PEERS® at Landmark College Social Skills Group

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Support

Overview of Presentation

- What is PEERS®
- Social challenges among teens and young adults
- Importance of improving friendships and relationships
- PEERS@ class method of instruction
- Role plays
- Social Coaching
- Outcomes
- Q&A

PEERS®

- Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills
- A social skills intervention for adolescents and young adults. It has a strong *evidenced-base* for use with teens and young adults with ASD, ADHD and similar social and communication challenges.
- Originally developed at UCLA by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson, founder and Director of the UCLA PEERS® Clinic, and Dr. Fred Frankel.
- Teaches ecologically valid skills based on how socially successful individuals behave.
- Builds in the generalization of skills that transfer into "real life" settings.

- Breaks down social skills into understandable steps
- 16-week curriculum
- Meets weekly for 90 minutes
- Structured like a class, not a therapy group
- Not a friend matching group
- Include social coaches

More details

Who should attend?

Young Adults who are:

- Social motivated
- Committed to regular attendance
- Interested in making and keeping friends and/or handling conflict and rejection
- Able to participate in a small group
- Willing to practice



Neurodiversity

- "Nothing about us without us"
 - John Elder Robison and other adults with ASD asked for evidence based social skills curriculum

- "It is not 'what's the matter with you'
- It is 'what matters to you.'"
 - Choice
 - PEERS does not try to change who students are
 - Skills for befriending and dating people they actually want to befriend.

Students

- PEER REJECTED
- PEER NEGLECTED

Social Challenges

What can make things tough

- Poor communication Skills
- Problems with topic initiation
- Use repetitive themes
- Perseverate on restricted interests
- Disregard the other persons interests
- One sided conversations
- Elicit fewer extended responses
- Give fewer reciprocal responses
- Fail to identify common interests
- Difficulty providing relevant information

Social Challenges

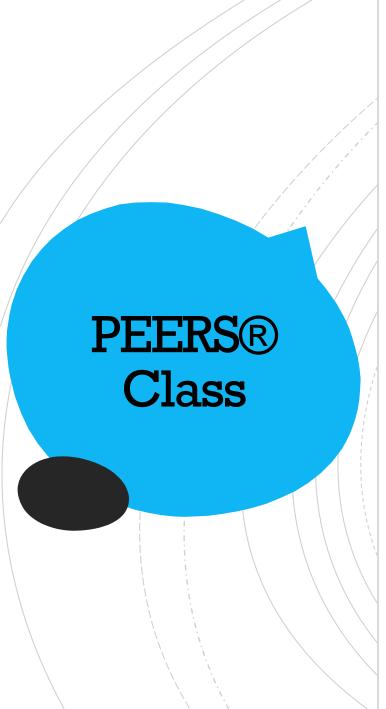
More...

- Making unexpected leaps in topics
- Pedantic Style of speaking
- Poor speech prosody
- Difficulty interpreting verbal and non-verbal social cues
 - Voice tone
 - Sarcasm
 - Gestures
 - Social Touch

Friendship

More...

- Very few close reciprocal friendships
- Poor friendship quality
- Greater conflict
- Less security in relationships
- Increased social isolation
- Less involvement in social activities
- More online friends than real life friends
- Peer Rejected, Peer Neglected
- Greater incidence of stalking behavior
- Vulnerable to exploitation and victimization



Method of Instruction

- Didactic Lesson with concrete rules and steps of social behavior
- Role Play Demonstrations of targeted skill
- Behavioral Rehearsal Exercises to practice newly learned skills
- Homework Assignment to practice newly learned skills
- Review of Homework to troubleshoot any problems
- Individual Social Coaching appointments to practice newly learned skills

PEERS® Class

Students will learn how to:

- Use appropriate conversational skills
- Finding a source of friends
- Use humor appropriately
- Use electronic communication
- Enter and exit conversations
- Be a good sport
- Handle arguments and disagreements
- Change a bad reputation
- Handle rumors and gossip
- Handle rejection, teasing and bullying

Role Play Demonstrations

Video or in Person Role Plays

- Emphasis on improving perspective taking
- Relevant, demonstration of skills and steps being learned
- Fun to watch
- All good or all bad
- Encourage student discussion participation
- Students can then practice during behavior rehearsals
- Use of "BUZZWORDS", common language used to describe social behaviors that can be summarized in just a few simple words.
 - Examples: Conversation hog, interviewer, too personal at first, friendship is a choice, using a prop, policing, mention a common interest, social groups, accepting peer groups.



Practice, feedback and generalizing skills to other settings

- Social Coach at Landmark
- Caregivers as Social Coaches

- Social Coaching in natural settings
- Assistance with weekly assignments
- Assistance with finding a source of friends



Does this work?

Evidence shows participants:

Make friends,

Maintain relationships

Experience less anxiety

Reduced depression and loneliness.

Student retention

Increased engagement

Student Comments:

"What I like about PEERS is how many topics you have to explore in the class. Since there is so much stuff, you might be comfortable with some stuff and uncomfortable with other stuff, so you can even it out and become more well-rounded."

"PEERS helped me become more social and be better with communication."

"Is PEERS supposed to build confidence? Because it's helping build my confidence."

"...the role plays help you think about what makes [the PEERS skills] more appropriate... I'm always learning from Elina's mistakes. Her mistakes are teachable moments where I realize, 'Oh that's why that doesn't make sense!' It's not a class that I dread. It's a class I think more schools should have, especially schools for students who learn differently."

"I like being able to stay in the conversation and figure out who I can be friends and what makes a good friend. Anyone can benefit from learning how to make and keep friends and build relationships."