tomoko Yamada^{1,2}, Yui Miura³, Manabu Ohi^{1,2}, Nozomi Akatsuka^{1,2}, Kazumi Tanaka⁴, Naotake Tsukidate⁵, Tomoka Yamamoto⁶, Hiroko Okuno⁶, Haruko Nakamichi⁶, Masako Taniike⁶, Ikuko Mohri⁶, Elizabeth A. Laugeson⁹

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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

Alana J. McVey¹, Hillary Schiltz², Angela Haendel³, Bridget K. Dolan⁴, Kirsten S. Willar⁵, Sheryl Pleiss⁶, Jeffrey S. Karst⁷, Audrey M. Carson⁸, Christina Calozzo⁹, Elisabeth Vogt¹, Amy Vaughan Van Hecke¹

J Autism Dev Disord DOI 10.1007/s10803-018-2108-8

ORIGINAL PAPER

The ABC's of Teaching Social Skills to Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom: The UCLA PEERS[®] Program

Elizabeth A. Laugeson¹, Ruth Ellingsen², Jennifer Sanderson³, Lara Tucci⁴, Shannon Bates⁵

Article

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

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

Journal of Attention Disorders
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DOI: 10.1177/1083426915238188
jatt.sagepub.com
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Short Report

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

Autism
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<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3396-6>

ORIGINAL PAPER

Changes in Depressive Symptoms Among Adolescents with ASD Completing the PEERS[®] Social Skills Intervention

Hillary K. Schiltz¹, Alana J. McVey¹, Bridget K. Dolan¹, Kirsten S. Willar¹, Sheryl Pleiss^{1,2}, Jeffrey S. Karst^{1,3}, Audrey M. Carson^{1,4}, Christina Calozzo¹, Elisabeth M. Vogt¹, Brianna D. Yund¹, Amy Vaughan Van Hecke¹

J Autism Dev Disord DOI 10.1007/s10803-018-2251-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

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

Jeffrey S. Karst¹, Amy Vaughan Van Hecke¹, Audrey M. Carson¹, Sheryl Stevens¹, Kirsten Scholtz¹, Bridget Dolan¹

J Autism Dev Disord (2005) 35:598–606
DOI 10.1007/s10803-005-0666-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

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

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

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

S.E. 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}

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, Guiyoung Song, Soochul Cho, Min-Sup Shin, Bung-Nyun Kim, Jae-Won Kim, Subin Park, and Elizabeth A. Laugeson

J Autism Dev Disord DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1250-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

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

Alexander Gantman · Steven K. Kapp · Kaely Orenski · Elizabeth A. Laugeson

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3728-1>

ORIGINAL PAPER

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, Wai Kwan Cho², Lourdes Mei Oi Lam², Elizabeth A. Laugeson³, Wai Shan Wong², Louisa S. K. Law²

Advances in Neurodevelopmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s1252-018-0071-1>

ORIGINAL PAPER

The Effects of a Modified PEERS Curriculum on Accurate and Novel Responding of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Keith C. Radley¹, Kate A. Helbig², Ashley N. Murphy², Morgan G. McCargo², Elizabeth L. Lown²

J Autism Dev Disord DOI 10.1007/s10803-016-2911-5

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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

Alana J. McVey¹, Bridget K. Dolan¹, Kirsten S. Willar^{1,2}, Sheryl Pleiss^{1,3}, Jeffrey S. Karst^{1,4}, Christina L. Calozzo¹, Christina Calozzo¹, Elisabeth M. Vogt¹, Nakia S. Gordon¹, Amy Vaughan Van Hecke¹

J Autism Dev Disord DOI 10.1007/s10803-013-1883-y

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 Hecke¹, Sheryl Stevens¹, Audrey M. Carson¹, Jeffrey S. Karst¹, Bridget Dolan¹, Kirsten Scholtz¹, Ryan J. McKindles¹, Rheanna Kennel¹, Scott Breckman¹

J Autism Dev Disord DOI 10.1007/s10803-016-2969-0

ORIGINAL PAPER

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

Danielle N. Lardo¹, Madison Bertolin¹, Eliana E. Sudholt¹, Cierra Keith¹, Barbara Braddock², David A. S. Kaufman¹

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3504-2>

ORIGINAL PAPER

Exploring the Effectiveness of a Peer-Mediated Model of the PEERS Curriculum: A Pilot Randomized Control Trial

Nicole L. Matthews¹, Beatriz C. Orr¹, Katrina Warriner¹, Mary DeCarlo¹, Mia Sorensen¹, Jessica Laffin¹, Christopher J. Smith¹

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-03943-z>

ORIGINAL PAPER

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

Joshua Wyman^{1,3}, Anthony Claro²

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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

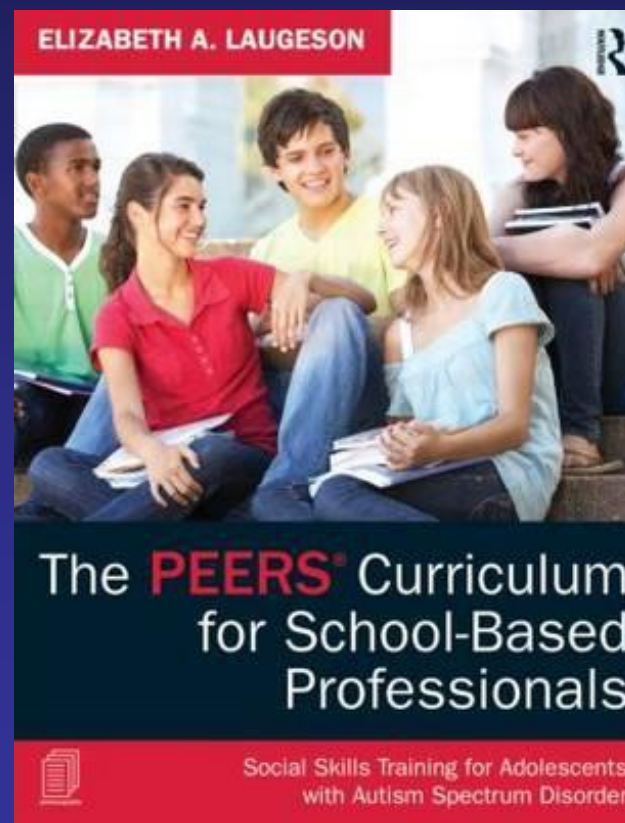
Shai Joseph Rabin, Sandra Israel-Yaacov, Elizabeth A. Laugeson, Irit Mor-Snir, and Ofer Golan

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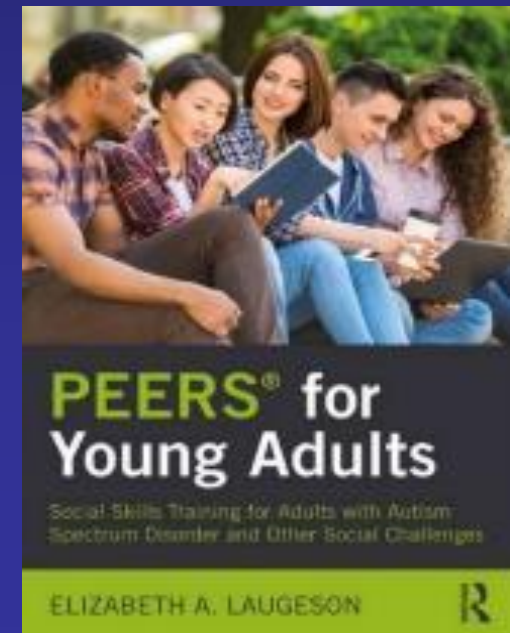
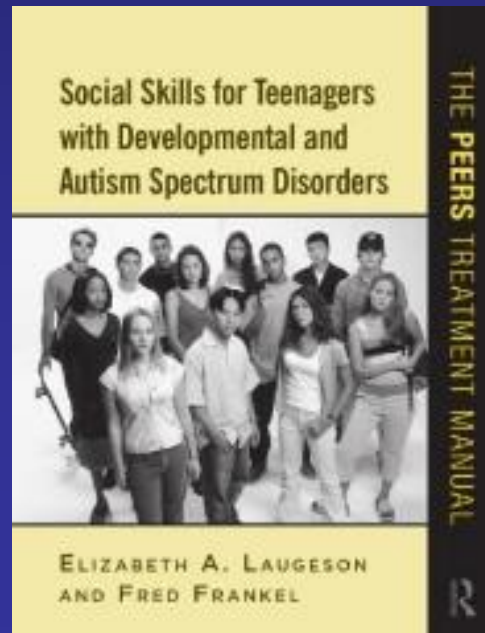
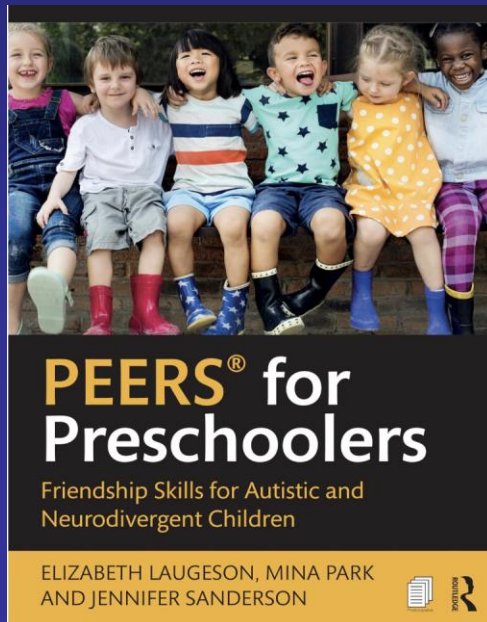
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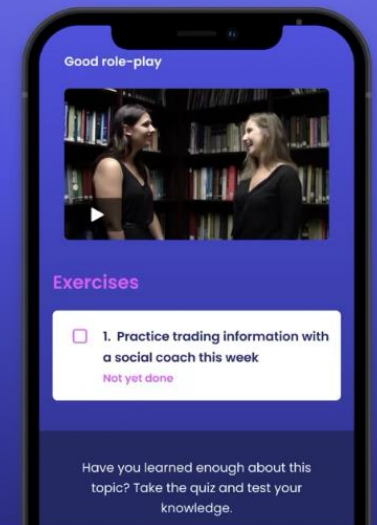
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Assignments are given to
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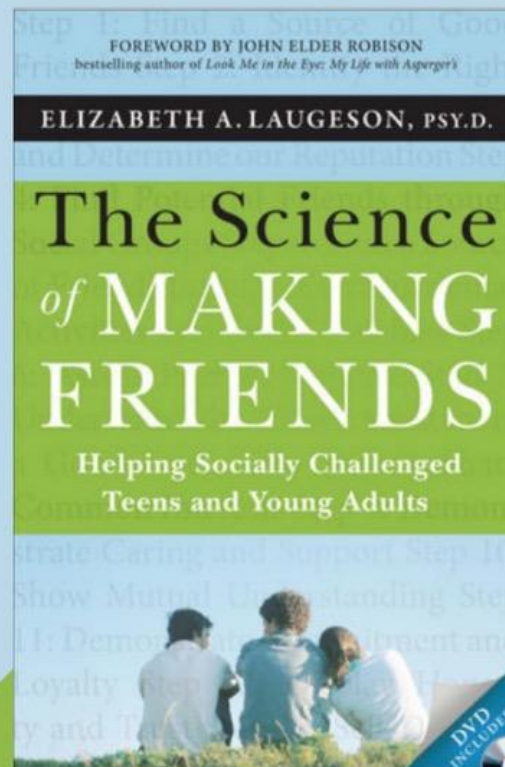
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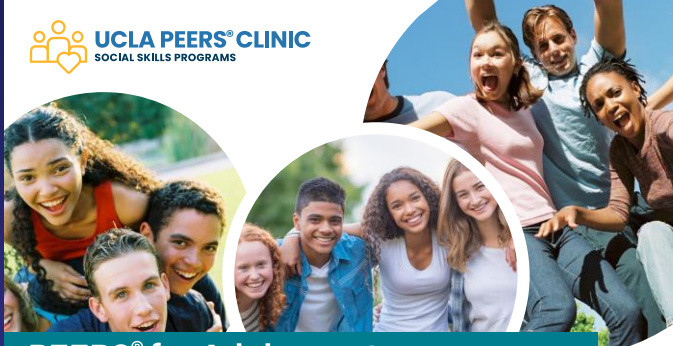

- Parent book
- Friendship skills
- Handling peer rejection and conflict
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 - Social coaching tips
- Chapter summaries for teens and young adults
- Chapter exercises / homework
- Companion DVD
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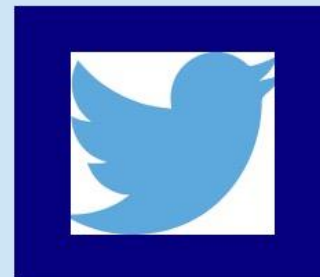
Protocol ID: IRB-23-1769 UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 12/10/2024 Committee: North General IRB

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