

**PEERS® at  
Landmark College  
Social Skills Group**

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# 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 **E**ducation and **E**nrichment of **R**elational **S**kills
- 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.

A decorative background featuring several thin, curved lines in the top-left and bottom-right corners. A large, bright blue, irregular shape is positioned on the left side of the slide, containing the text 'More details'.

## More details

- 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

**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

The logo for PEERS® Class is a blue, irregular shape resembling a speech bubble or a cloud, with a smaller black circle attached to its bottom-left side. The text "PEERS®" is in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with a registered trademark symbol (®) to the upper right of the 'S'. Below it, the word "Class" is written in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font. The background of the slide features a series of thin, curved lines that create a sense of depth and movement, with some lines being solid and others dashed.

# PEERS® Class

## 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

The logo for PEERS® Class is a blue, irregular shape resembling a speech bubble or a drop. It has a jagged top edge and a small black oval shape at the bottom left. The text "PEERS®" is in a bold, black, sans-serif font, and "Class" is in a larger, bold, black, sans-serif font below it. The background of the slide features a series of concentric, curved lines in light gray and white, creating a ripple effect.

# 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.



# Social Coaching

## 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



# Outcomes

**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. “