Social Skills Intervention for Adolescents: The PEERS Program

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Objectives

1. Describe the structure and content of the PEERS intervention.

2. Define positive outcomes associated with the PEERS program.

3. Identify options for embedding the PEERS curriculum within a school setting.
Social skills & ASD

A diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder requires:

“Persistent deficits in social communication and social interaction across multiple contexts,” including

- Deficits in social-emotional reciprocity
- Deficits in nonverbal communicative behaviors
- Deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships
Friendship & ASD

• 57% of teens with ASD had “a lot” of difficulty making and keeping friends

• 34% of teens with ASD never got together with friends
Friendship & ASD

- Greater quantity and quality of friendships is associated with:
  - Less self-reported loneliness
  - Higher self-reported self-esteem
  - Fewer symptoms of anxiety and depression

Mazurek, 2014
Why social skills intervention?

Social skills refer to a wide range of abilities including providing appropriate eye contact, using gestures, reciprocating information, initiating or ending an interaction. The challenges individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) face regarding social skills vary greatly. The general goal of any Social Skills Package intervention is to provide individuals with ASD the skills necessary to meaningfully participate in the social environments of their homes, schools, and communities.
Why social skills intervention?

Basic Facts

Number of articles reviewed:
NSP1 = 14  NSP2 = 21

Age range of participants: Adolescents 13-18 years

Skills increased:
- communication, learning readiness, placement, and play (NSP2)
- interpersonal (NSP1&2)

Behaviors decreased:
- general symptoms (NSP2)
- problem behaviors (NSP2)
- restricted, repetitive, nonfunctional patterns of behavior, interests, or activity (NSP2)
- sensory or emotional regulation (NSP2)
Why social skills intervention?

Social skills training (SST)

Group or individual instruction designed to teach learners with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) ways to appropriately interact with peers, adults, and other individuals. Most social skill meetings include instruction on basic concepts, role-playing or practice, and feedback to help learners with ASD acquire and practice communication, play, or social skills to promote positive interactions with peers.
The PEERS Program

- Is an evidence-based social skills intervention for middle and high school students with ASD
- Designed to be delivered in a group format
- To teens who are express social interest and motivation
The PEERS Program
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The PEERS Program: Curriculum Delivery

- Homework review
- Didactic instruction
- Concrete steps
- Role play/modeling
- Behavioral practice
- Assign homework
An example: Lesson 3

General rules for using electronic communication

1. Use “cover stories” for contacting people you don’t know well
2. Don’t get too personal
3. Use the two message rule
4. Avoid cold calling
PEERS Outcomes

• Social skills knowledge
• Get-togethers with peers
• Social anxiety symptoms
• ASD symptoms
• Problem behaviors

Schohl et al., 2014
PEERS Outcomes

Social Skills

ASD Symptoms
Planning for school-based implementation

1. **Who** will be included?
2. How will you **identify** students to include?
3. **Who** will facilitate or lead the social skills intervention?
4. **When** will social skills intervention take place?
School-based implementation

Daily Lesson Format
- 30-60 minute lessons, 4-5 days per week

Weekly Lesson Format
- 90 minute lesson, once per week

Alternate Formats
- 30-45 minute lessons, 2-3 days per week
Planning for school-based implementation

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5. **What** resources will we need (space, time, personnel)?
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6. **What** will be taught?
PEERS® Training Seminar Series

PEERS® for Adolescents Certified Training Seminar: Parent-Assisted Intervention

The PEERS® Certified Training Seminar is designed specifically for mental health professionals and educators interested in learning and/or implementing the PEERS® intervention into their clinical practice. For information on dates and registration, please see the attached flyers below.

We are pleased to offer PEERS® Training Seminars at UCLA on the following dates:

- March 27-29, 2019
- September 18-20, 2019

PEERS® School-Based Certified Training Seminar for Educators

The PEERS® Certified School-based Training for Educators is designed exclusively for teachers, school psychologists, counselors, speech and language pathologists, administrators, and school-based professionals who are interested in learning to implement the PEERS® Curriculum for School-based Professionals. Attendees will obtain 24 hours of training over 3 days regarding use of the PEERS® Curriculum and the research behind the program. For information on dates and registration, please see the attached flyers below.

https://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/training
Other Resources

The Science of Making Friends: Helping Socially Challenged Teens and Young Adults

PEERS® for Young Adults: Social Skills Training for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Other Social Challenges
Other Resources

- Peer-mediated instruction and intervention
- Social narratives
- Social skills training
- Structured play groups

Website:
https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/afirm-modules
Other Resources

• Story-based interventions
• Explicit instruction
• Communication Plain and Simple (webinar series)

Website:
https://triad.vkclearning.org
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4. **When** will social skills intervention take place?
5. **What** resources will we need (space, time, personnel)?
6. **What** will be taught?
7. **How** will student progress be monitored?
Social Skills Training:

Use this worksheet as a guide for planning a social skills training intervention.

---SST Planning Worksheet---

Learner’s Name: ___________________  Date/Time: _____________
Observer(s): ____________________________
Target Behavior: ____________________________

From AFIRM Social Skills Training module
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