

**Program for the Education and Enrichment of
Relational Skills (PEERS)
for Young Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

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*Funded by NIH T-32 Grant
(Leuchter, PI)*



PEERS for Young Adults

- ❖ Similar format to PEERS for Adolescents: 14-week long caregiver-assisted intervention for adults ages 18-22*
- ❖ Focus of the Intervention: (adapted for young adults)
 - ❖ Conversational skills: trading information, rules for having a two-way conversation; phone conversations
 - ❖ Appropriate use of humor and humor feedback
 - ❖ Choosing the right friends
 - ❖ Entering and leaving a conversation
 - ❖ Successful get-togethers and good sportsmanship
 - ❖ Handling teasing, bullying, and bad reputations
 - ❖ Handling arguments
- ❖ New Developments: Dating Etiquette and Peer Resistance Strategies Modules
- ❖ Caregiver role transition into a collaborative consultants

Preliminary Data

- Demographics
- Empathy Quotient
- Locus of Control
- Emotion Dysregulation
- Social Anxiety
- Loneliness

Demographics

- Young adults between ages 18-23 with Asperger's Disorder, High Functioning Autism or PDD-NOS
- Gender: 16 males and 7 females
- IQ: Average 98.42 (SD=18.42)
- Ethnicity: 14 White, 3 Hispanic, 5 Asian, 1 Middle Eastern
- Current Status
 - All single (currently not dating)
 - 19 in community colleges
 - 2 employed
 - 2 unemployed
 - Only 1 lives independently from caregivers
- All initial contact was through caregivers (19 parents, 2 siblings, 1 aunt, 1 grandparent.)

Empathy

- Using Empathy Quotient (*Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004*) caregiver and self-report measures

	Male	Female
Neurotypical Adults (in previous studies)	38.8 (12.4)	47.7 (11.0)
EQ-Young Adult Report	21.92 (7.81)	31 (6.11)
EQ-Caregiver Report	14.61 (8.69)	19.14 (6.94)
Overall EQ – Young Adult Report	56% below norm	86% below norm
Overall EQ - Caregiver Report	62% below norm	100% below norm

Locus of Control

- Using Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External control scale (*Nowicki and Duke, 1974*) self-report
- With a max score of 40 showing extreme external locus of control
- With range of scores 12-26 and mean 17.25 (SD=3.24)
- No significant general trend, but possible implications for treatment outcome

Emotion Dysregulation

- Using Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (Gratz & Roemer, 2004)

	Average Scores	Number of Study Participants
College Neurotypical	75-80	2
College Self-harm/Panic Attacks	85-90	2
Generalized Anxiety Disorder	90-95	4
PTSD	105	1
Borderline Personality Disorder	120	6

*Mean of 102 (SD=22.92) for current study. Statistics analyzed for n=19.

Social Anxiety

- Using Social Anxiety Scale (La Greca & Lopez, 1998) caregiver and self-report measures

	SAS-Self Report		SAS-Caregiver Report	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Fear of Negative Evaluations	10 (77%)	3 (43%)	8 (62%)	4 (57%)
Social Avoidance and Distress - General	8 (62%)	2 (29%)	10 (77%)	3 (43%)
Social Avoidance and Distress - New	10 (77%)	6 (86%)	12 (92%)	3 (43%)
SAS Total Score	10 (77%)	3 (43%)	12 (92%)	3 (43%)

Number of participant with scores that were at least one Standard Deviation above the norm (n=20)

Loneliness

- Using Social and Emotional Loneliness Scale for Adults (DiTomasso & Spinner, 1993) young adult self-report

	Romantic Loneliness	Social Loneliness	Family Loneliness
Current Study	27.1 (SD=6.4)	15.9 (SD=8.1)	11.68 (SD=5.9)
College Neurotypical Sample	16.4 (SD=6.1)	12.1 (SD=6.0)	12.1 (SD=7.5)
Sig. (2-tailed)	.000**	.040	.745

- Romantic Loneliness is significantly higher in comparison to in-group Social and Family Loneliness ($p < .000$). No significant difference between Social and Family Loneliness.

Acknowledgements

Mentors

- Liz Laugeson, Psy.D
- Connie Kasari, Ph.D

Consultants

- Fred Frankel, Ph.D
- Andrew Leuchter, MD

PEERS Research Treatment Team:

- Steven Kapp
- Chloe Koefler
- Jennifer Sanderson, MS
- Ruth Ellingsen
- Kristine McGlennen
- Clare Gorospe
- Jilly Chang
- Siena Whitham
- Dana Lieberman


