PEERS for Young Adults

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Overview of PEERS for Young Adults
(Adapted from Laugeson & Frankel, 2010)

• Addresses common social errors
• Teaches ecologically valid social skills
• Evidence-based for young adults with ASD (18-24)
• Caregiver-assisted
  - Parents, adult siblings, family members, life coaches, job coaches, peer coaches
• Focuses on relationship skills
  - Friendships
  - Romantic relationships

Common Social Challenges for Young Adults with ASD
• Difficulty with social communication
• Difficulty with social awareness
• Difficulty with social motivation
  - Engagement
• Difficulty with social cognition

Volkmar & Klin, 1998; Bauminger & Kasari, 2000; Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004; Koning & Magill-Evans, 2001; LeCouteur et al., 1999; Marks, Schrader, Longaker, & Levine, 2000; Ghaziuddin & Gerstein, 1996; Twattman-Cullen, 1998; Hengstuhl & Siperstein, 1999; Church, Amanullah, Amanullah, 2000; Constantine, 2005)
Consequences of Social Deficits For Young Adults with ASD

• Social neglect and isolation
  - Withdrawn
  - Seen as shy by others
  - May go unnoticed

• Peer rejection
  - Teased and bullied
  - Unsuccessful attempts to socially engage others

• Peer conflict
  - Arguments may result in termination of friendship
  - Lack of close reciprocal friendships
  - Poor friendship quality

Friendships as a “Protective Factor”

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

Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smirnito, & Bamburg, 1996; Miller & Ingham, 1976

Guidelines for Social Interaction

• Ecologically valid social skills
  • DO’S
  • Common social errors committed by those with ASD
    • DONT’S
  • Create rules around ecologically valid skills and common social errors
  • Break steps down into concrete parts
Evidence-based Teaching Strategies

- Homework review (30 mins)
  - Troubleshoot homework problems
  - Individualize treatment
- Didactic instruction (30 mins)
- Conduct role-play demonstrations using peer coaches
- Behavioral rehearsal (20 mins)
- Reunification with caregivers (10 mins)

Importance of Social Coaches

- Caregivers provide social coaching during coachable moments in natural settings
- Assist with generalization of skills to home and community setting
- Use of buzzwords and phrases
- Aide in homework compliance
- Guidance on interpersonal problem-solving
- Provide opportunities for peer contacts
- Assist in finding social activities and social hobbies based on the young adult’s INTERESTS

Weekly Didactic Topics

- Starting conversations and trading information
- Maintaining conversations and trading information
- Finding a source of friends
- Electronic communication
- Appropriate use of humor
- Entering and exiting conversations (three types)
- Get-togethers
- Dating etiquette (four sessions)
- Handling arguments and disagreements
- Handling direct & indirect bullying
Example: Entering Group Conversations

What are most young adults told to do in response to enter a group conversation?

- Listen to the conversation
- Watch from a distance
- Use a prop
- Identify the topic
- Find a common interest
- Move closer
- Wait for a pause
- Mention the topic
- Assess interest
- Introduce yourself

Evidence Support of Young Adult Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Intervention Duration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>n = 9</td>
<td>16 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waitlist</td>
<td>n = 8</td>
<td>16 weeks</td>
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</table>
Randomized Control Trial Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Treatment (n = 47)</th>
<th>Delayed treatment (n = 48)</th>
<th>p</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demographics</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>19.9±3.2</td>
<td>20.9±2.9</td>
<td>0.12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percent male</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Caucasian</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>KBIT-2 composite</td>
<td>96.7±13.4</td>
<td>106.8±17.4</td>
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<td>Verbal IQ composite</td>
<td>99.8±13.4</td>
<td>99.8±13.5</td>
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<td>AQ</td>
<td>35.9±5.2</td>
<td>32.8±6.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Young adult measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>SES Δ</td>
<td>132.6±33.7</td>
<td>152.3±49.2</td>
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<td>TWEAK Δ</td>
<td>14.4±2.7</td>
<td>12.0±2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>QRI total</td>
<td>2.24±1.9</td>
<td>2.68±2.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social total score</td>
<td>237.4±12.2</td>
<td>245.4±42.7</td>
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<td>Cognitive measures</td>
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<td>MSQ Total score</td>
<td>109.4±22.4</td>
<td>102.6±18.5</td>
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<td>SMR social skills</td>
<td>78.7±11.4</td>
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<td>QRI total</td>
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<td>HS</td>
<td>17.5±8.6</td>
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Programs & Trainings

- **UCLA PEERS**
  - Preschool (4-6 years old)
  - Teen Group (12-18 years old)
  - Young Adults (18+ years old)
- **Additional Resources**
  - Science of Making Friends
  - Friendmaker App on iTunes
- **Certified Trainings at UCLA:**
  - May 18 – 20, 2016 for Mental Health Professionals
  - June 23 – 25, 2016 for School-based Professionals

**UCLA PEERS Clinic**

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