

PEERS Group is a fun, engaging, and highly interactive social skills group for teens and pre-teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their parents. Everyday peer to peer social interactions are typically spontaneous and fast-moving. While kids with ASD may share interests with their peers and want to feel like part of a group, they often feel left behind when trying to process and respond to the social exchanges happening around them. Feeling discouraged, they may make inappropriate bids for attention, or give up trying altogether. PEERS Group provides opportunities for positive sustained interactions with peers who share their desire to make and keep friendships. Each week, a group of highly trained specialists teach core social principles through role-play, peer rehearsals, sportsmanship training, and homework assignments designed to generalize their newly learned skills to home, school, and community settings. PEERS Group tailors lessons to the interests of the participants, as well as other current and relevant topics, and build upon skills learned in prior sessions. When participants graduate from the PEERS program, they go forward with skills and knowledge that are shown to continually improve their social interactions and self-esteem.

The PEERS program is implemented over the course of 14 weeks, with separate parent and youth groups meeting simultaneously each week for 90 minutes. During each session we go over the past week's practice assignment, sharing success stories and troubleshooting any issues that may have prevented success. Information covered in prior sessions is tied in to the social skill lesson of the week, followed by ample time for rehearsal and practice. At the end of the session, the two groups reconvene to go over the guidelines for the next out-of-group assignment.

WHAT WILL PARENTS GAIN FROM THE PEERS PROGRAM?

Many of the parents who come to PEERS have become discouraged in trying to help their children develop friendships using methods that have not worked. We recognize that your own feelings of success correlate closely with your child's success in developing social skills. Our program teaches parents the same set of social skills that their child is learning each week. Goals are taught in incremental fashion, allowing both parent and child ample opportunity to practice simpler skills before moving on to more complex skills. This enables you to acquire the skills necessary to support your child by helping them to take part in activities where they can get to know peers, to arrange get-togethers, and to sustain friendships over time. The PEERS program fosters the development of skills of both the student and the parent, with the parent learning constructive, effective ways to be the primary coach for the student. Evidence shows that parents are absolutely essential to the success of the program. Our goal is to teach and support you in your efforts as your child gains skills and confidence.

SANDBOX ABA PRESENTS: PEERS SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP

Program for the Evaluation and
Enrichment of Relational Skills



HOW TO MAKE AND KEEP FRIENDS

PEERS GROUP IS HERE TO BENEFIT THOSE WHO:

- FEEL LEFT OUT BY THEIR PEERS
AT SCHOOL AND IN THE
COMMUNITY
- HAVE TROUBLE MAKING NEW
FRIENDS
- ARE UNHAPPY WITH THE
FRIENDSHIPS THEY HAVE
- FEEL DISLIKED, TEASED, OR
BULLIED
- FIND IT DIFFICULT TO
PARTICIPATE IN
CONVERSATIONS WITH PEERS
- WANT TO FORM POSITIVE
AND LASTING FRIENDSHIPS
- DESIRE PEER ACCEPTANCE AND
INCLUSION
- ARE COMMITTED TO
IMPROVING THEIR SOCIAL
SKILLS AND RELATIONSHIPS
THROUGH THE PEERS PROGRAM

Studies of the PEERS social skills program have identified significant social skills and friendship gains in participants with ASD upon graduation from the program and at a 14-week follow-up, as well as up to 5 years post-treatment (Karst et al., 2014). Evidence reported by parents and teachers on a standardized measure of social skills (SSRS) indicates that the intervention results in overall improvement of social skills and knowledge in the areas of social communication, social cognition, social awareness, social motivation, assertion, cooperation, and responsibility, as well as decreased ASD symptoms relating to social responsiveness and increases in peer interactions following intervention (Laugeson et al. 2011).

Parents who participated in the program showed increases in parenting self-efficacy, and a long-term outcome study attributes the maintenance of treatment gains to the high level of parent involvement in the intervention (Karst et al., 2014). The study suggests that the "social coaching" role of parents during and after PEERS is imperative for generalizing skills in the home and community; thus, promoting the use of parent-assistance in social skills generalization and maintenance (Laugeson et al. 2011).

Research and evidence found in the following resources:

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 Mogil

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 GROUP IS NOW ENROLLING FOR OUR SESSIONS BEGINNING IN MAY/JUNE 2015

We are seeking participants who will be entering the 6th-8th grades as of Fall 2015. The group meets Tuesday evenings from 6-7:30 PM. Healthy, diet-friendly snacks are provided at the beginning of each session.

To learn more about the program please contact us at 512-524-1374 and ask to speak to Rebecca Ryan or Jessi Turnbow-Cao.



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MORE INFORMATION FOR YOUR CHILD ON PAGE 2

WHAT IS PEERS GROUP?

PEERS Group is a fun and highly interactive social skills group for teens and pre-teens who want to improve their social life at school and in their community. Everyday peer to peer social interactions are spontaneous and fast-moving. Although you may be into the same things as your peers, maybe you find yourself feeling left behind when trying to keep up with their conversations. It can feel really frustrating when you are trying your best to be part of the group but still feel left out. PEERS Group gives you opportunities for low-pressure interactions with people your age who share your desire to make and keep friendships. Each week you will learn a new social skill through role-play, peer rehearsals, and sportsmanship training. You will also have practice activities that help you use your newly learned skills at home, school, and other places you hang out. Lessons are based on the interests of the group, as well as other current and relevant topics. Each new lesson builds on skills learned in prior sessions. At the end of the PEERS program, you will have skills and knowledge that are shown to keep improving your social interactions and confidence.



WHO ARE YOUR PEERS?

Peers are people in your age group who go to your school, play on your sports team, act in your drama club, volunteer for the same causes, or hang out in the same places you do. You see them often, sometimes every day, and share many of the same interests and experiences with them. This is the best group of people to seek out when making friends because they are already part of your life. They can make day-to-day life better or worse, all depending on how you get along with one another.

SANDBOX ABA PRESENTS: PEERS SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP

Program for the Evaluation and



HOW TO MAKE AND KEEP FRIENDS

PEERS GROUP IS HERE TO BENEFIT THOSE WHO:

- ♦ **Feel left out by their peers at school and in the community**
- ♦ **Have trouble making new friends**
- ♦ **Are unhappy with the friendships they have**
- ♦ **Feel disliked, teased, or bullied**
- ♦ **Find it difficult to participate in conversations with peers**
- ♦ **Want to form positive and lasting friendships**
- ♦ **Desire peer acceptance and inclusion**
- ♦ **Are committed to improving their social skills and relationships through the PEERS program**

WHY ARE PEERS IMPORTANT IN YOUR LIFE?

While you may have friends who are older or younger than you, you probably spend most of your time with other people your own age. Having friends at your school and extracurricular activities gives you a support system of people to laugh with when you are having fun, talk to when you need advice, stand up for you when others treat you badly, and, most importantly, to make you feel good about yourself. Good friends make hard times seem easier and good times feel even better.

HOW CAN YOU BE A PART OF YOUR PEER GROUP?

Being accepted and making friends can be really tricky, especially in middle school and high school. A person who is nice to you one day might ignore you in the hall the next. Music and jokes everyone is really into one week are old news just a few weeks later. It can be really difficult to keep up with all of the changes, but just remember, you don't need to please everyone. Having just a few close friends can be really fun. You



WHAT WILL PEERS GROUP TEACH YOU?

There are certain social rules and boundaries that aren't really talked about, but are generally accepted by most people. PEERS Group teaches you what these rules are and how to follow them so that you can have better relationships and fit in with your peers. We start with simple conversations that help us find things in common and build up to skills like choosing friends who are right for you, inviting friends over to hang out, the right times for humor, dealing with bullies, how to fix a bad reputation, and more. There are lots of chances to practice in group so that you will feel more confident using your new skills with peers outside of group.



ARE YOU IN?

PEERS works best for people who truly want to be a part of it. If this program sounds like something that might work for you, ask your parents to give us a call.