

The Science of Making Friends for Autistic Teens and Adults: The UCLA PEERS Program



UCLA PEERS[®] CLINIC
SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAMS

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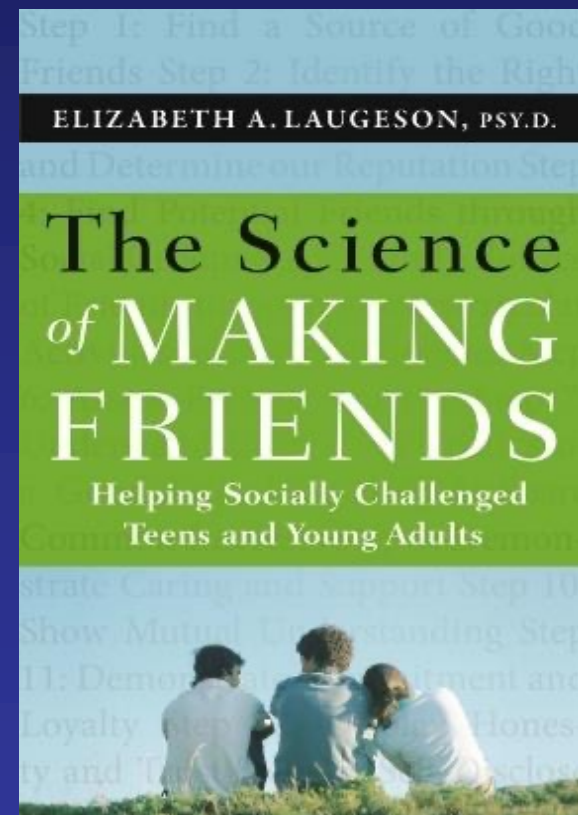
Learning Objectives

1. Understanding of ecologically valid social skills found to be helpful in making and keeping friends.
2. Awareness of evidence-based strategies for teaching social skills that enhance outcomes and generalization of skills.
3. Insight into the immediate and long-term outcomes of PEERS[®] for autistic adolescents and adults interesting in making and keeping friends.



Overview of Lecture

- Common social differences among autistic youth and adults
- Overview of PEERS[®]
- Role of neurodiversity
- Evidence-based teaching methods
- PEERS[®] social strategies
 - Friendships: Entering group conversations
 - Bullying: Handling teasing
- Research summary
 - Meta-Analysis on PEERS[®]
 - Long-term follow-up study of PEERS[®]
- Resources



Common Social Differences Among Autistic Youth

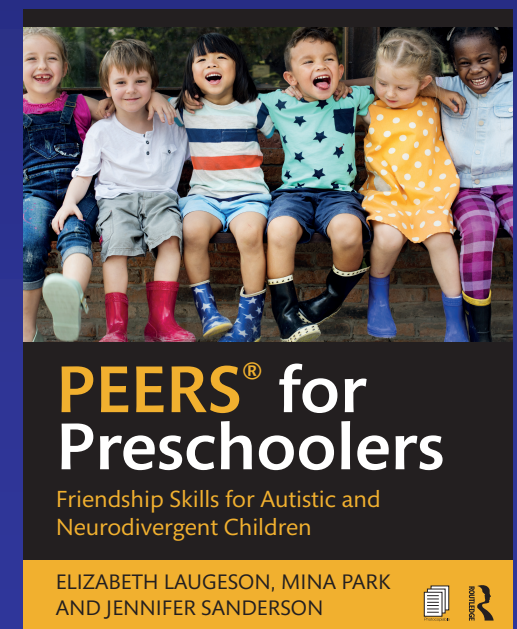
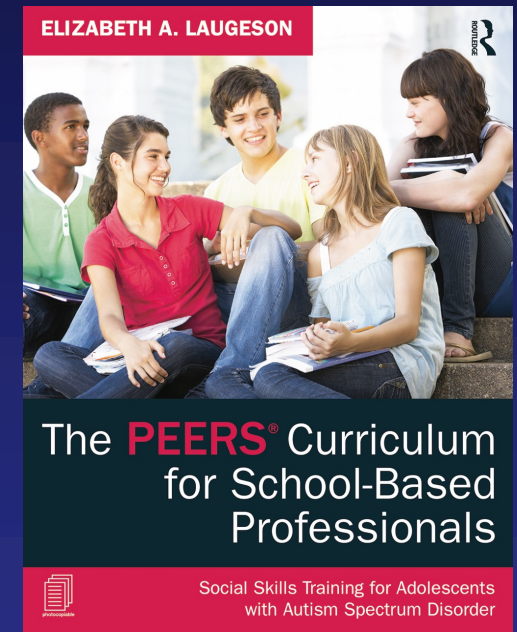
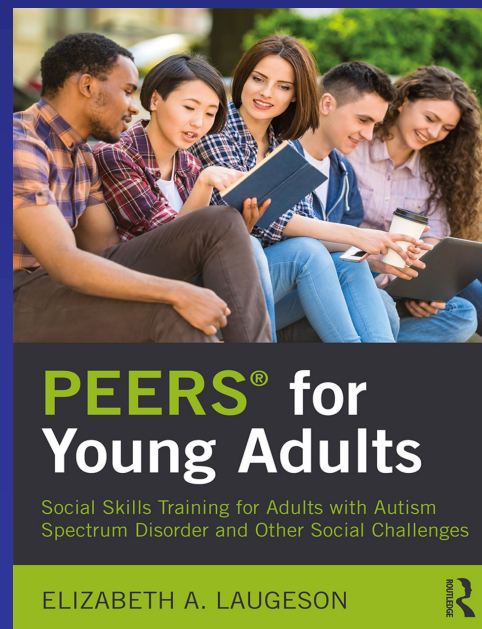
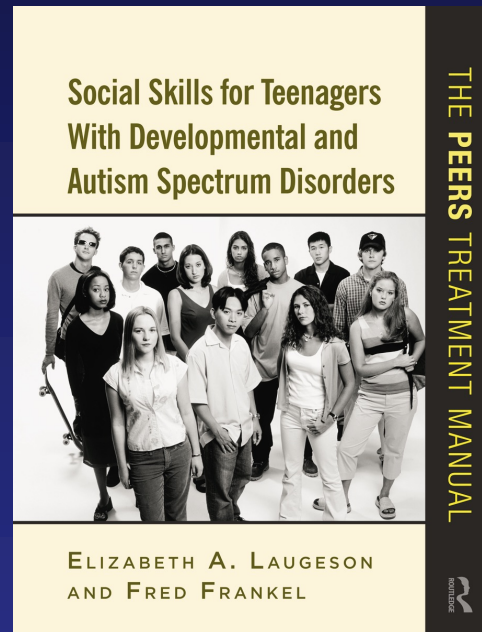
Photo of PEERS® courtesy of Associated Press

- Social communication
- Social awareness
- Understanding social cues
- Constructive social engagement
- Social cognition
- Development of friendships
- Higher incidence of bullying and victimization



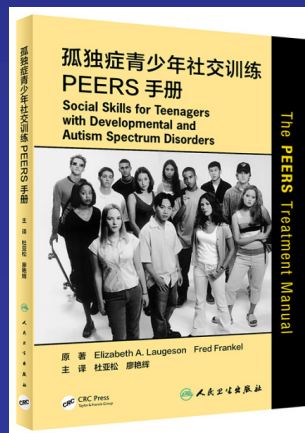
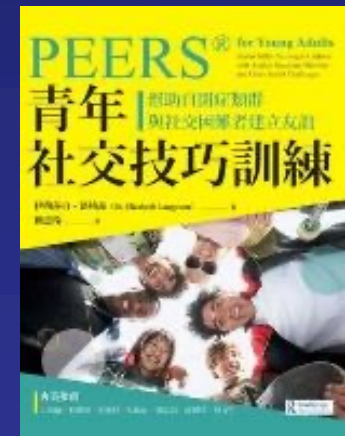
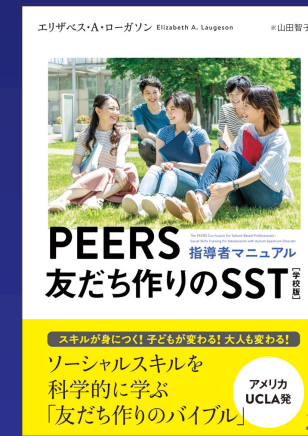
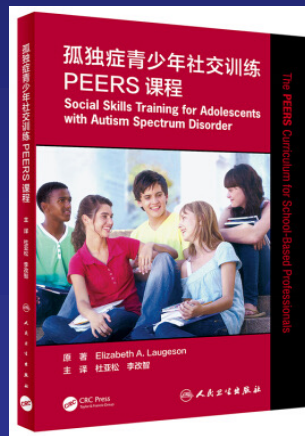
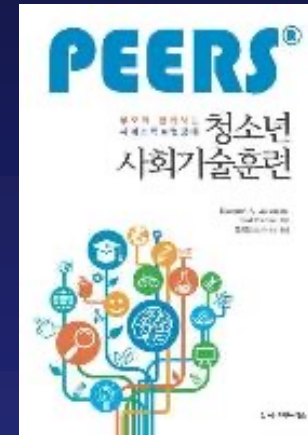
Background about PEERS®

- International program
 - Developed at UCLA in 2004
 - Programs have been translated into over a dozen languages
 - Used in over 150 countries
- Evidence-Based Social Skills Programs:
 - PEERS® for Preschoolers
 - PEERS® for Adolescents
 - PEERS® for School-Based Professionals
 - PEERS® for Young Adults
- Research Programs:
 - PEERS® for Careers
 - PEERS® for Dating



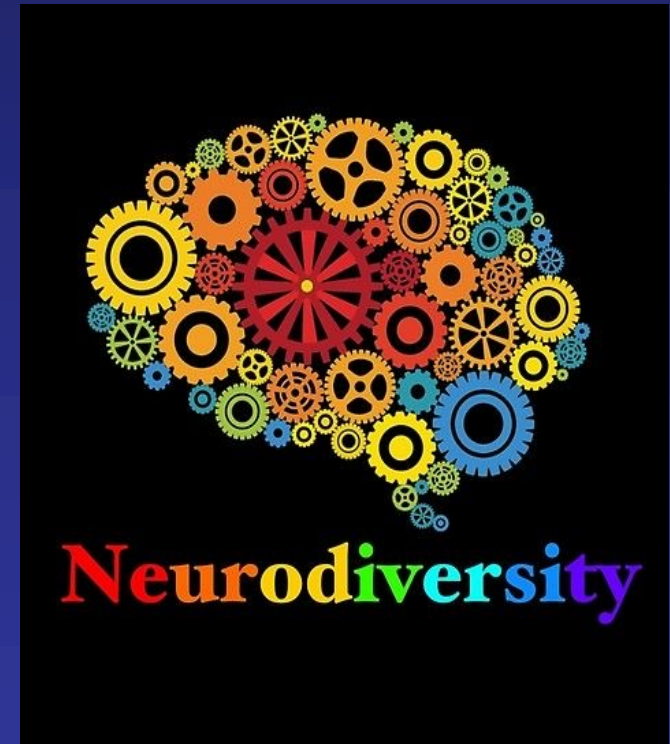
Unique Aspects of PEERS®

- One of the only evidence-based social skills programs
- Parent or caregiver assisted
 - Parents and other caregivers are trained as social coaches
- Only appropriate for socially motivated participants
- Only teaches ecologically valid social skills
 - Teaches rules and steps followed by socially successful people
- Cross-culturally adapted and validated across the globe



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



The Importance of Choice

- Each week we review strategies in friendships and relationships 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 a personal CHOICE



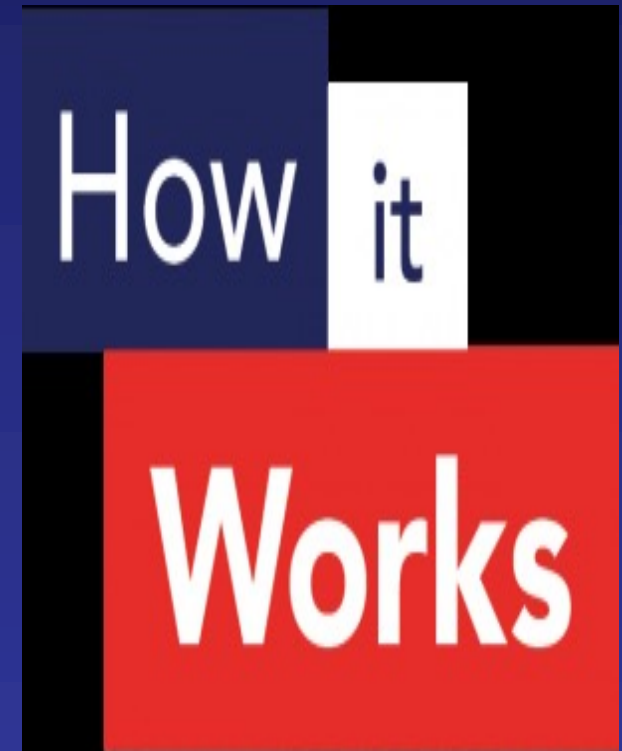
PEERS[®] Neuroaffirming Pledge

- 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



Evidence-Based Methods of Instruction

- Weekly Lessons
 - Concrete rules and steps of socially helpful behavior
 - Ecologically valid social skills taught
- Role-play demonstrations
 - Model social behavior
 - Socially risky and socially helpful demonstrations
 - Perspective taking questions
- Small group practice
- Social coaching
- Homework assignments
 - Practice in natural social settings
 - Helps generalize skills
- Homework review
 - Review assignments from the previous lessons
 - Provides repetition of instruction
 - Allows for individualization of the program



A 3D-rendered puzzle piece is the central focus, tilted slightly to the right. The piece is orange and features the word "SKILLS" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The letters are raised, creating a shadow effect. The puzzle piece is surrounded by other white puzzle pieces, some of which are partially visible. The entire scene is set against a white background, with dark blue horizontal bars at the top and bottom.

SKILLS

Friendship: Entering Group Conversations

QUESTIONS

What are most young people told to do to meet new people?

Do these strategies usually work?



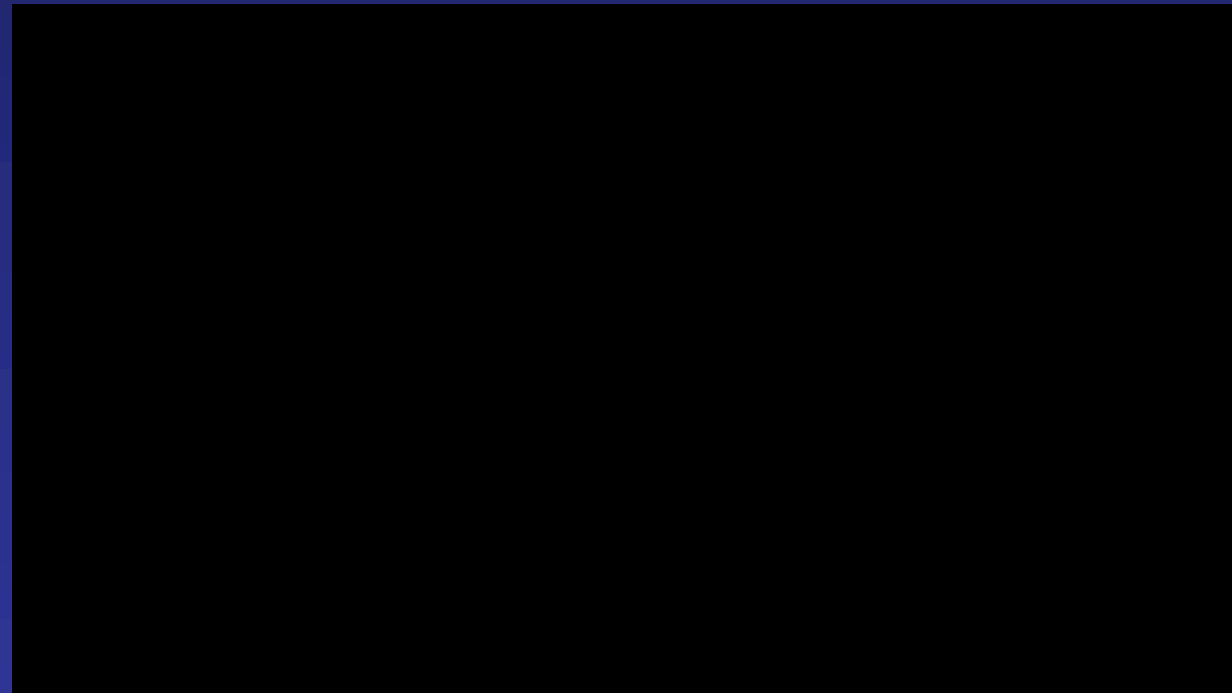


Entering Group Conversations

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 conversations?





Entering Group Conversations

Socially Helpful Behavior

1. Listen to the conversation
2. Watch from a distance
3. Use a prop
4. Identify the topic
5. Find a common interest
6. Move closer
7. Wait for a pause
8. Mention the topic
 - Make a comment
 - Ask a question
 - Give a compliment
9. Assess interest
 - Are they looking at you?
 - Are they facing you?
 - Are they talking to you?
 - Did they open the circle?
10. Introduce yourself (only if you haven't met and they seem interested)



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

Bullying: Handling Teasing

QUESTIONS:

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

Do those strategies usually work?





Handling Teasing

Socially Risky Behavior

- Ignoring the teasing is RISKY
 - They will just keep teasing you
 - You are making it easy for them to tease you
 - It will make it more likely that the teaser will keep teasing
 - If your goal is to stop the teasing, ignoring the teasing is RISKY





Handling Teasing

Socially Risky Behavior

- Walking away right away is RISKY
 - They will follow you and keep teasing you
 - You are making it easy for them to tease you
 - It will make it more likely that the teaser will keep teasing
 - If your goal is to stop the teasing, walking away right away is RISKY





Handling Teasing

Socially Risky Behavior

- Telling someone in authority right away is RISKY
 - They may want to retaliate against you for trying to get them in trouble
 - They probably won't get in trouble if it's your word against theirs
 - NOTE: This does not apply to your parent / social coach
 - If your goal is to stop the teasing, telling someone in authority right away is RISKY



Handling Teasing

QUESTION:

What are some socially helpful behaviors for handling teasing?





Handling Teasing

Socially Helpful Behavior

- Acting like what the person said did not bother you is HELPFUL
 - If you show that you are bothered:
 - You will make the teasing fun for the teaser
 - They will be more likely to tease you again
 - If you show that what the person said didn't bother you:
 - The teaser feels embarrassed
 - The teasing won't be fun for the teaser
 - They will be less likely to tease you again
 - If your goal is to stop the teasing, acting like what the person said didn't bother you is HELPFUL





Handling Teasing

Socially Helpful Behavior

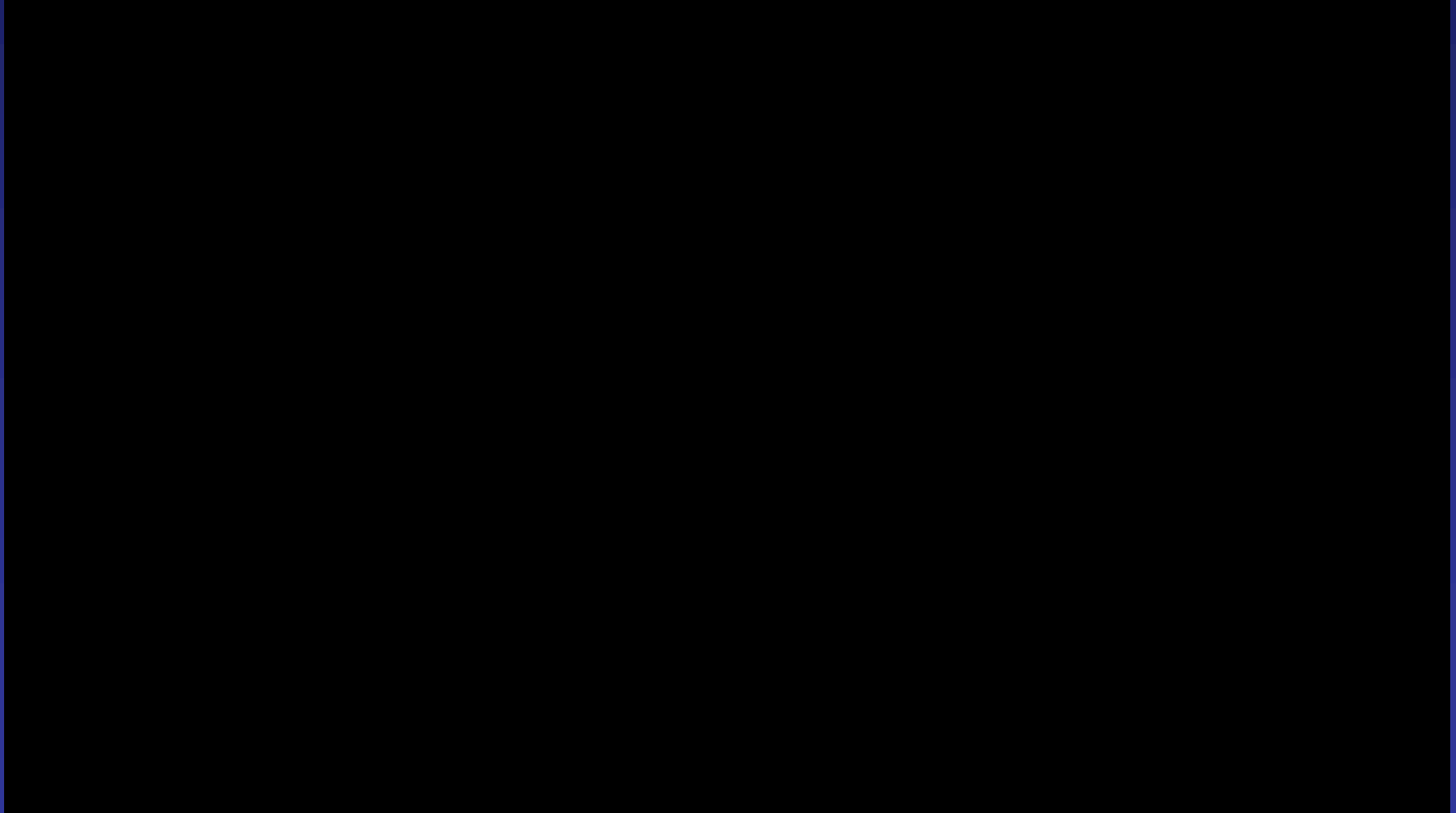
- Providing a **SHORT COMEBACK** that shows what the person said didn't bother you is **HELPFUL**:
 - Whatever!
 - So what?
 - Big deal!
 - Who cares?
 - Yeah and?
 - And your point is?
 - Am I supposed to care?
 - Is that supposed to be funny?
 - Tell me when you get to the funny part
 - Tell me when you get to the punchline
 - Anyway... (Good comeback to walk away on)
 - If your goal is to stop the teasing, giving a short comeback that shows what the person said didn't bother you is **HELPFUL**





Handling Teasing

Socially Helpful Behavior



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



Overview of Results from Meta-Analysis and RCT of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents

(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman & Bent, 2021)
(Laugeson, Frankel, Gantman, Dillon & Mogil, 2012)

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}

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J Autism Dev Disord (2012) 42:1025–1036
DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1339-1

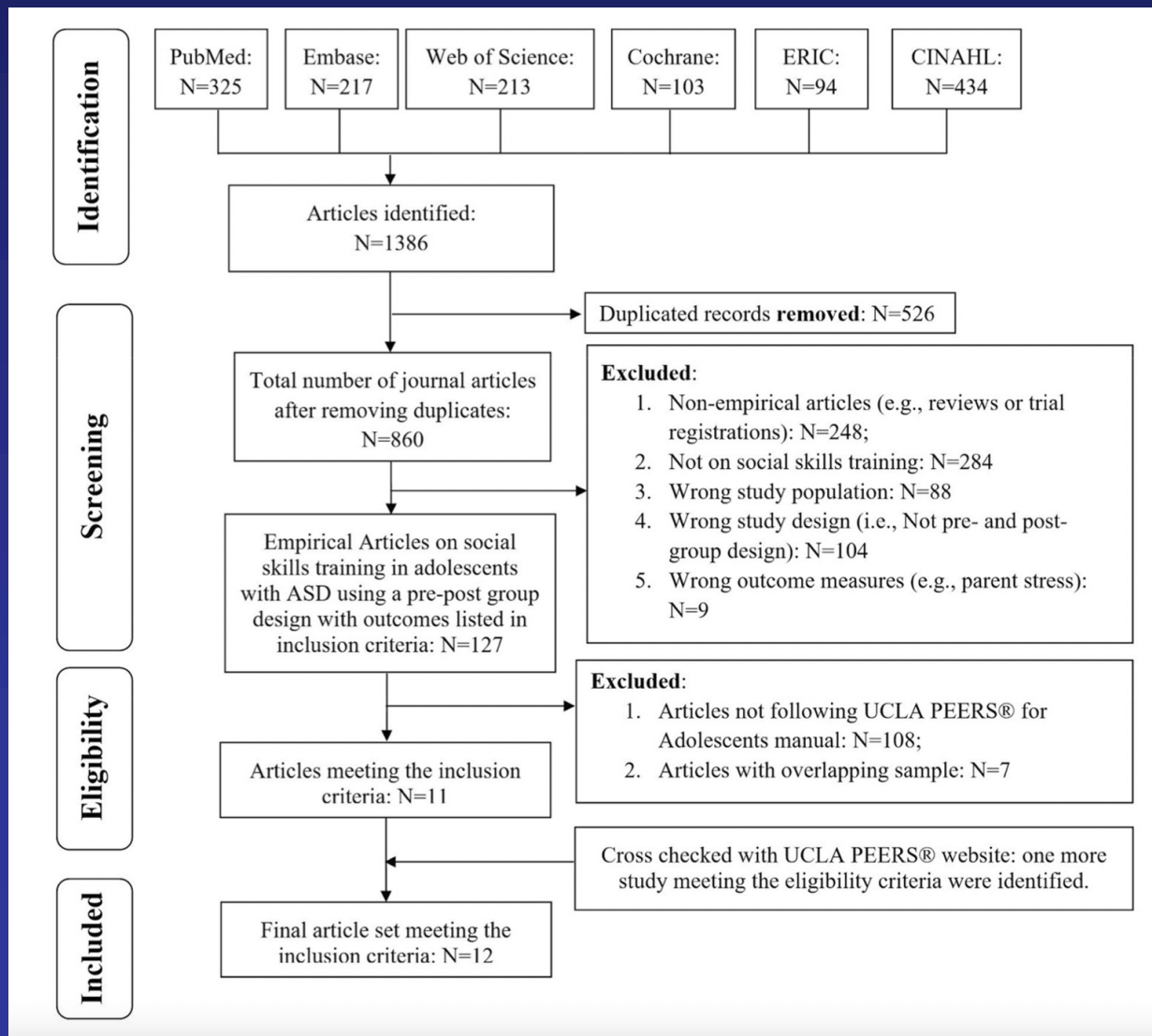
ORIGINAL PAPER

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 Mogil

Study Design for Meta-Analysis of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents

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



- Effect size tells you how meaningful the relationship is between variables.
- A large effect size means that a research finding has practical significance.
- A small effect size indicates limited practical applications
- Hedge's g :
 - 0.2 = Small effect size
 - 0.5 = Medium effect size
 - 0.8 = Large effect size

Participants at Baseline from RCT of Parent-Assisted PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents

(Laugeson, Frankel, Gantman, Dillon & Mogil, 2012)

Table 2 Mean demographic and baseline variables for treatment and delayed treatment control groups (standard deviations are in parentheses)

Variable	Group		<i>p</i>
	Treatment <i>n</i> = 14	Delayed treatment <i>n</i> = 14	
Age (years)	15.0 (1.0)	14.3 (1.4)	ns
Grade	9.4 (1.2)	8.8 (1.3)	ns
Percent male	85.7	78.6	ns
Percent Caucasian	57.1	42.9	ns
Percent mainstreamed	64.3	50.0	ns
KBIT composite	94.1 (20.2)	104.5 (18.8)	ns
Vineland composite	72.0 (10.6)	75.4 (9.2)	ns
Teen measures			
TASSK	13.1 (3.5)	14.0 (2.9)	ns
QPQ-A host	0.8 (1.1)	0.4 (0.9)	ns
Parent measures			
QPQ-P host	0.8 (1.1)	0.4 (0.8)	ns
SSRS-P social skills	39.2 (8.3)	39.9 (11.6)	ns
SRS-P	80.86 (9.3)	76.0 (10.2) ^a	ns

^a *n* = 7

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

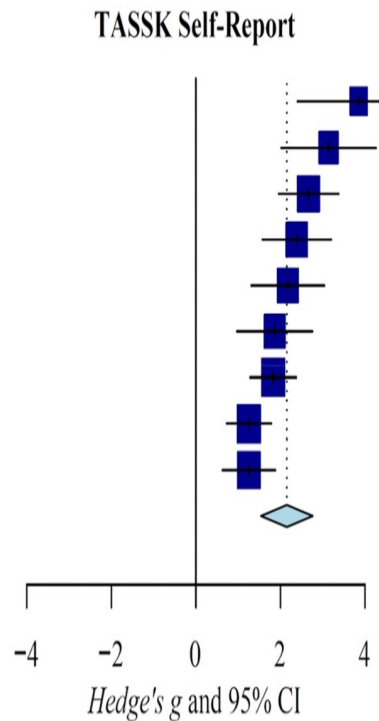
(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman & Bent, 2021)
(Laugeson, Frankel, Gantman, Dillon & Mogil, 2012)

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

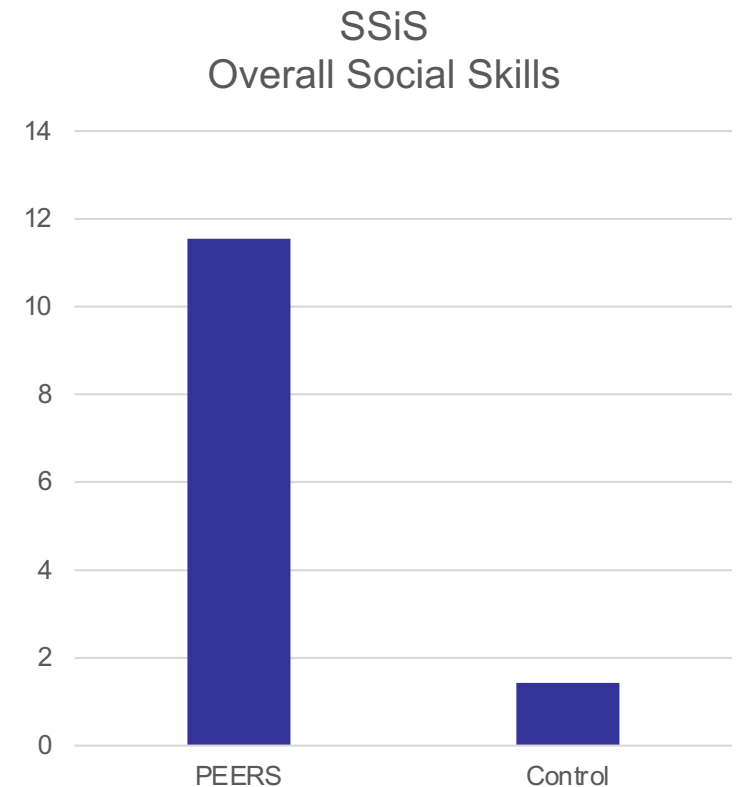
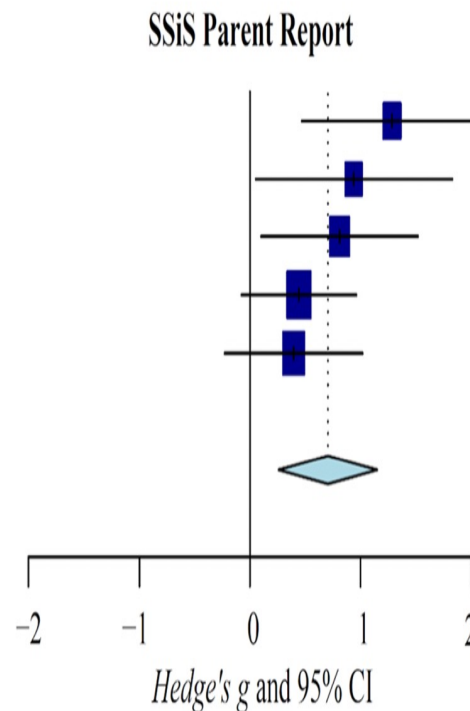
Overview of Results from Meta-Analysis and RCT of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents: Overall Social Skills (SSiS)

(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman & Bent, 2021)
 (Laugeson, Frankel, Gantman, Dillon & Mogil, 2012)

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

Medium to Large Effect Sizes

Study Names	g	(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

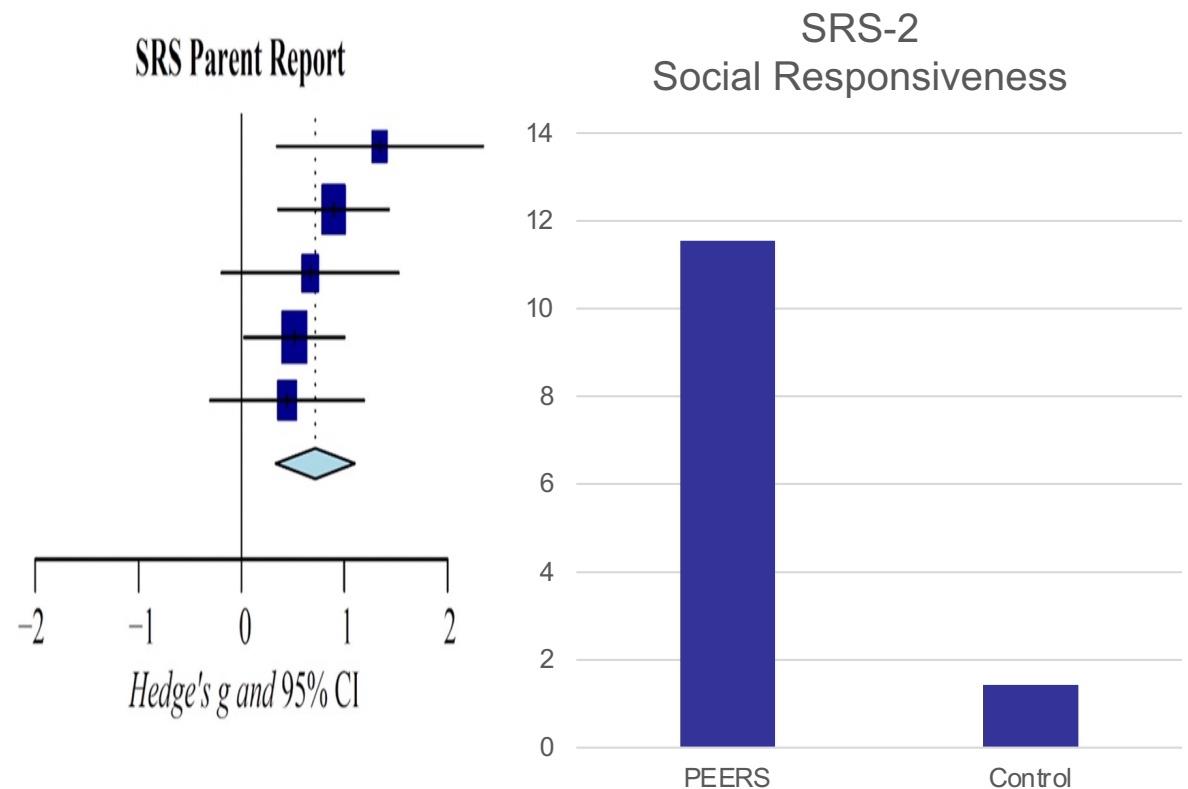
Overview of Results from Meta-Analysis of PEERS[®] for Autistic Adolescents: Social Responsiveness (SRS-2)

(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman & Bent, 2021)
(Laugeson, Frankel, Gantman, Dillon & Mogil, 2012)

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: Social Engagement – Teen and Parent Report (QSQ)

(Zheng, Kim, Salzman, Ankenman & Bent, 2021)
(Laugeson, Frankel, Gantman, Dillon & Mogil, 2012)

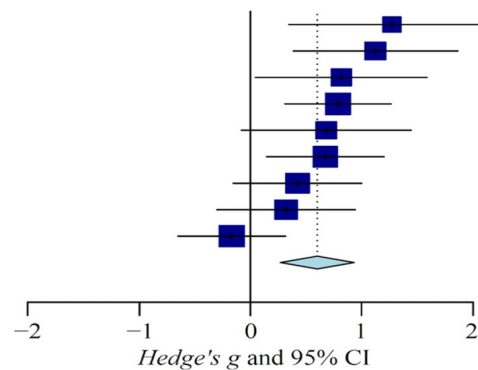
Fig. 6 Forest plot for pooled effect size on QSQ adolescent self-report

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: $I^2 = 49\%$

**Small to Large
Effect Sizes**

QSQ Adolescent Self Report



Frequency of Get-Togethers in Previous Month

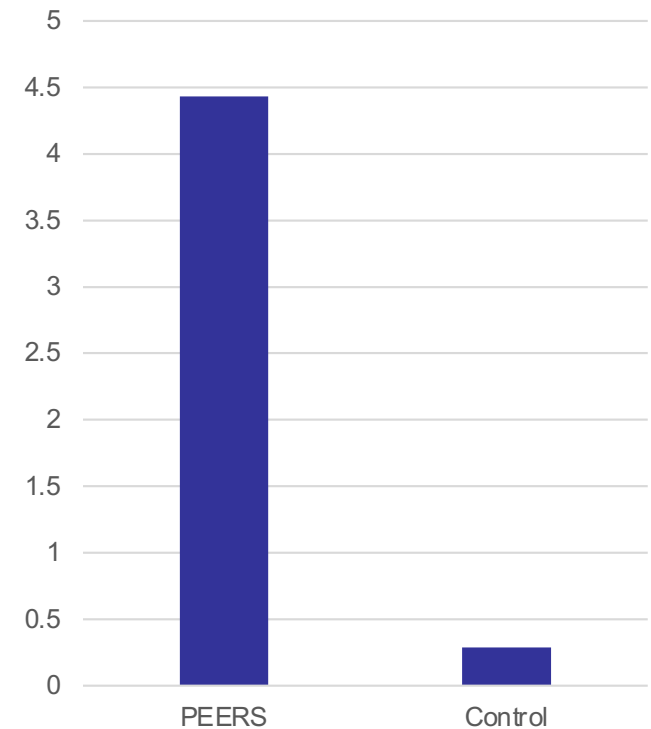


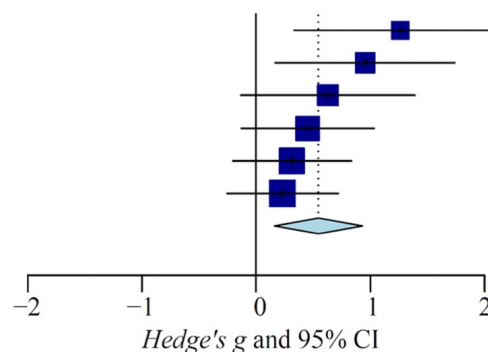
Fig. 7 Forest plot for pooled effect size on QSQ parent report

Study Names	<i>g</i>	(95% CI)
Laugeson et al., 2012	1.26	[0.34; 2.19]
Matthews et al., 2018	0.95	[0.17; 1.74]
Yamada et al., 2020	0.63	[-0.13; 1.39]
Yoo et al., 2014	0.45	[-0.13; 1.03]
Schohl et al., 2014	0.31	[-0.20; 0.83]
Shum et al., 2019	0.23	[-0.25; 0.72]
Total	0.55	[0.16; 0.93]

Heterogeneity: $I^2 = 12\%$

**Small to Large
Effect Sizes**

QSQ Parent Report



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

PEERS[®] Long-term Follow-up Study

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

- Data was collected 1-5 years post-treatment
 - T1 – Pre-test
 - T2 – Post-test
 - T3 – 1-5 year follow-up
- 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

*Journal of Mental Health Research
in Intellectual Disabilities*, 7:45–73, 2014
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Long-Term Treatment Outcomes for Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training for Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorders: The UCLA PEERS Program

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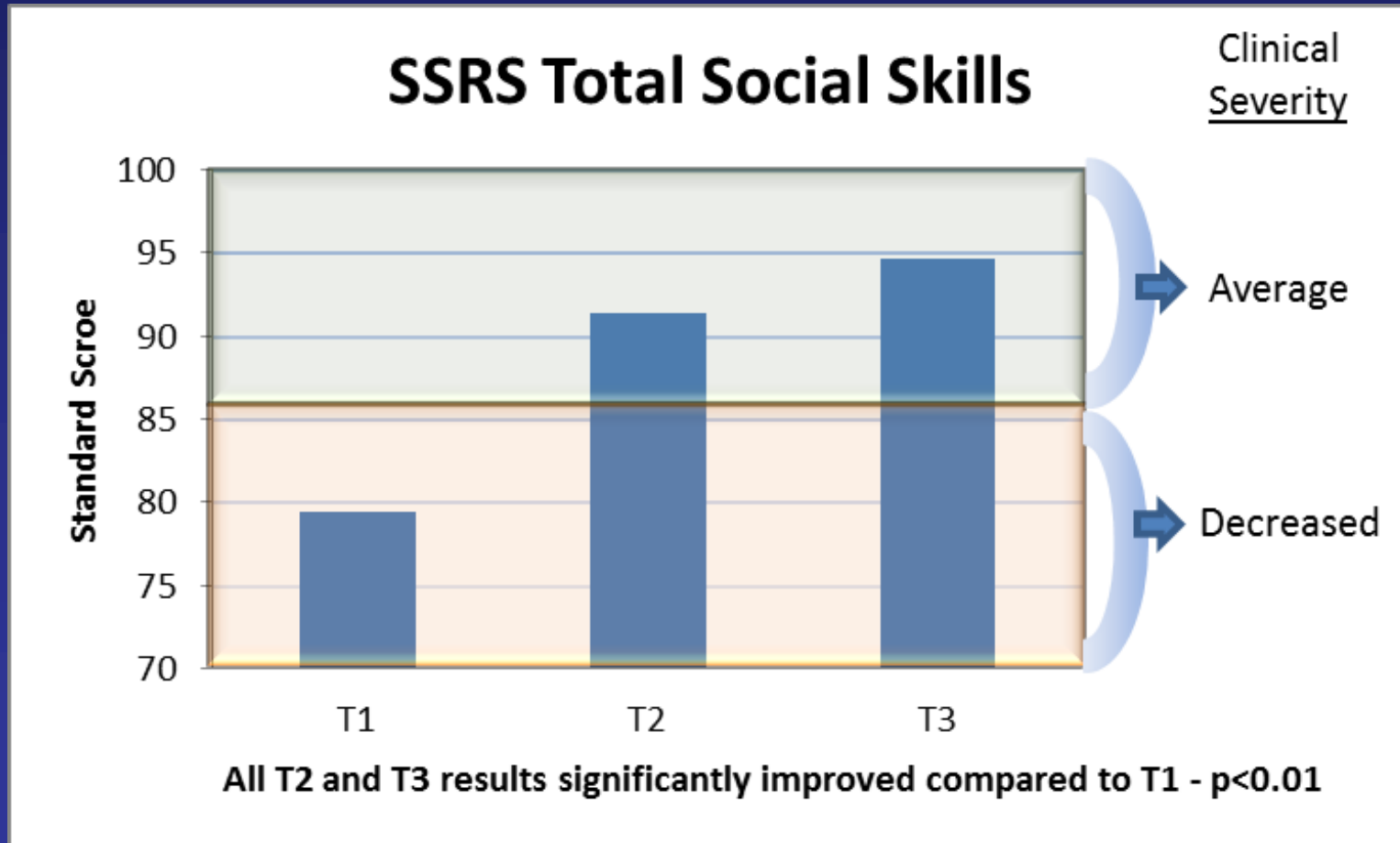
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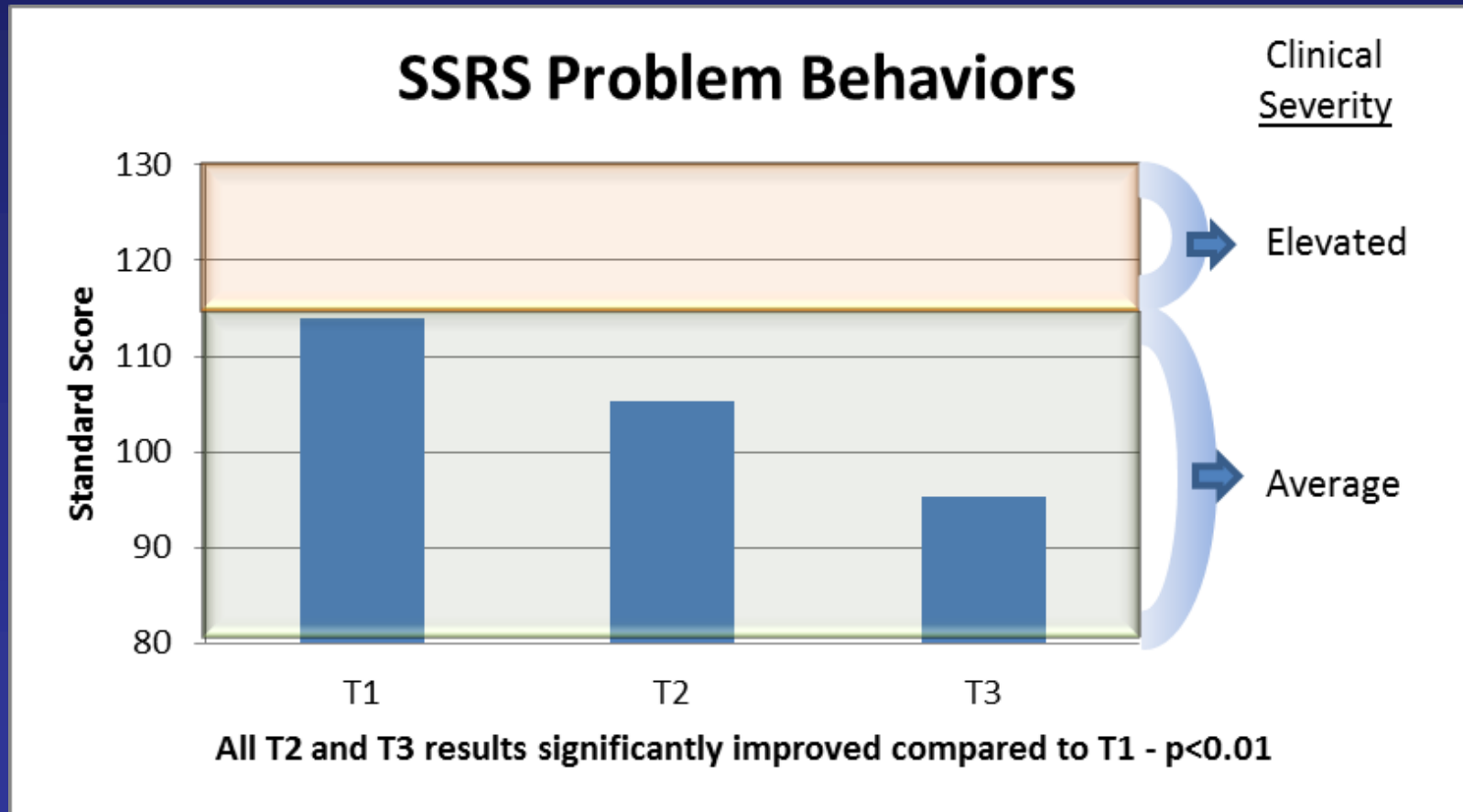
PEERS[®] Long-term Follow-up Study

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



PEERS[®] Long-term Follow-up Study

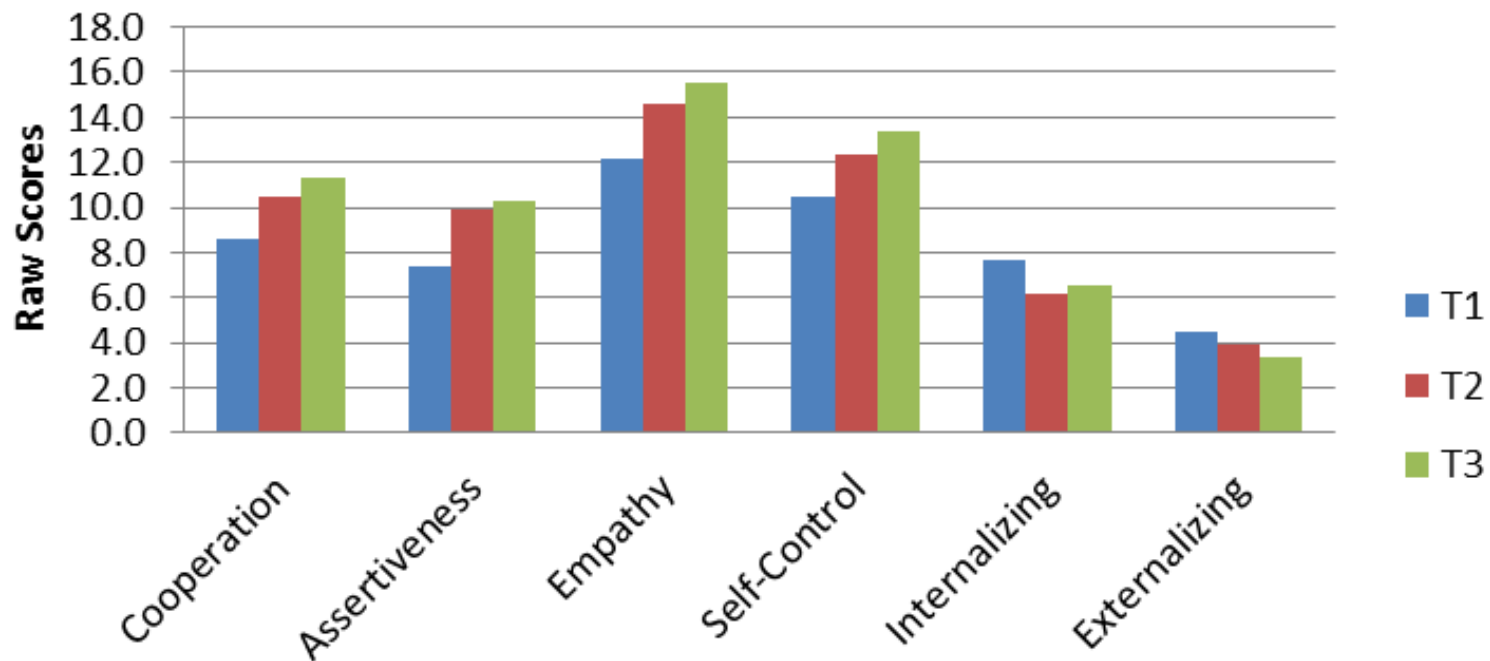
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates & Frankel, 2013)



PEERS[®] Long-term Follow-up Study

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

SSRS Subscales

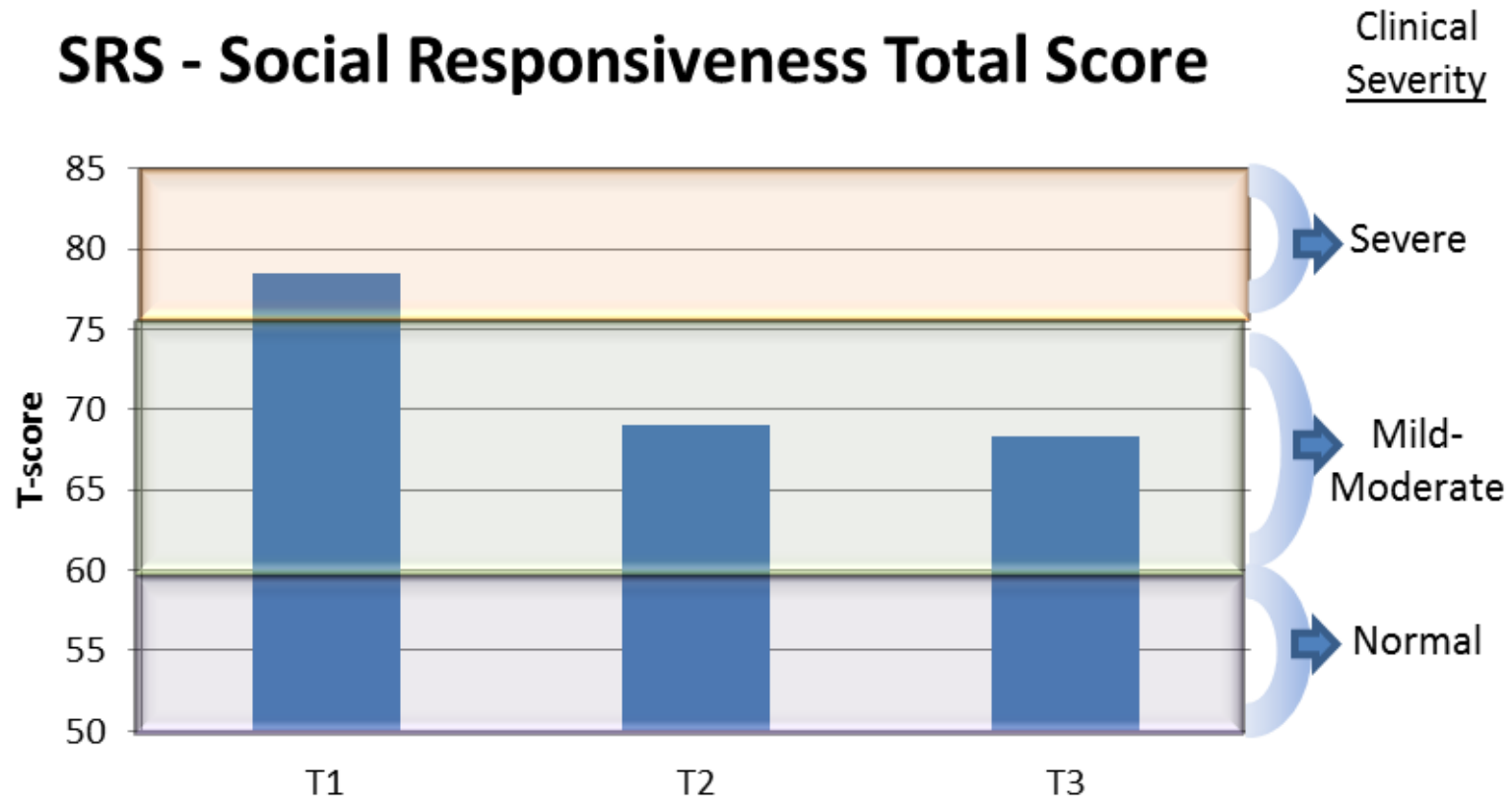


All T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - $p < 0.01$

PEERS[®] Long-term Follow-up Study

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

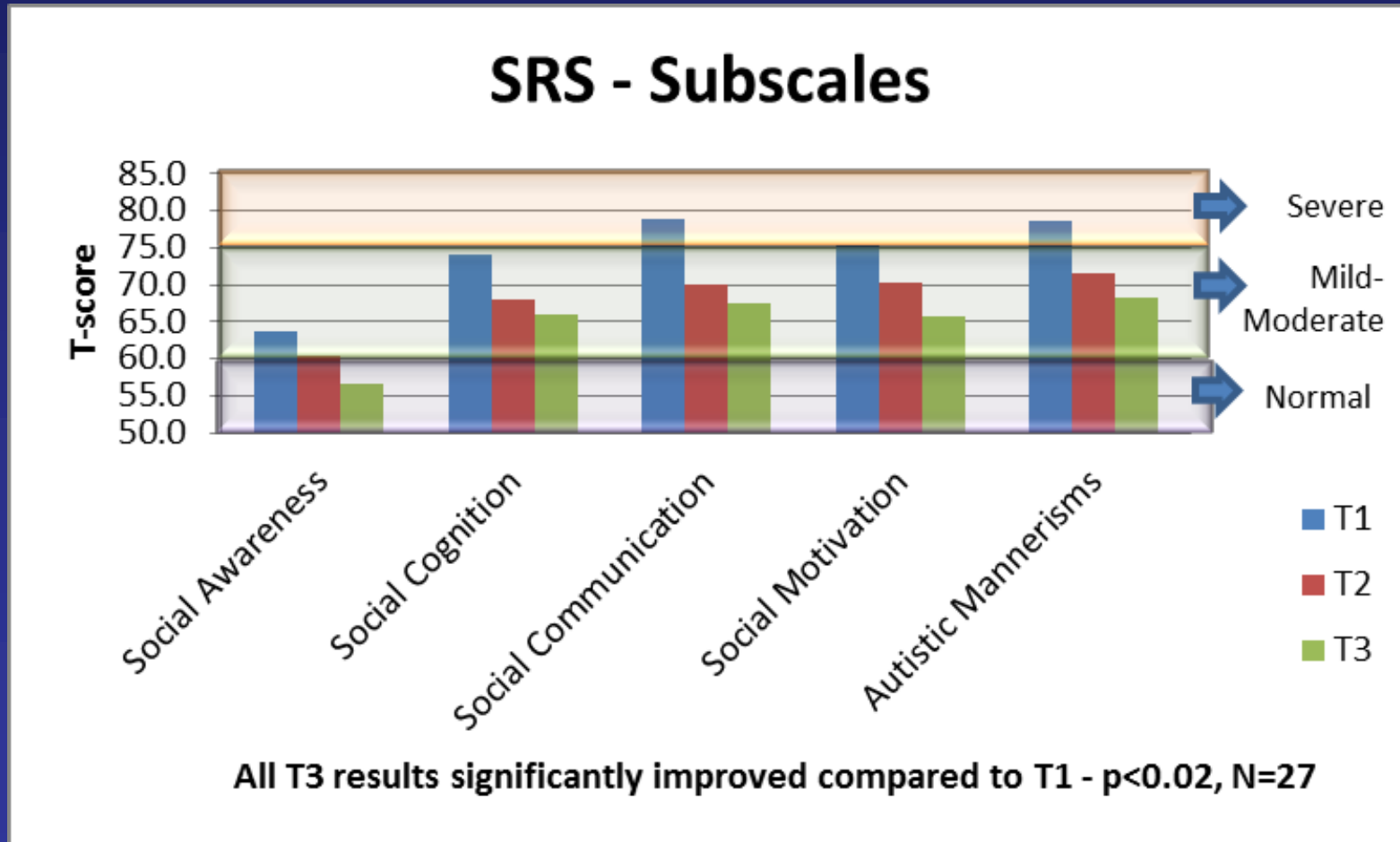
SRS - Social Responsiveness Total Score



All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - $p < 0.01$, $N = 27$

PEERS[®] Long-term Follow-up Study

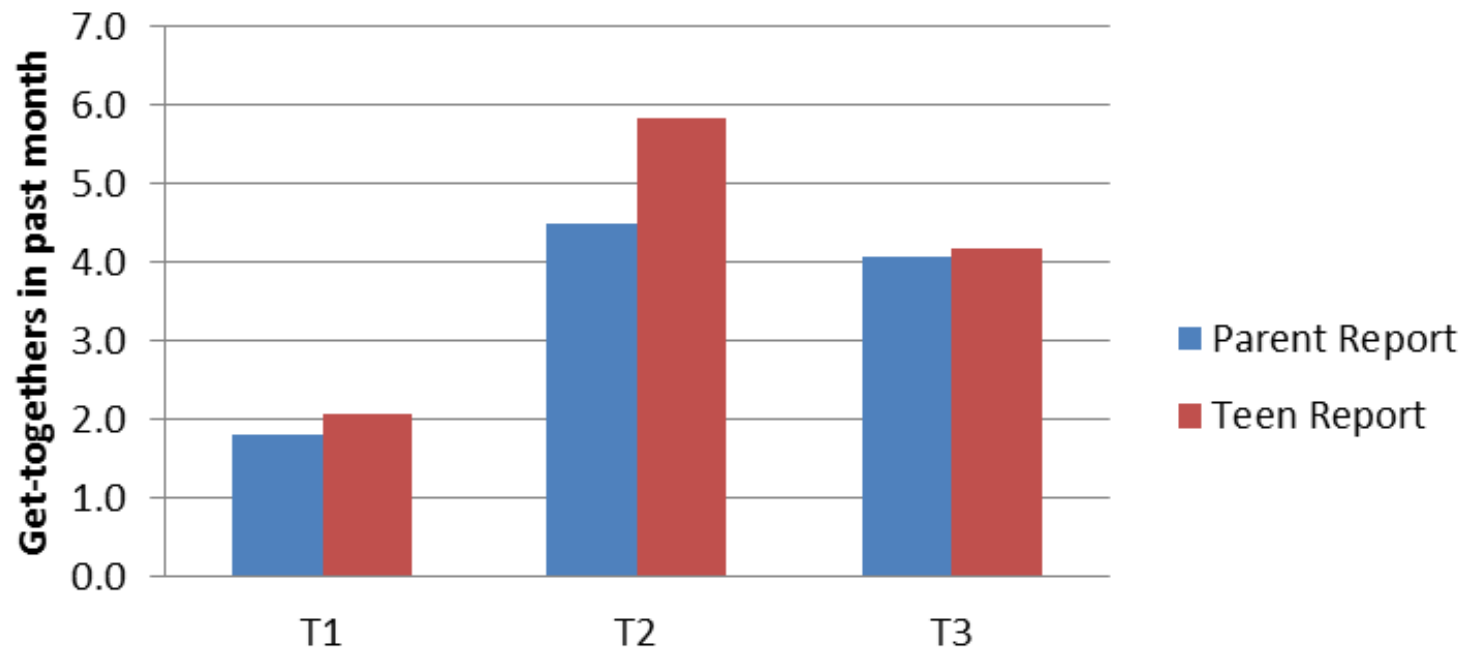
(Mandelberg, Laugeson, Cunningham, Ellingsen, Bates & Frankel, 2013)



PEERS[®] Long-term Follow-up Study

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

QSQ Total Get-Togethers

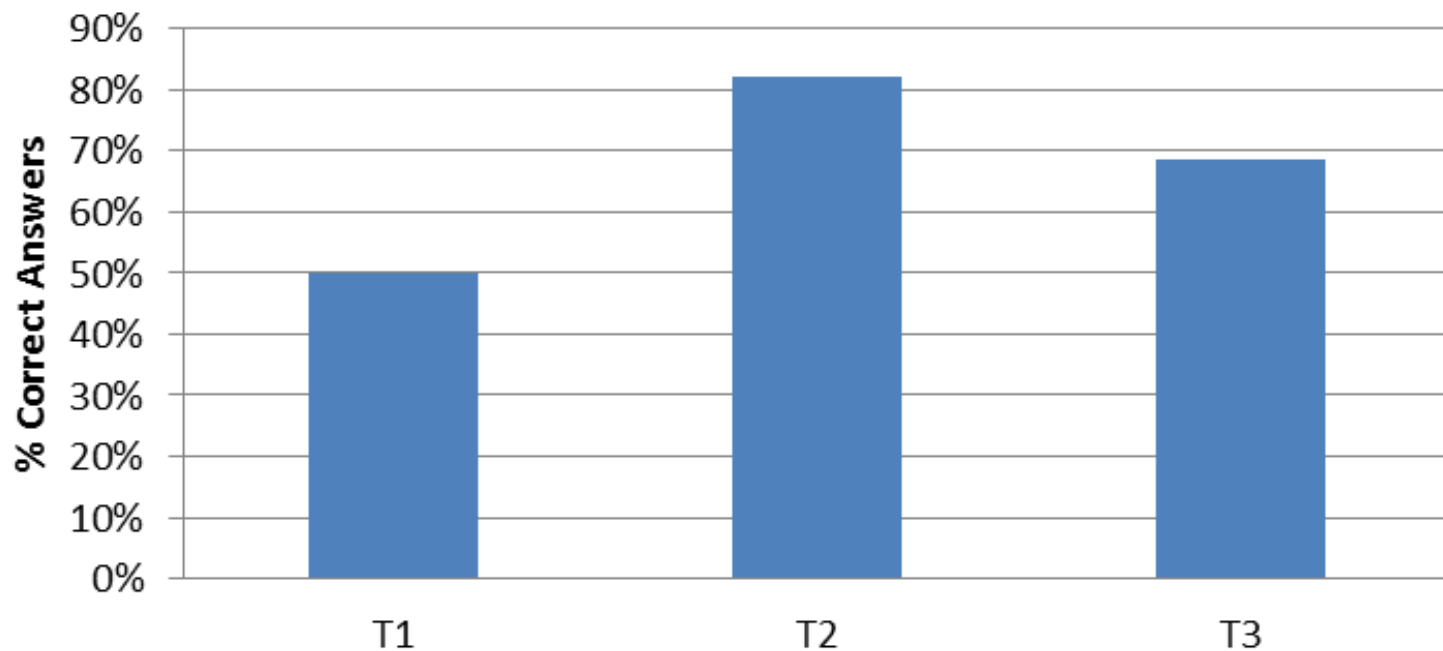


All T2 and T3 results significantly improved compared to T1 - $p < 0.02$

PEERS[®] 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 - $p < 0.01$



RESOURCES

Open to all, including children, teens, young adults, parents, professionals, and educators.



PEERS® VIRTUAL BOOT CAMP

Includes **35 PRE-RECORDED EPISODES** covering **ALL PEERS®** skills


PRESENTED BY DR. ELIZABETH LAUGESON, DEVELOPER OF PEERS®,
FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR, UCLA PEERS® CLINIC

To register:
peersclinic@ucla.edu
(310) 267-3377

Topics Covered:

Friendship skills
Dating etiquette
Conversational skills
Conflict resolution
Handling bullying

GO AT YOUR OWN PACE while receiving instruction on concrete rules and steps of social etiquette, video role-play demonstrations, and suggestions for practicing skills at the end of every episode.

 www.facebook.com/uclapeers

 [@UCLAPEERS](https://twitter.com/UCLAPEERS)

 [@UCLAPEERS](https://www.instagram.com/uclapeers)

PEERS® Virtual Boot Camp

- 35 episodes for teens and adults
- Covers ALL the skills taught in PEERS®
- Go at your own pace
- Available on the UCLA PEERS YouTube Channel
- Access never expires



Love on the Spectrum (Netflix): PEERS[®] Dating Bootcamp

NETFLIX



ABC
Australian Broadcasting Corporation
Television



**FREE
PEERS®
Role-Play
Video Library**



**UCLA
PEERS® CLINIC
FREE ROLE-PLAY VIDEOS**

www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources

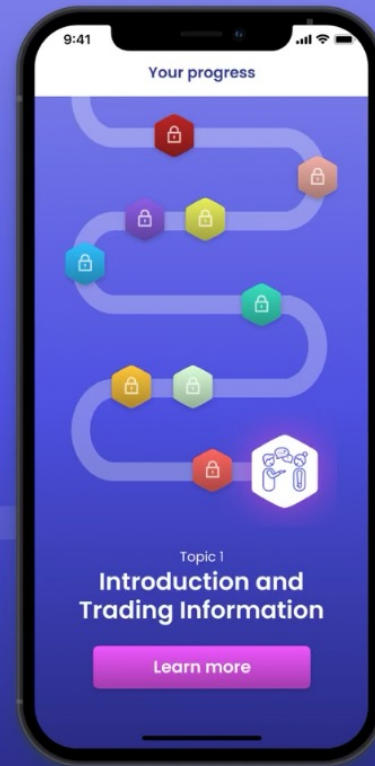
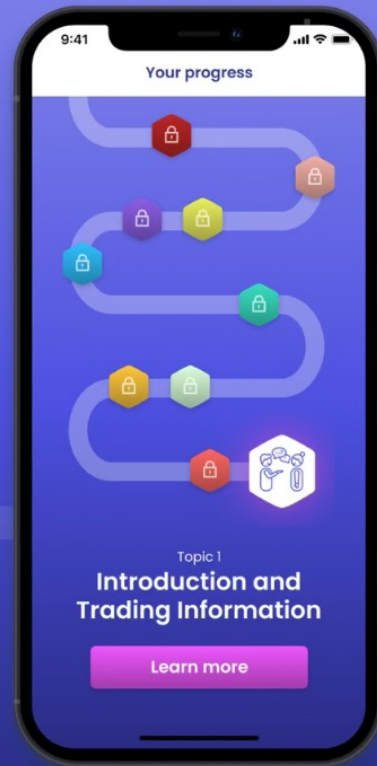
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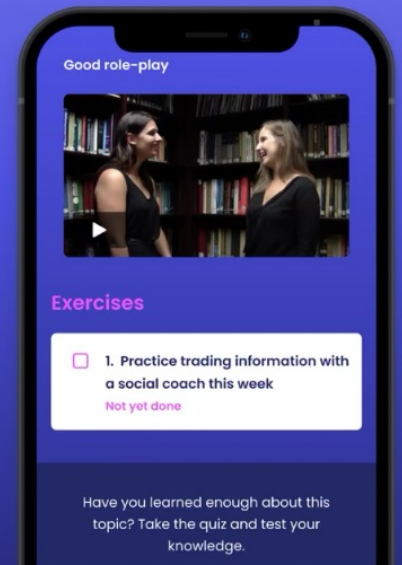
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ELIZABETH A. LAUGESON, PSY.D.

The Science of MAKING FRIENDS

Helping Socially Challenged
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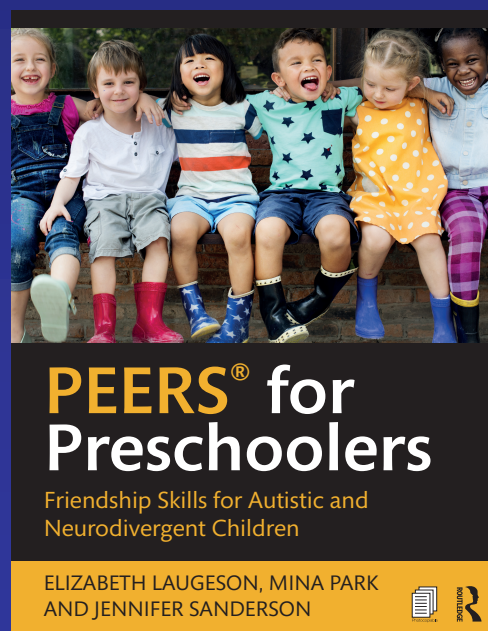
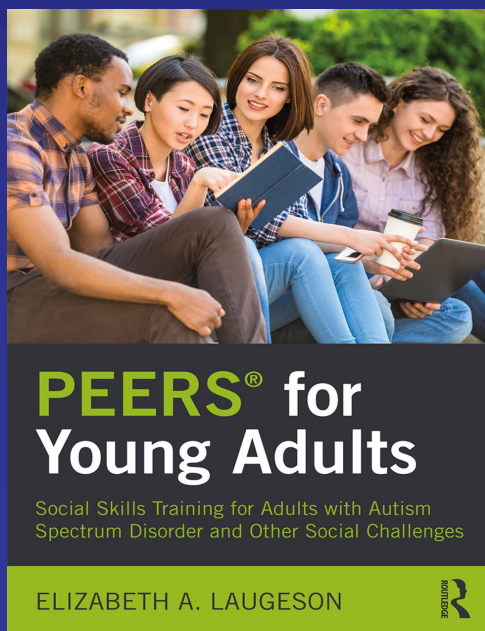
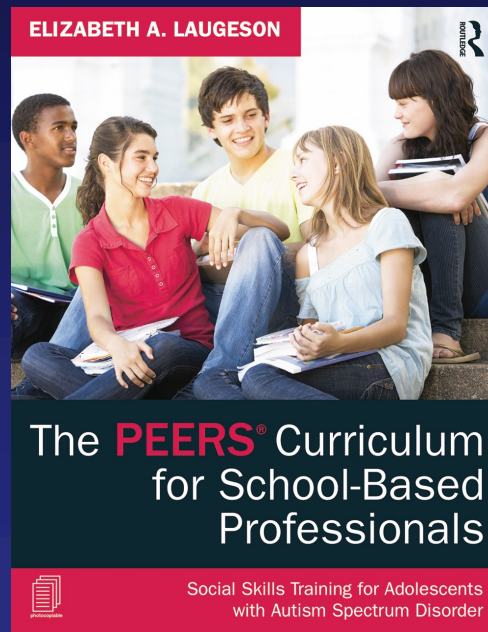
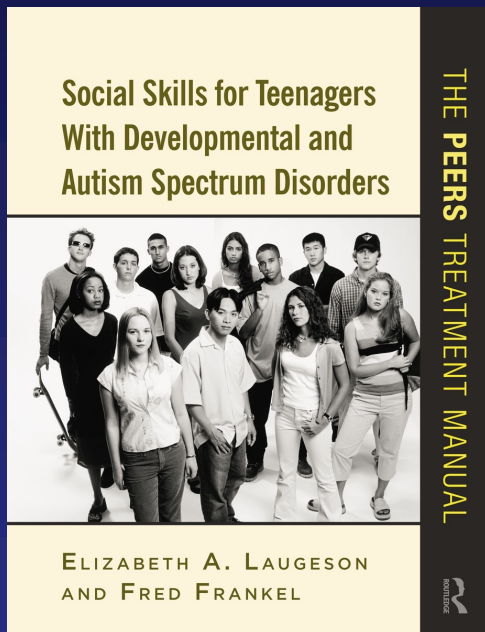
The Science of Making Friends

- Parent book
- Friendship skills
- Handling peer rejection and conflict
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