

# Love in the Time of COVID for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The UCLA PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Dating Program

**UCLA** PEERS<sup>®</sup> Clinic



*[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)*

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# Overview of Lecture

- Romantic relationships among adults with ASD
- Overview of PEERS
- PEERS intervention strategies
  - Finding people to date during COVID-19
  - Dating activity options during COVID-19
  - Staying safe on dates
  - Handling dating pressure from partners
- Video clip of PEERS Dating Bootcamp: Love on the Spectrum (Netflix)
  - Making conversation during dates
- Overview of preliminary research
- Resources



# Romantic Relationships Among Young Adults with ASD

Despite interest in dating, adults with ASD often struggle with developing romantic relationships

- Fewer romantic relationships
- Less likely to marry
- Greater incidence of stalking behavior
- Less sexual knowledge and awareness
- Greater risk for sexual exploitation and victimization
- Higher risk for financial exploitation



(Stokes et al., 2005; Stokes et al., 2007; Howlin et al., 2013; Orsmond et al., 2013; Howlin et al., 2014; Tobin et al., 2013; Reichow et al., 2010)

# Lack of Services for Adults with ASD

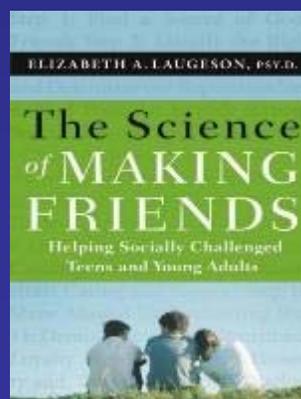
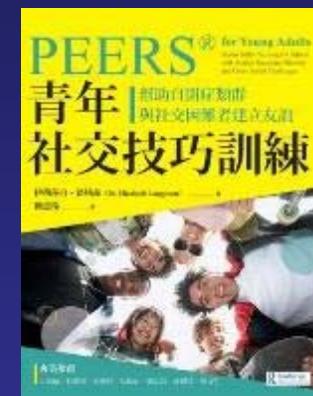
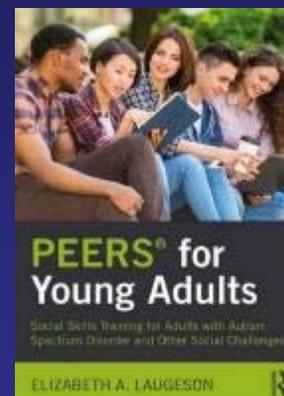
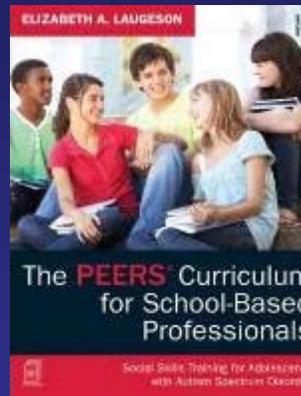
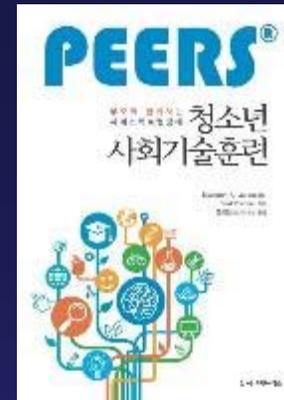
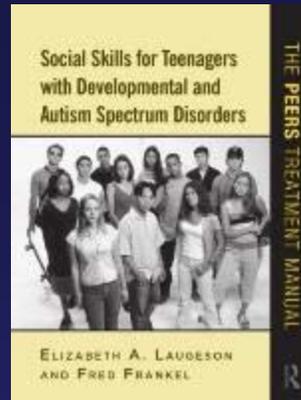
- No evidence-based social skills interventions focused on dating skills for adults with ASD
- Overall lack of evidence-based treatments to improve social outcomes in adults with ASD
  - Research funding has historically ignored adults with ASD
  - Autism services cliff: Access to services greatly diminishes after the age of 21
- Interventions are failing to meet the changing and increasing social demands across development



(Eaves et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2011; Howlin et al., 2004; Hendricks et al., 2009)

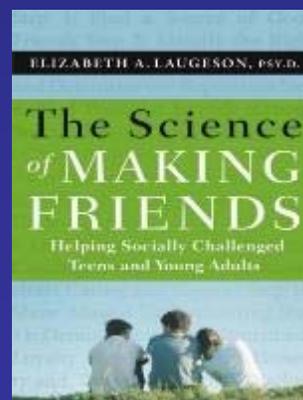
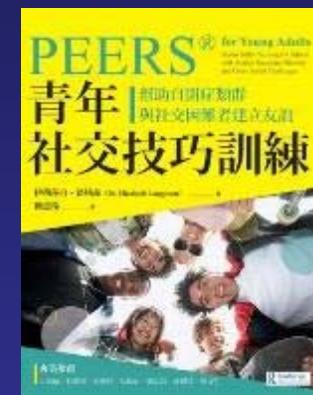
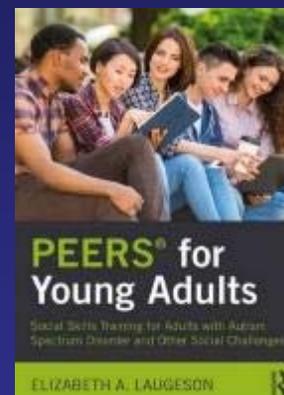
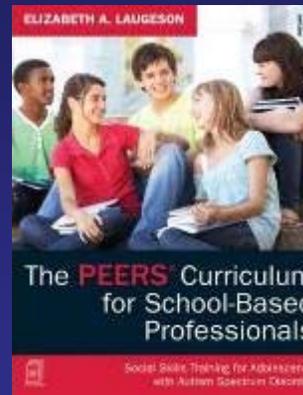
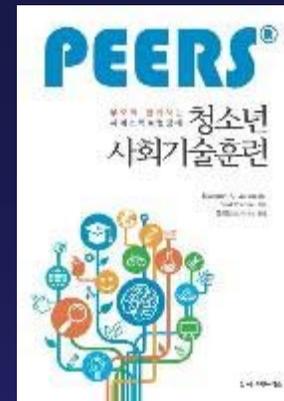
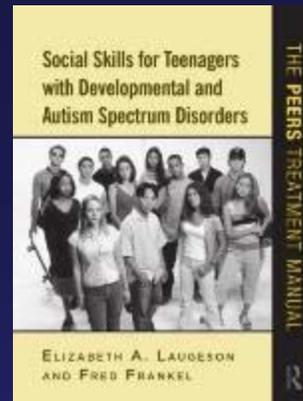
# Background about PEERS®

- International program
  - Used in over 85 countries
  - Programs have been translated into over a dozen languages
  - Developed at UCLA in 2004
- Evidence-Based Social Skills Programs:
  - PEERS® for Preschoolers
  - PEERS® for Adolescents
  - PEERS® for Young Adults
- Research Programs:
  - PEERS® for Careers
  - PEERS® L Dopa
  - PEERS® for Dating



# Unique Aspects of PEERS®

- One of the only evidence-based social skills programs
  - ONLY evidence-based social skills program for teens and adults with ASD and other social challenges
- Parent or caregiver assisted
  - Social coaches are trained to provide support outside of the treatment setting
- Only teaches ecologically valid social skills
  - Teaches rules and steps followed by socially successful people
- Cross-culturally adapted across the globe

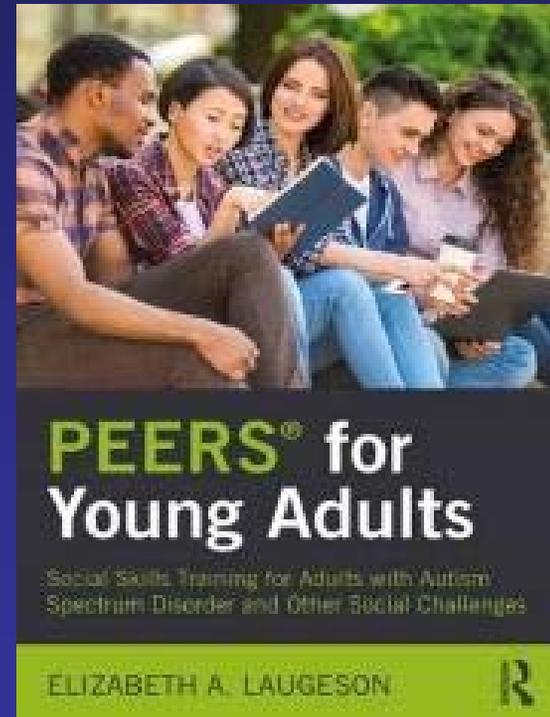


# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults

## Targeted Social Skills

### Friendship and Romantic Relationship Skills:

- Finding and choosing good friends
- Finding and choosing romantic partners
- Conversational skills
- Starting and entering conversations
- Exiting conversations
- Electronic communication
- Appropriate use of humor
- Get-togethers
- Dating etiquette
  - Letting someone know you like them
  - Asking someone on a date
  - Organizing and planning a date
  - General dating do's and don'ts

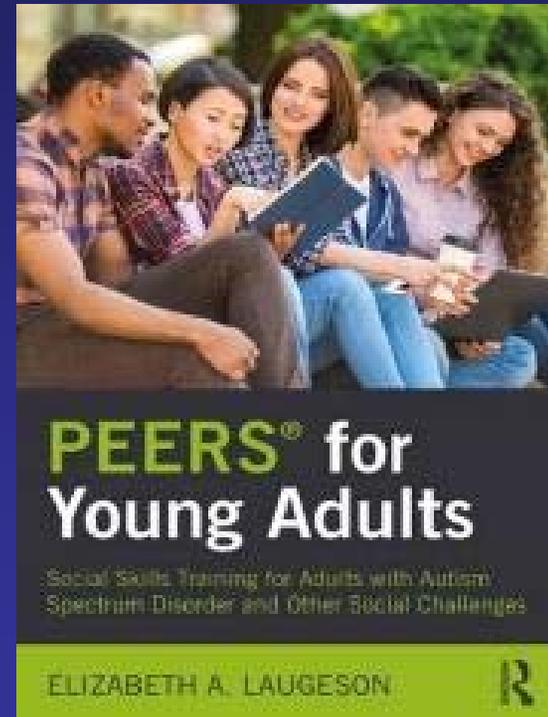


# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults

## Targeted Social Skills

### Managing Conflict and Rejection Skills:

- Dating etiquette
  - Taking no for an answer
  - Politely turning someone down for a date
  - Handling unwanted dating pressure
- Handling arguments
- Handling direct bullying
  - Teasing and embarrassing feedback
  - Physical bullying
- Handling indirect bullying
  - Cyber bullying
  - Rumors and gossip



# Choosing Appropriate People to Date

- Dating is a choice
  - We don't get to date everyone
  - Everyone doesn't get to date us
- There are GOOD choices and there are BAD choices when it comes to dating



(Laugeson 2017)

# Dating Sources

## QUESTION:

Where do people find romantic partners?



# Appropriate Dating Sources

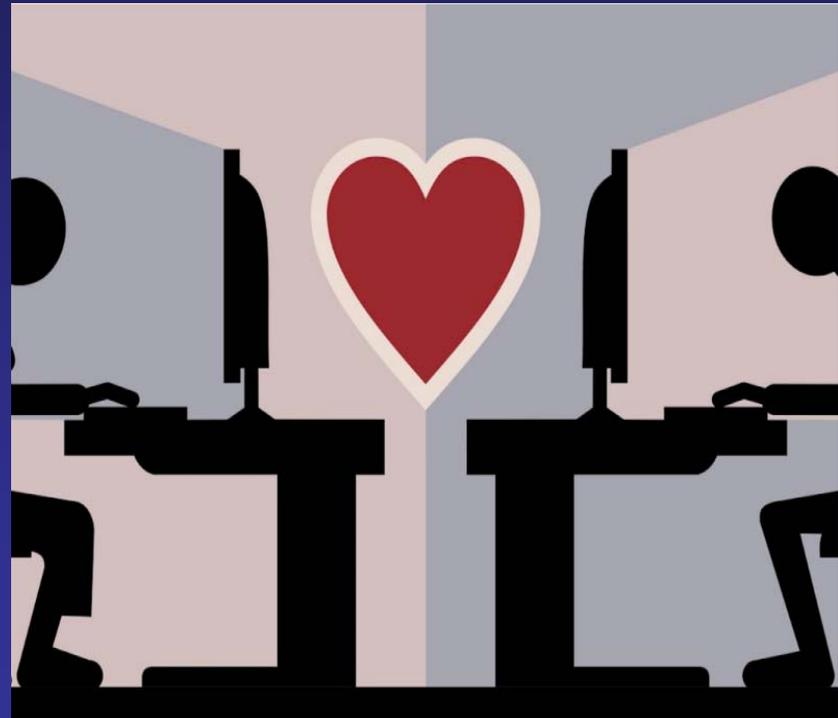
Mutual friends	Online dating sites and dating apps
Friends of family members	School, college, adult classes
Parties and get-togethers	Meet-up groups
Social activities and gatherings	Work place
Sporting events	Neighborhood
Dog parks and local parks	Sports clubs, private gyms, recreational centers
Recreational activities (e.g., sports leagues and clubs)	Church, synagogue, mosque, temple, religious gatherings
Community gatherings (e.g., concerts, fairs, farmer's market)	Public places (e.g., coffee houses, bars, clubs)

# Dating Sources During COVID-19

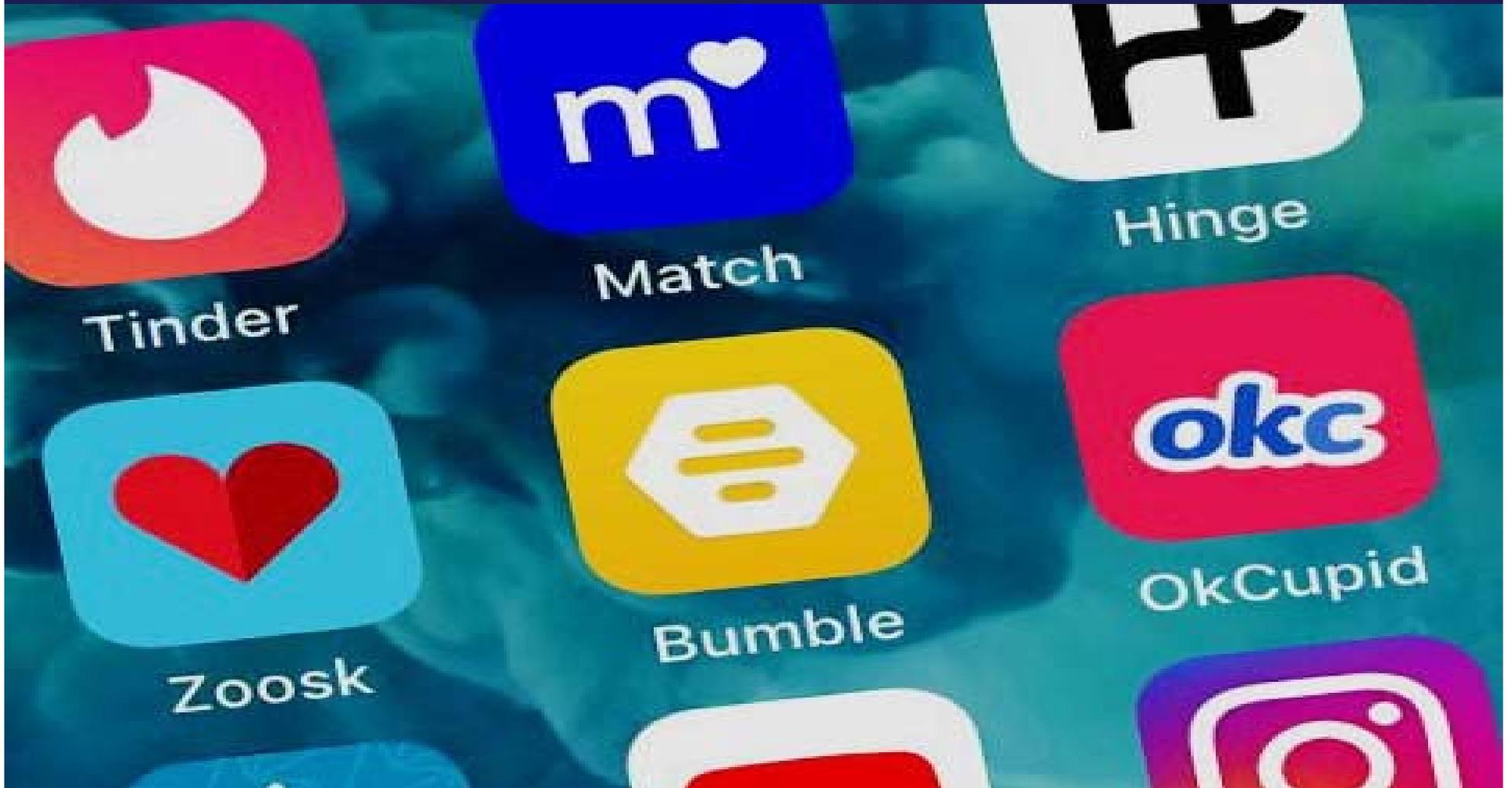
## QUESTIONS:

Where do people find romantic partners during COVID-19?

What are some appropriate dating apps?

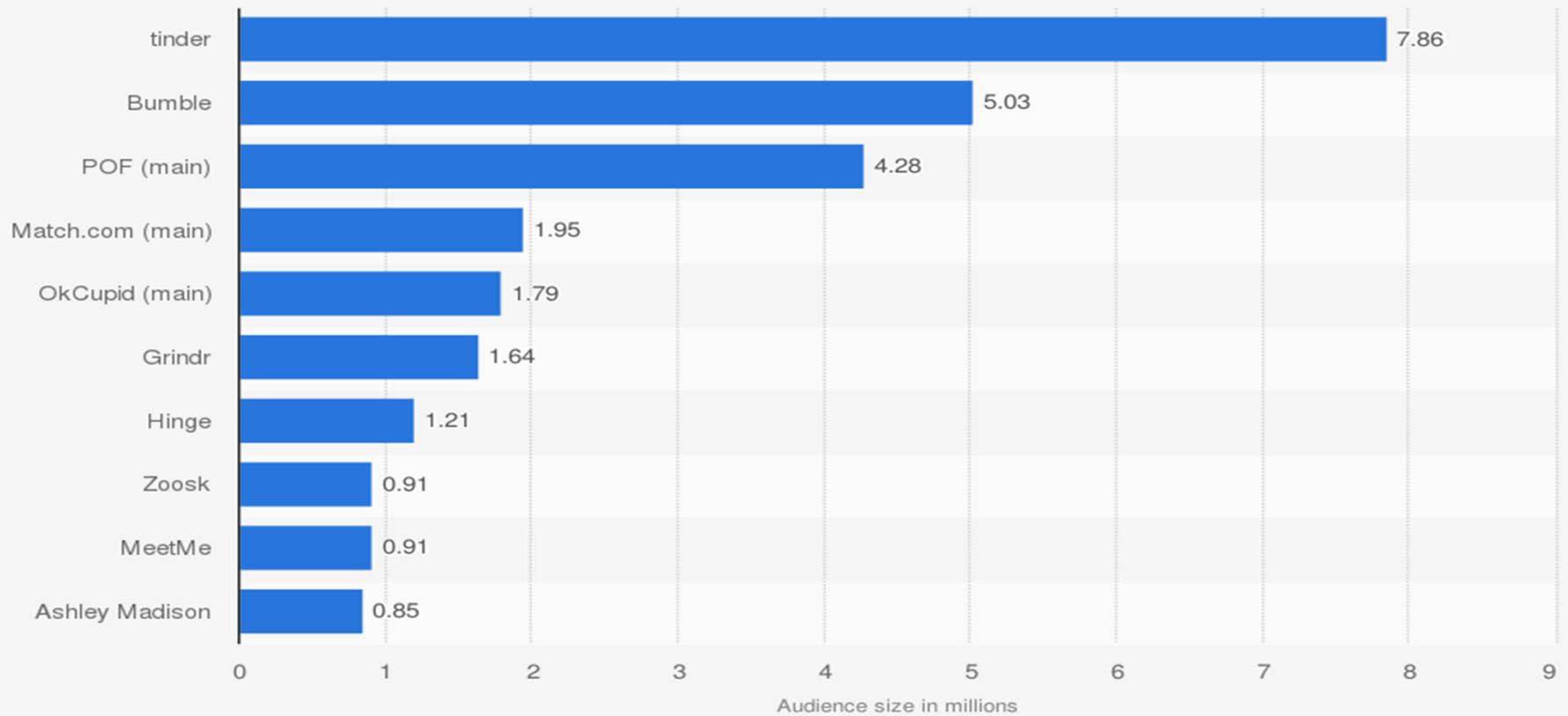


# Appropriate Dating Apps



# Most Popular Dating Apps Before COVID-19

Most popular online dating apps in the United States as of September 2019, by audience size (in millions)



Source  
Verto Analytics  
© Statista 2020

Additional Information:  
United States; Verto Analytics; September 2019; 18 years and older

# Most Popular Dating Apps During COVID-19

Top Dating Apps in the U.S. for April 2020 by Downloads



## Overall Downloads

-  Tinder
-  Bumble
-  Plenty of Fish
-  Hinge
-  Hily
-  MeetMe
-  Badoo
-  Taimi
-  Slowly
-  Tagged

## App Store Downloads

-  Tinder
-  Bumble
-  Hinge
-  Plenty of Fish
-  Hud
-  Slowly
-  MeetMe
-  Hily
-  Badoo
-  Taimi

## Google Play Downloads

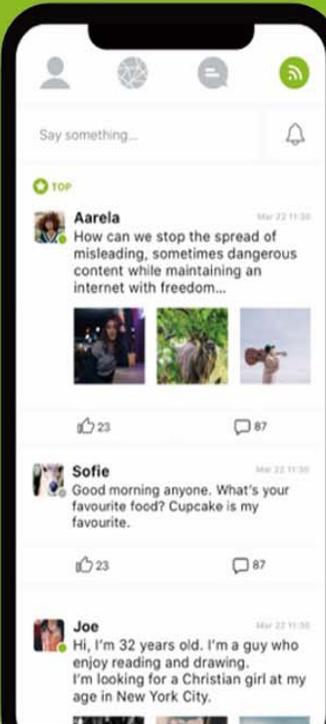
-  Tinder
-  Plenty of Fish
-  Hily
-  MeetMe
-  Bumble
-  Badoo
-  Taimi
-  Tagged
-  Hinge
-  SKOUT

# Population Specific Dating Apps



# Autism Specific Dating App: Hiki

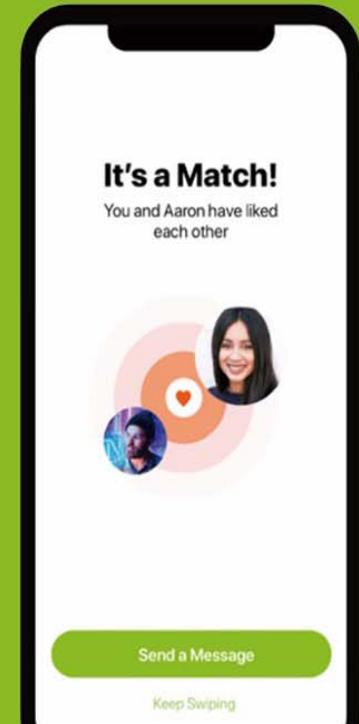
Become a member  
of our community.



Customize your  
profile.

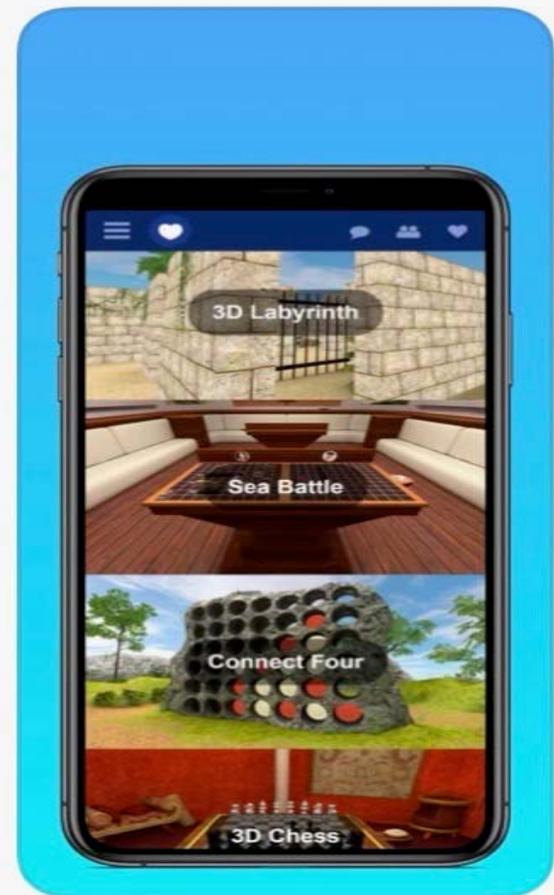
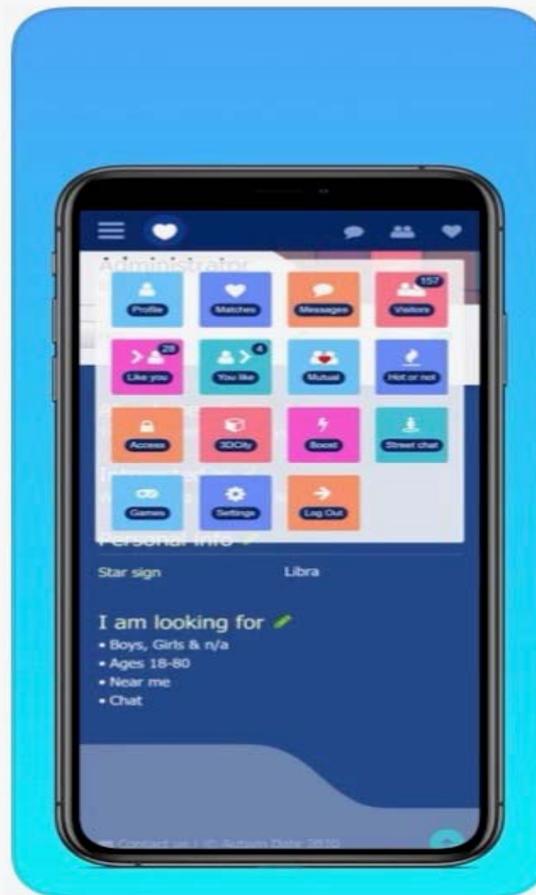
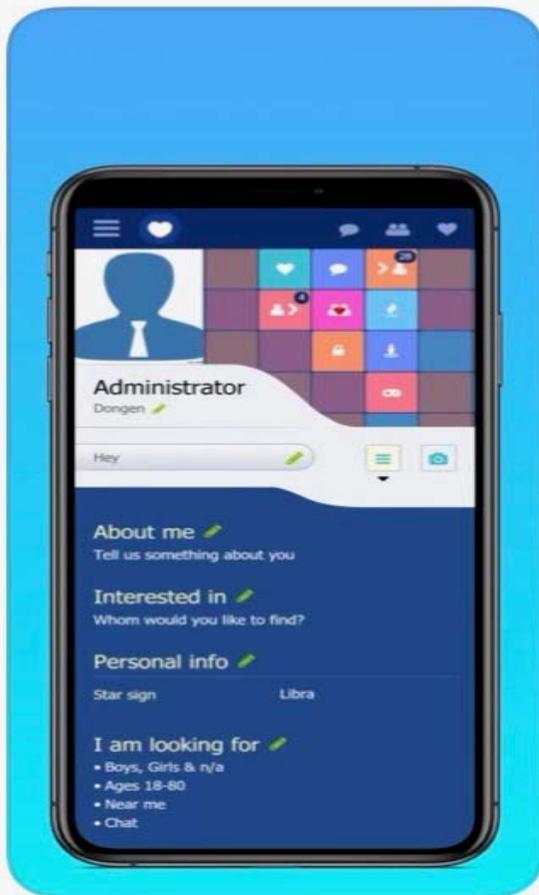


Find friendship and  
love on Hiki.



 hiki  
Social Platform  
for the Autistic  
Community

# Autism Specific Dating App: Autism Date



# Staying Safe during COVID-19

## QUESTIONS:

How do you stay safe during in-person dates?

How do you stay safe on dates during COVID-19?



# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Rules for Staying Safe During In-Person Dates

- Don't give out your personal contact information at first for online dating
- Check their social media and/or google your date before you meet if you don't know them well
- Let friends and family know where you are and who you're with
- Get yourself to and from the date
- Meet your date in a public place



(Laugeson 2017)

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Rules for Staying Safe During In-Person Dates

- Don't go anywhere alone with your date at first if you don't know them well
  - Don't get in the car with your date at first
  - Don't take your date home at first
  - Don't go to your date's home at first
- Check in with friends and family before and after the date
- Can ask bartender for an “angel shot” if feeling unsafe



(Laugeson 2017)

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Rules for Staying Safe on Dates During COVID-19

- Meet several times online before meeting in-person
- Make sure you are each symptom-free before meeting
- Check temperatures before meeting
- Consider getting a COVID-19 test prior to the date
- Consider quarantining in a safe bubble for two weeks before meeting



(Laugeson 2017)

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Rules for Staying Safe on Dates During COVID-19

- Choose a safe meeting place with:
  - Appropriate space to maintain social distancing
  - Good ventilation
  - Good cleaning procedures
  - Access to restrooms with soap and water for hand washing
- Decide when to wear face coverings and what type
- Agree to maintain social distancing throughout the date
- Avoid touching
- Use hand sanitizer frequently



(Laugeson 2017)

# Dating during COVID-19

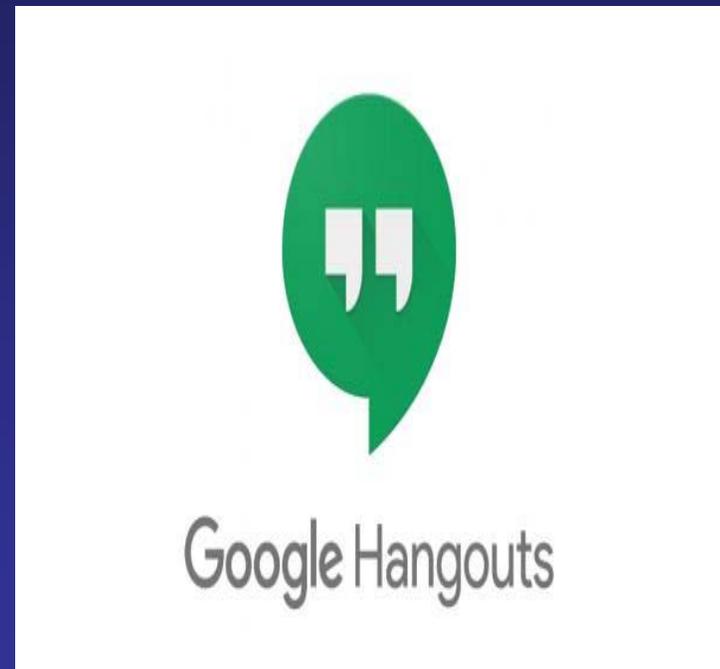
## QUESTION:

Where are many dates taking place during COVID-19?



# Online Dates

- Many dates are taking place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Popular platforms for online dates include:
  - Facetime
  - Google hangouts
  - House party
  - Skype
  - Zoom
  - Whatsapp
  - Discord
  - Video chat through social media



# Dating during COVID-19

## QUESTIONS:

What do people do during online dates?

What do people do on in-person dates during COVID-19?



# Common Activities for Online Dates

Interest	Activity
Mealtime	Make a meal together Have food delivered at the same time Have a glass of wine or beer together Drink coffee together
Sports	Watch sports together online
Videogames	Play online videogames
Fitness	Take a walk or hike together on your phones Do a YouTube workout together
Books	Go through your at-home library
Tabletop boardgames	Play games on Houseparty
Music	Compare playlists
Movies / TV shows	Netflix viewing party

# Common Activities for In-Person Dates During COVID-19

Interest	Activity
Mealtime	Dine at an outdoor restaurant Have a picnic in the park Outdoor farmer's market Outdoor BBQ in a public park
Outdoor sports	Go for a walk Go for a bike ride Outdoor rollerblading
Sports	Watch sports together in an outdoor restaurant Go golfing Outdoor fitness class Boating, kayaking
Nature	Go for a hike Meet in a public park Go to the beach

# Handling Dating Pressure from a Partner

## QUESTIONS:

Do you have to meet in-person when dating during COVID-19?

What should you do if the person you are dating:

- Wants to get more serious than you do?
- Wants to get physically intimate before you do?
- Wants to meet in-person during COVID-19?



# Handling Dating Pressure from a Partner (Bad Role Play)



Role play videos: [www.semcl.ucla.edu/peers/resources](http://www.semcl.ucla.edu/peers/resources)

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Steps for Handling Dating Pressure from a Partner (Good Role Play)

1. Keep your cool
2. Tell them what you DON'T want to do
  - “I’m not comfortable with...”
  - “I’m not ready to...”
3. Give a cover story
  - “I like to take things slow.”
4. Use “I” statements to tell them how you feel
  - “I think I need more time to get to know you.”
5. Change the subject
6. Give a cover story and leave (if still pressured)
7. Remember dating is a choice

Role play videos: [www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources)

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Research Evidence within the United States

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 44(10), 2514-2524  
 © Springer Science+Business Media Dordrecht 2014  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-014-2514-1  
 ISSN: 1547-5347 print/ISSN 1573-278X online  
 Periodic ID: 1547-5347/14(10) 2514-2524

**Long Term Treatment Outcomes for Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training for Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorders: The UCLA PEERS Program**

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 SHANNON BATES AND FRED FRANKEL  
 Psychology  
 University of California, Los Angeles

J Autism Dev Disord (2009) 39:598-600  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-009-0066-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training to Improve Friendships in Teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

Elizabeth A. Laugeson · Fred Frankel · Catherine Magli · Ashley R. Dillon

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-010-2911-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

**A Replication and Extension of the PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults Social Skills Intervention: Examining Effects on Social Skills and Social Anxiety in Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Alana J. McVey<sup>1</sup> · Bridget K. Dolan<sup>1</sup> · Kirsten S. Willar<sup>1,2</sup> · Sheryl Pleiss<sup>1,2</sup> · Jeffrey S. Karst<sup>1,4</sup> · Christina L. Cannon<sup>1</sup> · Christina Calozzo<sup>1</sup> · Elisabeth M. Vogt<sup>1</sup> · Niklis S. Gordon<sup>1</sup> · Amy Vaughan Van Hecke<sup>1</sup>

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-010-3121-5

BRIEF REPORT

**Brief Report: Does Gender Matter in Intervention for ASD? Examining the Impact of the PEERS<sup>®</sup> Social Skills Intervention on Social Behavior Among Females with ASD**

Alana J. McVey<sup>1</sup> · Hillary Schiltz<sup>1</sup> · Angela Haendel<sup>1</sup> · Bridget K. Dolan<sup>1</sup> · Kirsten S. Willar<sup>1,2</sup> · Sheryl Pleiss<sup>1,2</sup> · Jeffrey S. Karst<sup>1,4</sup> · Audrey M. Carson<sup>1,4</sup> · Christina Calozzo<sup>1</sup> · Elisabeth Vogt<sup>1</sup> · Amy Vaughan Van Hecke<sup>1</sup>

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-010-3121-5

S.E. · ASD IN ADULTHOOD: COMORBIDITY AND INTERVENTION

**A Randomized Controlled Trial to Improve Social Skills in Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder: The UCLA PEERS<sup>®</sup> Program**

Elizabeth A. Laugeson<sup>1,2</sup> · Alexander Gantman<sup>1,2</sup> · Steven K. Kapp<sup>1,3</sup> · Kately Orenski<sup>1,4</sup> · Ruth Ellingsen<sup>1,2</sup>

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-010-3121-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Measuring the Plasticity of Social Approach: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of the PEERS Intervention on EEG Asymmetry in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

Amy Vaughan Van Hecke · Sheryl Stevens · Audrey M. Carson · Jeffrey S. Karst · Bridget Dolan · Kirsten Schohl · Ryan J. McKindles · Rhema Kenned · Scott Brockman

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-010-3121-5

ORIGINAL PAPER

**The ABC's of Teaching Social Skills to Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom: The UCLA PEERS<sup>®</sup> Program**

Elizabeth A. Laugeson · Ruth Ellingsen · Jennifer Sanderson · Lara Tucci · Shannon Bates

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-010-3121-5

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 Magli

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-010-2969-0

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Parents Perceive Improvements in Socio-emotional Functioning in Adolescents with ASD Following Social Skills Treatment**

Danielle N. Lardo<sup>1</sup> · Madison Bertalin<sup>1</sup> · Eliana L. Sudikoff<sup>1</sup> · Cierra Keith<sup>1</sup> · Barbara Braddock<sup>1</sup> · David A. S. Kaufman<sup>1</sup>

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 DOI: 10.1177/1087124313508818  
 jat.sagepub.com  
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**Examination of a Parent-Assisted, Friendship-Building Program for Adolescents With ADHD**

Denise M. Gardner<sup>1</sup>, Alyson C. Gerdes<sup>1</sup>, and Kelsey Weinberger<sup>1</sup>

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-011-1250-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Social Skills Training for Young Adults with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders: A Randomized Controlled Pilot Study**

Alexander Gantman · Steven K. Kapp · Kately Orenski · Elizabeth A. Laugeson

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders  
 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-2504-2

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Exploring the Effectiveness of a Peer-Mediated Model of the PEERS Curriculum: A Pilot Randomized Control Trial**

Nicole L. Matthews<sup>1</sup> · Beatriz C. Orr<sup>1</sup> · Katrina Warriner<sup>1</sup> · Mary DeCarlo<sup>1</sup> · Mia Sorensen<sup>1</sup> · Jessica Laffin<sup>1</sup> · Christopher J. Smith<sup>1</sup>

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders  
 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3396-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Predicting treatment success in social skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: The UCLA Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills**

Ya-Chih Chang<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth A. Laugeson<sup>1</sup>, Alexander Gantman<sup>1</sup>, Ruth Ellingsen<sup>1</sup>, Fred Frankel<sup>1</sup> and Ashley R Dillon<sup>1</sup>

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-013-1900-1

ORIGINAL PAPER

**A Replication and Extension of the PEERS Intervention: Examining Effects on Social Skills and Social Anxiety in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

Kirsten A. Schohl · Amy V. Van Hecke · Audrey Meyer Carson · Bridget Dolan · Jeffrey Karst · Sheryl Stevens

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders  
 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-03943-z

ORIGINAL PAPER

**The UCLA PEERS School-Based Program: Treatment Outcomes for Improving Social Functioning in Adolescents and Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Those with Cognitive Deficits**

Joshua Wyman<sup>1,3</sup> · Anthony Clark<sup>2</sup>

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders  
 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-017-3396-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Changes in Depressive Symptoms Among Adolescents with ASD Completing the PEERS<sup>®</sup> Social Skills Intervention**

Hillary K. Schiltz<sup>1</sup> · Alana J. McVey<sup>1</sup> · Bridget K. Dolan<sup>1</sup> · Kirsten S. Willar<sup>1</sup> · Sheryl Pleiss<sup>1,2</sup> · Jeffrey S. Karst<sup>1,3</sup> · Audrey M. Carson<sup>1,4</sup> · Christina Calozzo<sup>1</sup> · Elisabeth M. Vogt<sup>1</sup> · Brianna D. Yund<sup>1</sup> · Amy Vaughan Van Hecke<sup>1</sup>

Advances in Neurodevelopmental Disorders  
 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-511-1

ORIGINAL PAPER

**The Effects of a Modified PEERS Curriculum on Accurate and Novel Responding of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Keith C. Radley<sup>1</sup> · Kate A. Helbig<sup>2</sup> · Ashley H. Murphy<sup>2</sup> · Morgan G. McCargo<sup>2</sup> · Elizabeth L. Lown<sup>2</sup>

J Dev Phys Disabil (2017) 29:797-808  
 DOI 10.1007/s10802-017-0037-x

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

**A Pilot Study Examining the Effectiveness of the PEERS Program on Social Skills and Anxiety in Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Trenesha L. Hill<sup>1</sup> · Sarah A. O. Gray<sup>1</sup> · Courtney N. Baker<sup>1</sup> · Koren Boggs<sup>2</sup> · Elizabeth Carey<sup>2</sup> · Corinne Johnson<sup>2</sup> · Jodi L. Kamps<sup>2</sup> · R. Enrique Varela<sup>3</sup>

J Autism Dev Disord (2010) 40:14-21  
 DOI 10.1007/s10803-014-2231-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Parent and Family Outcomes of PEERS: A Social Skills Intervention for Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Jeffrey S. Karst · Amy Vaughan Van Hecke · Audrey M. Carson · Sheryl Stevens · Kirsten Schohl · Bridget Dolan

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Research Evidence Outside of the United States

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Korean Version of the PEERS<sup>®</sup> Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training Program for Teens With ASD

Hee-Jeong Yoo, Geonho Bahn, In-Hee Cho, Eun-Kyung Kim, Joo-Hyun Kim, Jung-Won Min, Won-Hye Lee, Jun-Seong Seo, Sang-Shin Jun, Guiyoung Bong, Soochurl Cho, Min-Sup Shin, Bung-Nyun Kim, Jae-Won Kim, Subin Park, and Elizabeth A. Laugeson

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### A Randomized Controlled Trial evaluating the Hebrew Adaptation of the PEERS<sup>®</sup> Intervention: Behavioral and Questionnaire-Based Outcomes

Shai Joseph Rabin, Sandra Israel-Yaacov, Elizabeth A. Laugeson, Irit Mor-Snir, and Ofer Golan 

## EMPIRISCH ONDERZOEK

### Nederlandse hertaling van de PEERS-training

GABRINE JAGERSMA, SAKINAH IDRIS, SOPHIE JACOBS, BJORN JAIME VAN PELT, KIRSTIN GREAVES-LORD

### Multicentre, randomised waitlist control trial investigating a parent-assisted social skills group programme for adolescents with brain injuries: protocol for the friends project

Rose Gilmore,<sup>1,2</sup> Leanne Sakzewski,<sup>1</sup> Jenny Ziviani,<sup>3</sup> Sarah McIntyre,<sup>4</sup> Hayley Smithers Sheedy,<sup>4</sup> Nicola Hilton,<sup>2</sup> Tracey Williams,<sup>5</sup> Kirsten Quinn,<sup>6</sup> Anne Marie Sarandrea,<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth Laugeson,<sup>7</sup> Mark Chatfield<sup>1</sup>

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders (2020) 50:976–997  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-04325-1>

## ORIGINAL PAPER



### Examining the Treatment Efficacy of PEERS in Japan: Improving Social Skills Among Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Tomoko Yamada<sup>1,2</sup>, Yui Miura<sup>3</sup>, Manabu Oji<sup>1,2</sup>, Nozomi Akatsuka<sup>1,2</sup>, Kazumi Tanaka<sup>4</sup>, Naotake Tsukidate<sup>5</sup>, Tomoka Yamamoto<sup>1</sup>, Hiroko Okuno<sup>1</sup>, Mariko Nakanishi<sup>1</sup>, Masako Taniike<sup>1</sup>, Ikuko Mohri<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth A. Laugeson<sup>6</sup>

Published online: 10 December 2019  
© The Author(s) 2019

Journal of Education & Social Policy

Vol. 3, No. 4; October 2016

### Examining the Efficacy of an Adapted Version of the UCLA PEERS<sup>®</sup> Program with Canadian Adolescents

Loredana Marchica M.A.  
Miranda D'Amico Ph.D.

Centre for the Arts in Human Development  
Concordia University  
7141 Sherbrooke West  
Montréal, Québec  
Canada H4B1R6

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3728-1>

## ORIGINAL PAPER



### Learning How to Make Friends for Chinese Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Hong Kong Chinese Version of the PEERS<sup>®</sup> Intervention

Kathy Kar-Man Shum<sup>1</sup>, Wai Kwan Cho<sup>2</sup>, Lourdes Mei Oi Lam<sup>2</sup>, Elizabeth A. Laugeson<sup>3</sup>, Wai Shan Wong<sup>2</sup>, Louisa S. K. Law<sup>2</sup>

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-018-3859-4>

## ORIGINAL PAPER



### Age as a Moderator of Social Skills Intervention Response Among Korean Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Jung Kyung Hong<sup>1</sup>, Miae Oh<sup>2</sup>, Guiyoung Bong<sup>1</sup>, Ju-Hyun Kim<sup>1</sup>, Geonho Bahn<sup>3</sup>, In-Hee Cho<sup>4</sup>, Hee Jeong Yoo<sup>1,5</sup>

© Springer Science+Business Media, LLC, part of Springer Nature 2018

Pelt et al. *BMC Psychiatry* (2020) 20:274  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02650-9>

BMC Psychiatry

## STUDY PROTOCOL

Open Access

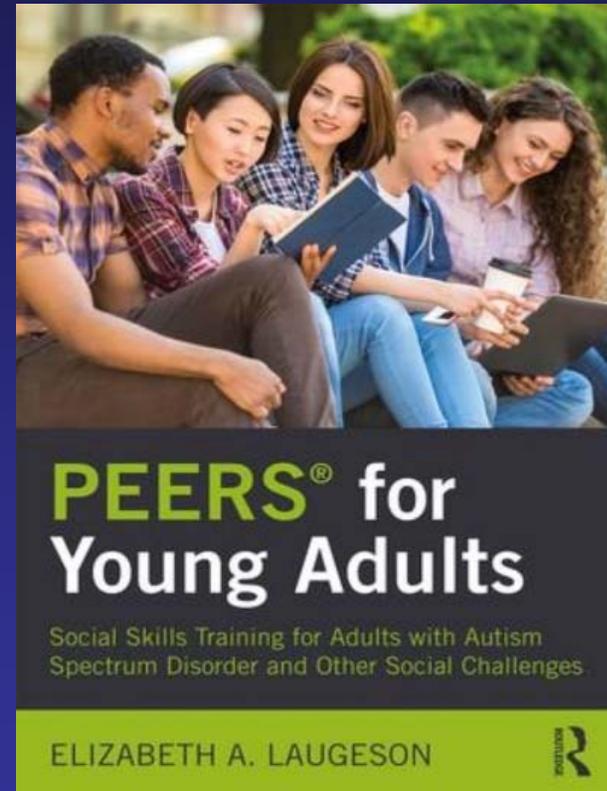


### The ACCEPT-study: design of an RCT with an active treatment control condition to study the effectiveness of the Dutch version of PEERS<sup>®</sup> for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder

B. J. van Pelt<sup>1,2\*</sup>, S. Idris<sup>1,3</sup>, G. Jagersma<sup>2</sup>, J. Duvekot<sup>1</sup>, A. Maras<sup>2</sup>, J. van der Ende<sup>1</sup>, N. E. M. van Haren<sup>1</sup> and K. Greaves-Lord<sup>1,2,4,5</sup>

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults

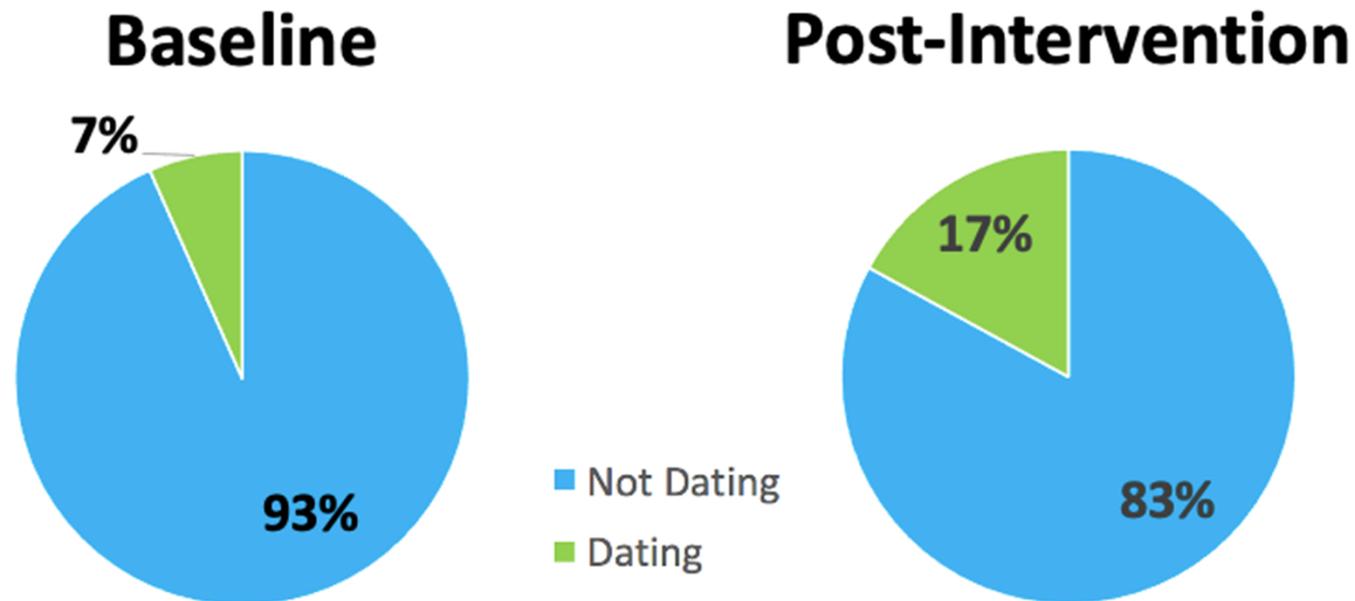
- Caregiver-assisted
  - Concurrent social coaching and young adult sessions
- 16-week curriculum
  - 90-minute weekly sessions
- Young adults with ASD
  - 18-38 years of age
- Focuses on relationship skills
  - Friendships
  - Handling conflict and rejection
  - Dating (ONLY four sessions)



(Laugeson 2017)

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults: Change in Dating Activity

(Laugeson & Moody, 2020)

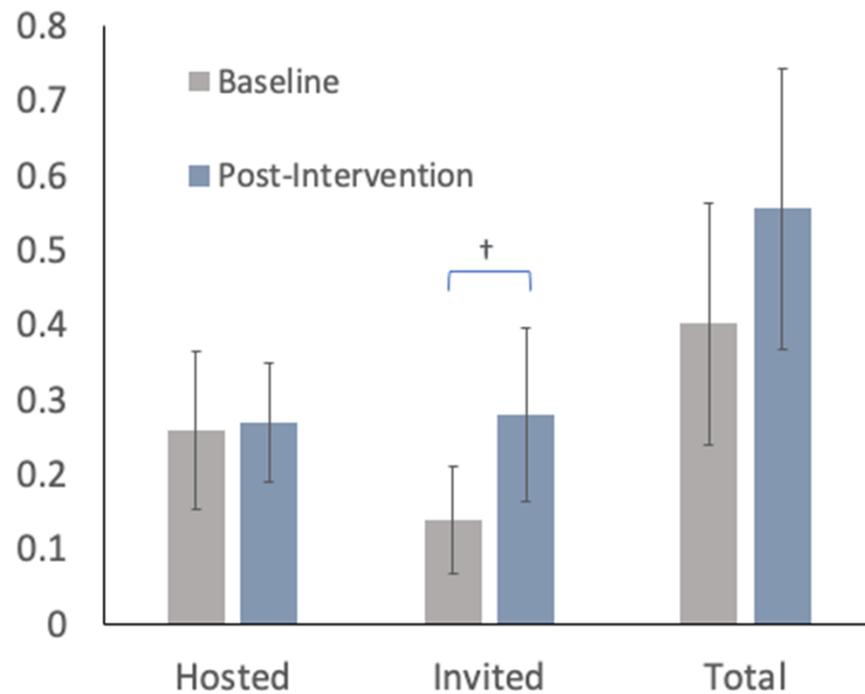


Young adults were significantly more likely to be involved in dating activity following the PEERS for YA program,  $\chi^2(1)=6.95, p=.008$ .

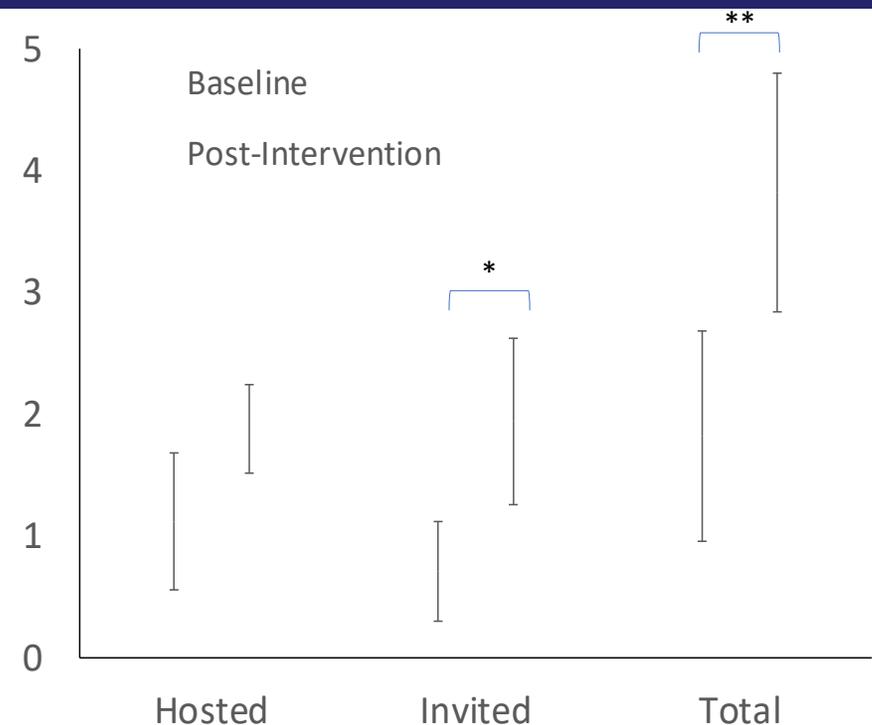
# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults: Young Adult Self-Report of Change in Dating Frequency (Number of Dates in the Previous Month)

(Laugeson & Moody, 2020)

## Full Sample



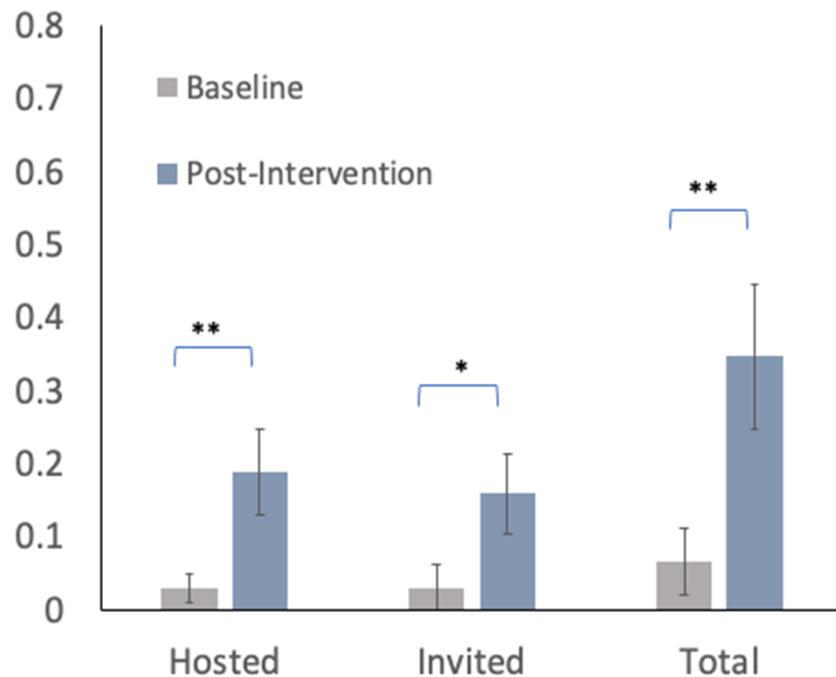
## Interested in Dating



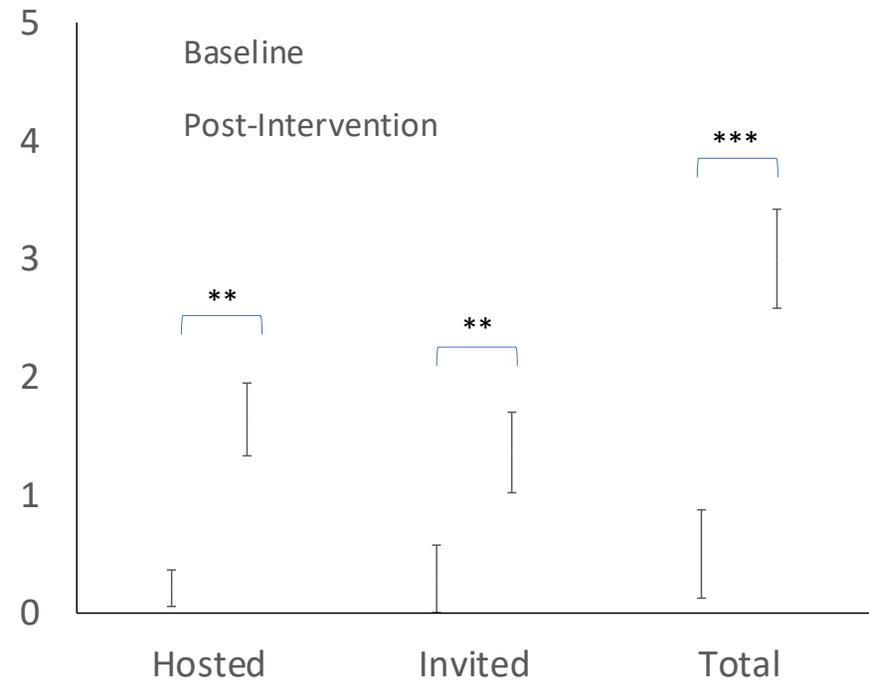
# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults: Caregiver Report of Change in Dating Frequency (Number of Dates in the Previous Month)

(Laugeson & Moody, 2020)

## Full Sample



## Interested in Dating



# UCLA PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Dating

## A Family's Journey in Becoming Autism Research Advocates

By Cara Gardenswartz, Ph.D.

I first came to UCLA as a doctoral student in the Department of Psychology. During my time at UCLA, I learned about advancements in autism, the friendship program, and the latest behavioral interventions. Little did I realize that 20 years later I would come back to UCLA seeking help for my teenager with autism. My son, Eli, who has ASD, participated in the PEERS program for teens in 2017, two years ago, at the age of 13. And my husband and I, along with the other parents of the PEERS group, received our own PEERS education simultaneously. We became Eli's "social coaches."

The 16-week PEERS for Adolescents program was truly transformational. Our teens, (and us social coaches) were given a strategic "rulebook" on how to engage in various



*Eli and Cara Gardenswartz, PEERS for Dating donor family*

thought was needed in social interactions. Instead, they did research to find out which skills mattered, how to teach these skills to teens, and assessed changes in the adolescents' social skills at the end of their 16 weeks in PEERS, and even years later. As a psychologist, this thoughtful scientific inquiry was extremely important to me.

manager of the boy's high school basketball team and is LOVED by his classmates -- often called the "nicest kid in school." Without some of these tools, he might not have naturally attracted the same students that are now drawn to him.



# PEERS® Dating Bootcamps at UCLA

Two-day intensive topical  
boot camps for teens,  
adults, family members,  
and professionals:

Saturday & Sunday  
9 AM – 3PM

To register for  
PEERS Bootcamps,  
please contact us at:  
peersclinic@ucla.edu  
(310) 26-PEERS

\*Open to all including  
teens, adults,  
families, practitioners  
and educators\*



## PEERS® DATING BOOT CAMP

UCLA PEERS® CLINIC

BOOT CAMP IS HELD AT THE UCLA SEMEL INSTITUTE FOR  
NEUROSCIENCE AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR IN LOS ANGELES

SAT/SUN  
DATE TBD

PRESENTER:

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

TIME: 9 AM-3 PM

Light refreshments will be served

Family  
Members  
Attend for  
FREE! \*

TOPICS COVERED:

- LETTING SOMEONE KNOW YOU LIKE THEM
- FLIRTING
- CHOOSING APPROPRIATE PEOPLE TO DATE
- ONLINE DATING
- ASKING SOMEONE ON A DATE
- ACCEPTING REJECTION
- TURNING SOMEONE DOWN
- PLANNING AND GOING ON DATES
- DATING DO'S AND DON'T'S
- HANDLING PRESSURE FROM PARTNERS

UCLA PEERS® Clinic  
www.semel.ucla.edu/peers

\*Offer only valid for families accompanying their teen or young adult

\*PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT A PEERS® CERTIFIED TRAINING SEMINAR; THUS, ATTENDEES WILL NOT RECEIVE CERTIFICATION UPON COMPLETION OF BOOT CAMPS

# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Dating Bootcamp

## Topics Covered

- Conversational skills
- Letting someone know you like them
- Flirting
- Choosing appropriate people to date
- Online Dating
- Asking someone on a date
- Accepting rejection
- Turning someone down
- Planning and going on dates
- Dating do's and don'ts
- Handling pressure from partners



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

NETFLIX



ABC

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Television



Love on the Spectrum – Netflix  
Episode 3 Video Clip  
Time code: 35:10 – 41:30

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

NETFLIX



ABC

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Television

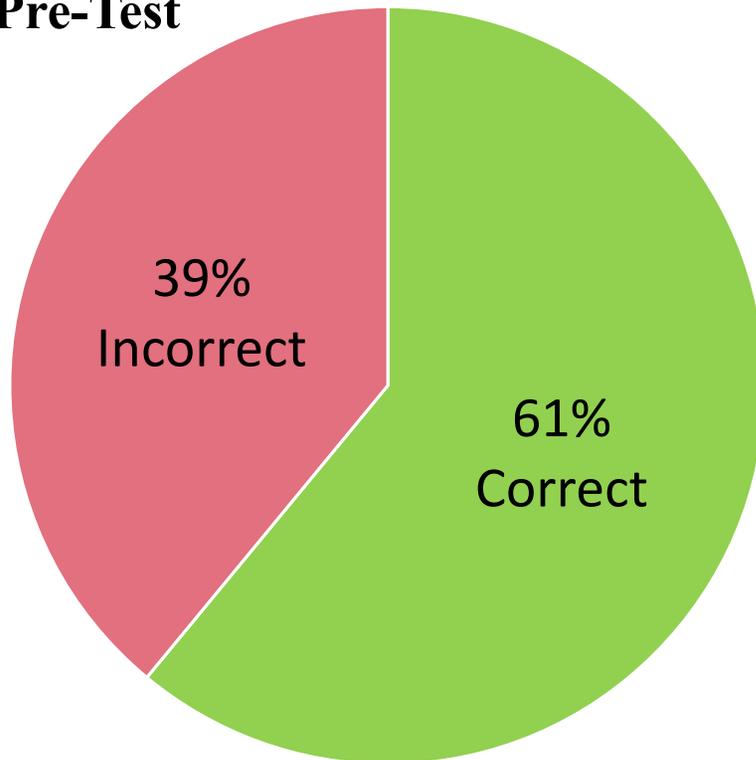


# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Dating Bootcamp:

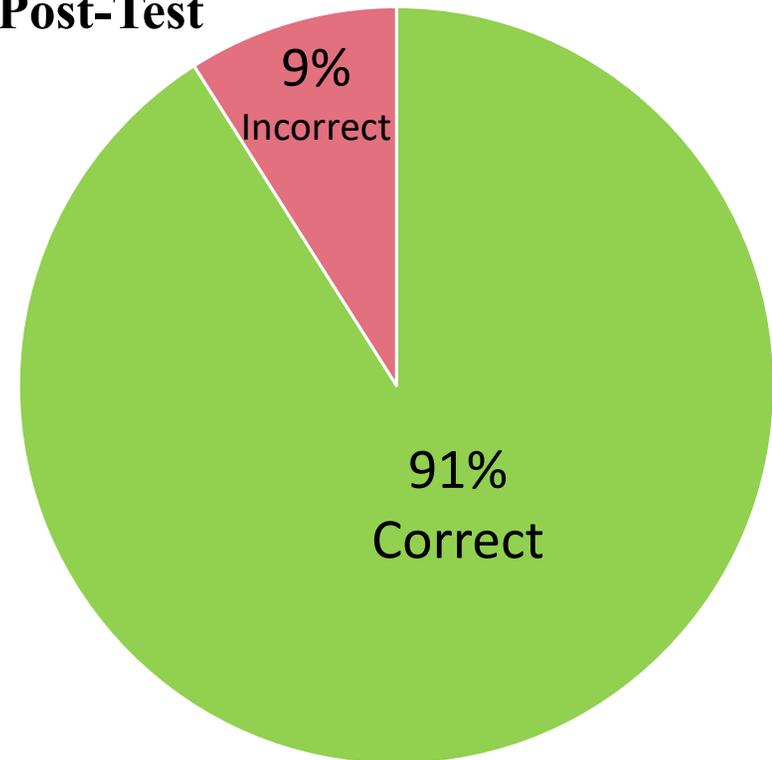
## Dating Skills Knowledge

(Laugeson, Moody, & Denluck, 2020)

**Pre-Test**



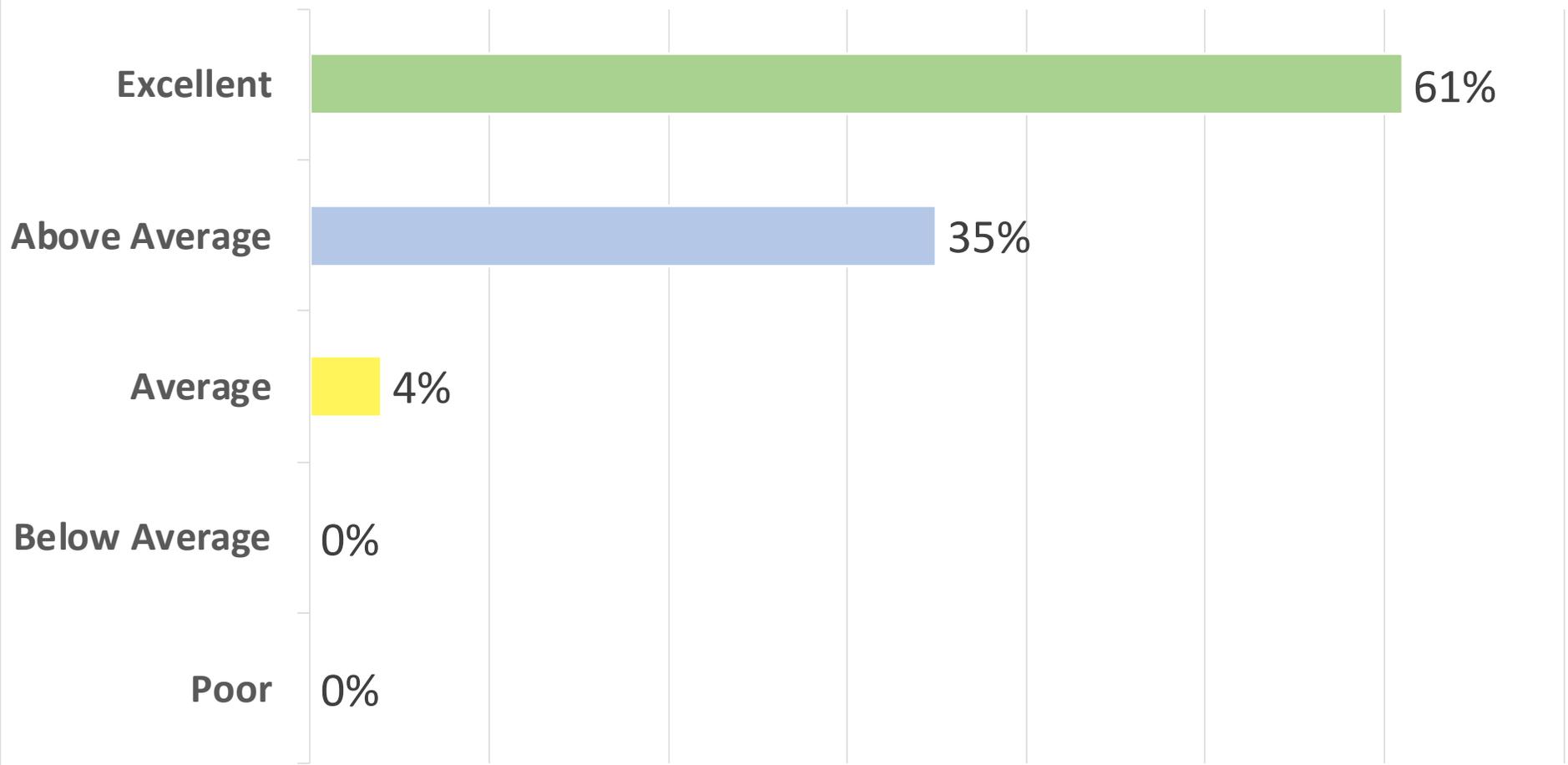
**Post-Test**



# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Dating Bootcamp:

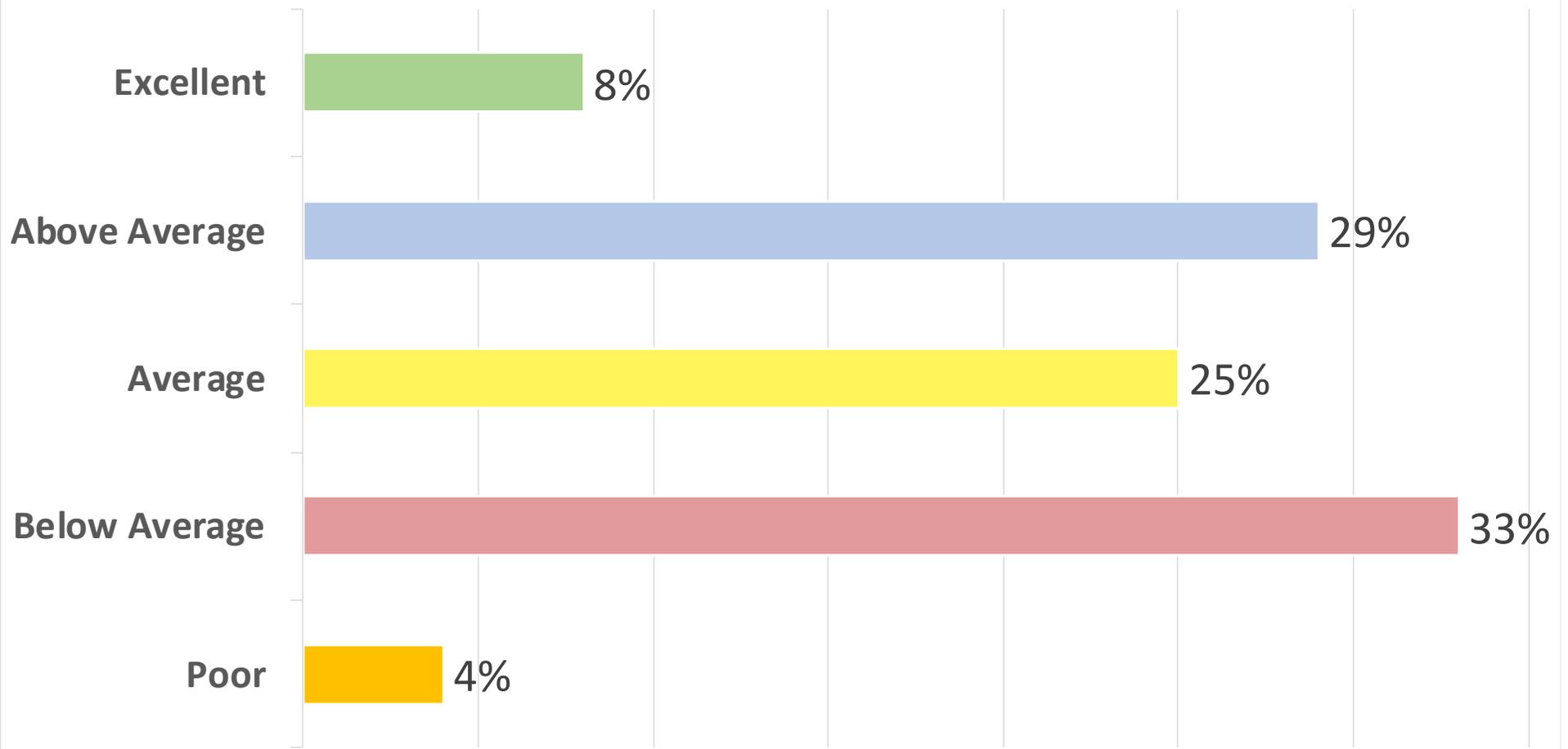
Likelihood Knowledge Gained Will Influence Dating Practices

(Laugeson, Moody, & Denluck, 2020)



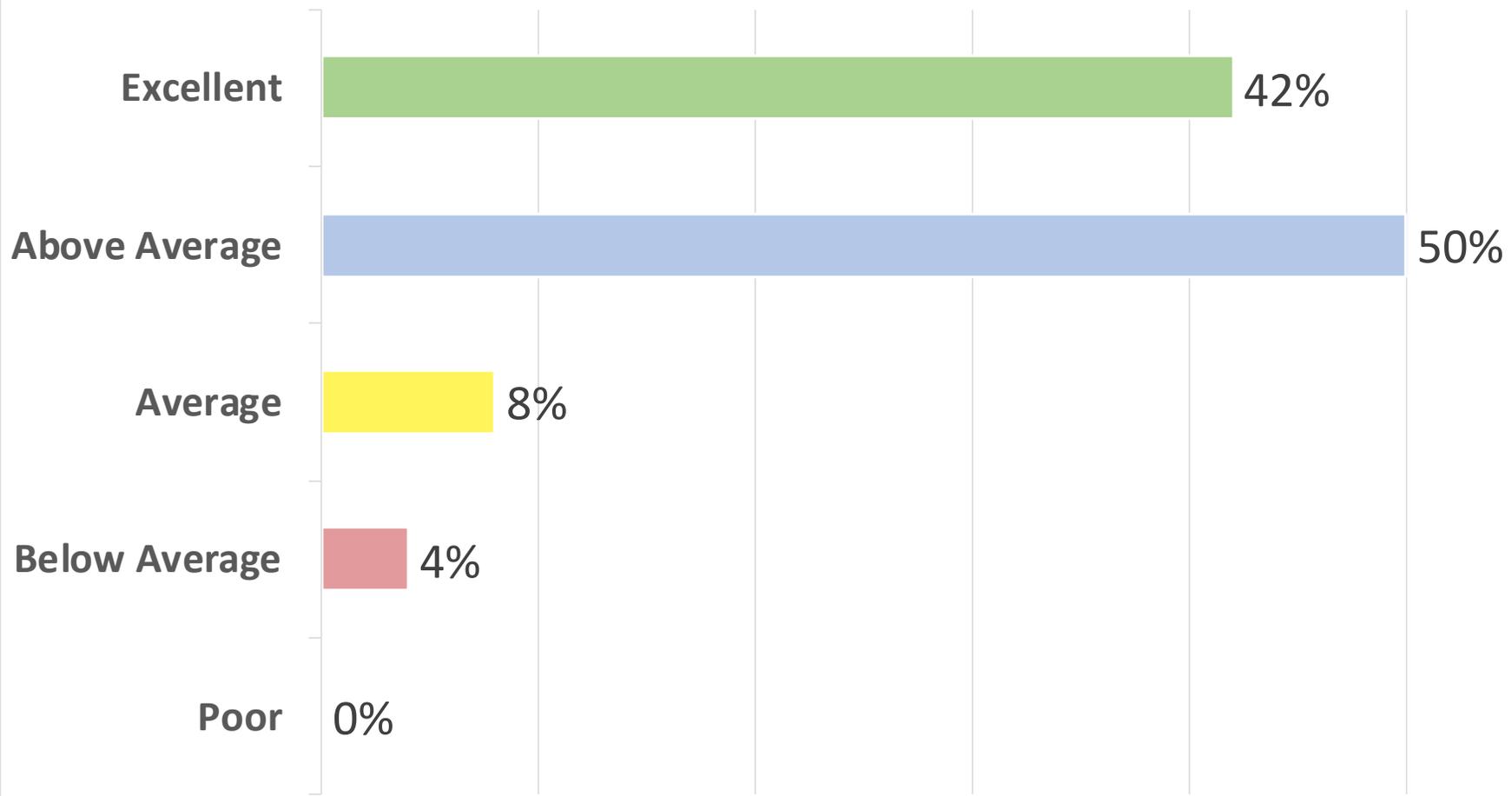
# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Dating Bootcamp: Pretest Self-Report of Dating Knowledge

(Laugeson, Moody, & Denluck, 2020)



# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Dating Bootcamp: Post-Test Self-Report of Dating Knowledge

(Laugeson, Moody, & Denluck, 2020)



# PEERS<sup>®</sup> Dating Bootcamp: Additional Skills Requested

(Laugeson, Moody, & Denluck, 2020)

- Setting up online dating profiles
- Sexuality
- Dating among LGBTQ
- Relationship boundaries
- Safety
- Handling rejection



# UCLA PEERS® for Dating

- 16-week program
- Dating skills for adults with ASD (18-45 years of age)
- RCT examining the benefit of receiving dating coaching
- Starting January 2021



## FREE UCLA DATING Program for Adults with Autism

This UCLA research study examines the effectiveness of **PEERS® FOR DATING**, a 16-week social skills program to help adults with autism spectrum disorder learn skills to find and maintain romantic relationships.

### TOPICS COVERED:

- Choosing appropriate people to date • Starting conversations
- Maintaining conversations • Entering and exiting conversations
- Electronic communication • Creating Dating Profiles • Online Dating
- Letting someone know you like them • Asking someone on a date
  - Handling rejection • Going on Dates • Dating do's and don'ts
- Handling dating pressure • Physical contact and sexual activity
  - Relationship boundaries • Conflict resolution

(310) 267-3377

Peersclinic@ucla.edu

[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)



Protocol ID: IRB#20-000018 UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 8/28/2020 Through: 8/27/2021 Committee: North General IRB



# RESOURCES

# UCLA PEERS® Young Adult Telehealth Groups

MONDAYS

4:30–6:00 PM PST

6:30–8:00 PM PST

## Young adults will learn about:

- Using social media and online platforms to develop and maintain friendships
  - Conversational skills
- Entering & exiting conversations
- Appropriate use of humor
- Electronic communication
  - Dating skills
- Organizing get-togethers
- Handling direct and indirect bullying
  - Handling disagreements
  - Handling dating pressure



## PEERS® Social Skills Group for Young Adults

- PEERS® for Young Adults is an evidence-based social skills intervention for motivated adults who are interested in making and keeping friends and/or developing romantic relationships.
- Young adults and social coaches (including parents or other caregivers) attend 16 weekly telehealth sessions over Zoom for 90-minutes each week.
- Young adults are taught social skills through didactic lessons and role-play demonstrations, and practice these skills during online socialization activities.
- Social coaches attend separate telehealth sessions simultaneously and are taught how to assist young adults in making and keeping friends and/or dating.

Telehealth  
groups  
available  
NOW!

**To enroll, please contact**  
(310) 267-3377  
peersclinic@ucla.edu

**For more information, visit**  
[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)

**Teens will learn about:**

- Using social media and online platforms to develop and maintain friendships
  - Conversational skills
- Entering & exiting conversations
  - Electronic communication
- Using humor appropriately
  - Organizing get-togethers
  - Being a good sport
- Handling disagreements
  - Changing a bad reputation
- Handling teasing and bullying



## PEERS<sup>®</sup> Social Skills Group for Adolescents

- PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Adolescents is an evidence-based social skills intervention for motivated teens in middle and high school who are interested in making and keeping friends and/or handling conflict and rejection.
- Teens and parents attend 16 weekly telehealth sessions over Zoom for 90-minutes each week.
- Teens are taught social skills through didactic lessons and role-play demonstrations, and practice these skills during online socialization activities.
- Parents attend separate telehealth sessions simultaneously and are taught how to assist their teens in making and keeping friends.
- Parent participation is required.

Telehealth  
groups  
available  
NOW!

**To enroll, please contact**  
(310) 267-3377  
peersclinic@ucla.edu

**For more information, visit**  
[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)

# UCLA PEERS<sup>®</sup> Adolescent Telehealth Groups

WEDNESDAYS

4:30–6:00 PM PST

6:30–8:00 PM PST

# UCLA PEERS® Educational Classes

TUESDAYS

4:30 – 6:00 PM PST

6:30 – 8:00 PM PST

#### Participants will learn about:

- Using social media and online platforms to develop and maintain friendships
- Conversational skills
- Friendship skills
- Organizing get-togethers
- Conflict resolution
- Good sportsmanship
- Changing a bad reputation
- Handling teasing and bullying



## PEERS® Online Social Skills Class Plus optional dating lessons!

- PEERS® is an evidence-based social skills intervention for motivated teens and young adults who are interested in making and keeping friends and/or handling conflict and rejection.
- Teens and/or young adults attend 16 weekly classes over Zoom for 90-minutes each week, plus an optional 4 weeks of dating skills.
- Participants are taught social skills through didactic lessons and role-play demonstrations, and practice these skills during online socialization activities.
- Social coaches attend separate classes simultaneously and are taught how to assist their teens in making and keeping friends.
- Groups for adolescents and groups for young adults are now enrolling!

Now  
enrolling  
families  
worldwide!

To enroll, please contact  
(310) 267-3377  
peersclinic@ucla.edu

For more information, visit  
[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)

 [www.facebook.com/uclapeers](https://www.facebook.com/uclapeers)

 @UCLAPEERS

 @UCLAPEERS

# UCLA PEERS<sup>®</sup> Virtual Boot Camp

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



## PEERS<sup>®</sup> VIRTUAL BOOT CAMP

Includes **35 PRE-RECORDED EPISODES** covering **ALL PEERS<sup>®</sup> skills**

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

To register:  
[peersclinic@ucla.edu](mailto: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](https://www.facebook.com/uclapeers) [@UCLAPEERS](https://twitter.com/UCLAPEERS) [@UCLAPEERS](https://www.instagram.com/UCLAPEERS)

- 35 episodes
- Covers ALL the skills taught in PEERS<sup>®</sup>
- Go at your own pace
- Available on the UCLA PEERS YouTube Channel
- Access never expires

**NOW ENROLLING FOR  
PEERS® FOR  
CAREERS!**



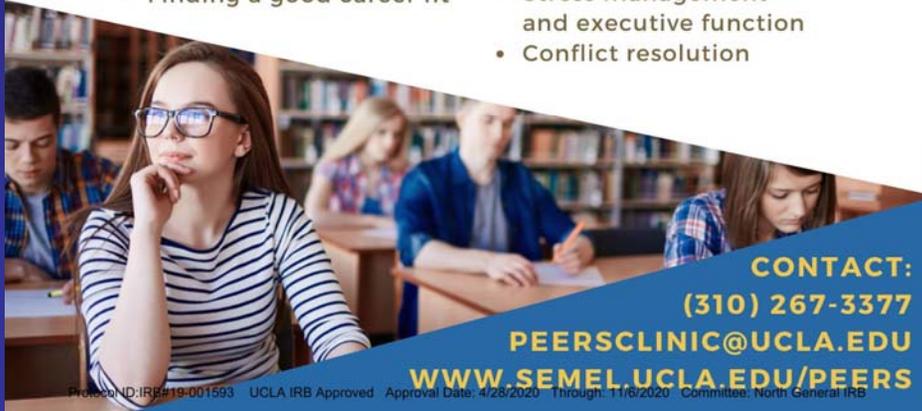
**ARE YOU LOOKING FOR  
A JOB OR INTERNSHIP? DO YOU  
STRUGGLE WITH SOCIAL COMMUNICATION?**

## **FREE SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH ASD**

**This research study includes a 20-week program  
teaching employment-related skills, followed by a 10-  
week internship!**

*Participants must be currently or previously enrolled in  
junior college, community college or 4 year university.*

- Building a resume
- Interviewing skills
- Finding a good career fit
- Navigating the work environment
- Stress management and executive function
- Conflict resolution



**CONTACT:**

**(310) 267-3377**

**PEERSCLINIC@UCLA.EDU**

**WWW.SEMEL.UCLA.EDU/PEERS**

Protocol ID: IRB#19-001593 UCLA IRB Approved Approval Date: 4/28/2020 Through: 11/8/2020 Committee: North General IRB

# **UCLA PEERS® for Careers**

- College to career transition program
- 20-week program for college students with ASD

**THURSDAYS**

**5:00 – 7:30 PM**



## UCLA Treatment Study for Individuals with Autism

*The purpose of this 16-week study is to examine the combined effects of medication (L-DOPA or placebo) plus a specialized behavioral intervention aimed towards increasing social skills.*

**You are eligible to participate if you:**

- Are between 13-30 years
- Have an autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

**Participants will receive:**

- PEERS (social skills training)  
(1 session/week for 16 weeks)
- Comprehensive diagnostic & cognitive evaluation
- Neurological testing
- L-DOPA or placebo (inactive medication)
- Questionnaires, interviews, psychological and laboratory testing
- Brain scan (pre and post)
- Up to \$550 if complete all visits

**For more information, contact UCLA at  
310 26-PEERS or 310 267-3377; [semel.ucla.edu/PEERS](http://semel.ucla.edu/PEERS)**



James McCracken, M.D.; Elizabeth Laugeson, Psy.D  
[www.semel.ucla.edu/PEERS](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/PEERS)

Protocol ID: IRB#17-001168 - UCLA IRB Approved - Approval Date: 10/10/2019 - Through: 7/24/2020 - Committee: Medical IRB 3

# UCLA PEERS® L-Dopa Research Study

Return Start Date:

TBD



*[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers)*

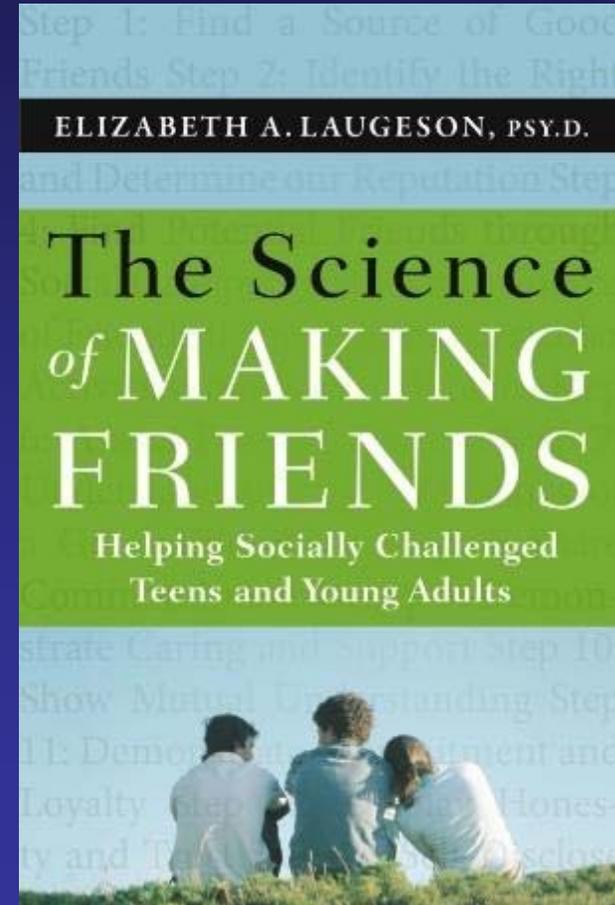
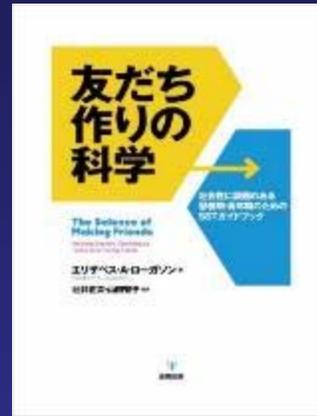
## Role-Play Video Library

[www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources](http://www.semel.ucla.edu/peers/resources)

[www.routledge.com/cw/laugeson](http://www.routledge.com/cw/laugeson)

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

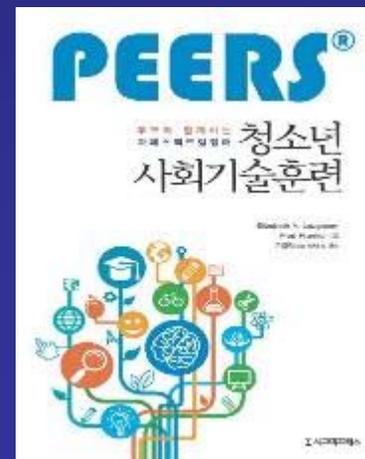
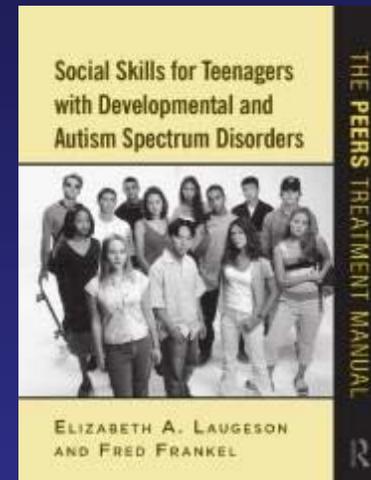
- Parent book
- Friendship skills
- Handling peer rejection and conflict
- Parent section
  - Narrative lessons
  - Social coaching tips
- Chapter summaries for teens and young adults
- Chapter exercises / homework
- Companion DVD
  - Role-play videos



# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Adolescents

## Teleconferences for Professionals

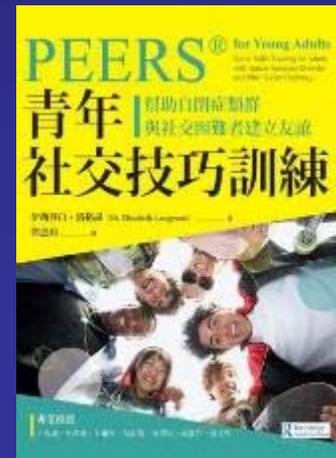
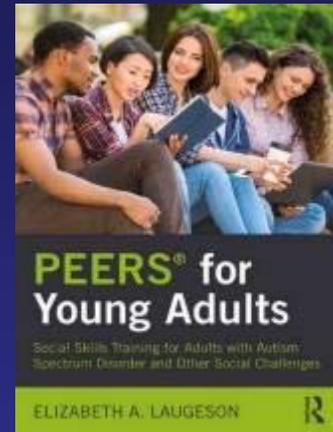
- Certified Teleconferences at UCLA:
  - April 19-21, 2021
- 14-week curriculum
- Weekly 90-minute teen sessions and parent sessions
- Parent handouts
- Addresses core deficits for ASD
- Focuses on friendship skills and handling peer rejection and conflict
- Teaches ecologically valid social skills



# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Young Adults

## Teleconferences for Professionals

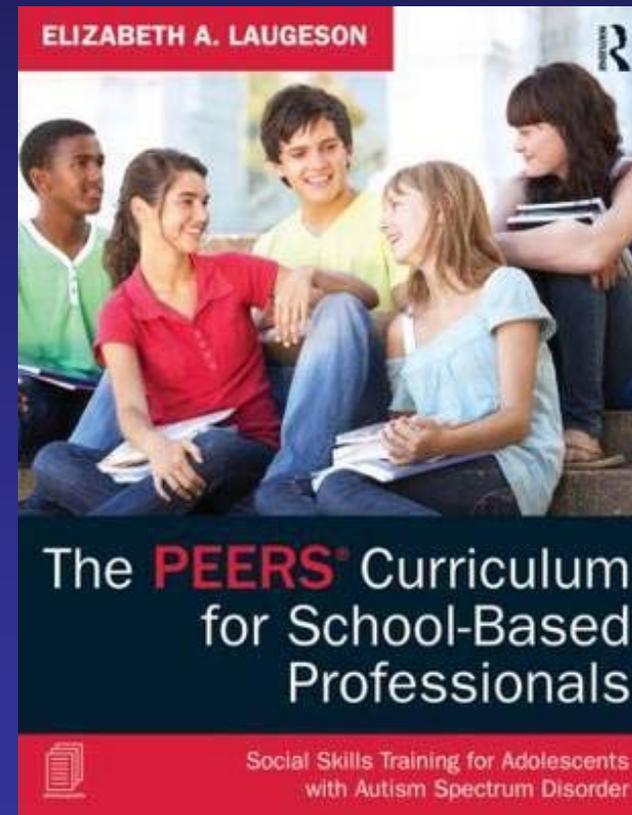
- Certified Teleconferences at UCLA:
  - February 3-5, 2021
- 16-week curriculum
- Weekly 90-minute young adult sessions and caregiver sessions
- Social coaching handouts
- Addresses core deficits for ASD
- Focuses on friendship and relationships skills and handling peer rejection and conflict
- Teaches ecologically valid social skills



# PEERS<sup>®</sup> for Adolescents

## School-Based Certified Training

- Certified Trainings at UCLA
  - June 23-25, 2021
- Teacher-facilitated curriculum
- 16-week program
- Daily lesson plans
- Focuses on friendship skills and strategies for handling peer rejection and conflict
- Includes weekly comprehensive parent handouts



# Acknowledgements

## Research Collaborators

Fred Frankel, Ph.D., ABPP  
Andrew Leuchter, M.D.  
Alex Gantman, Psy.D.  
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