

# The UCLA PEERS® Program: Strategies for Handling Teasing/Bullying



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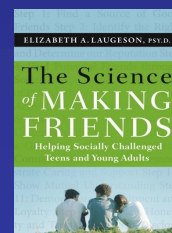
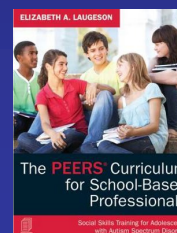
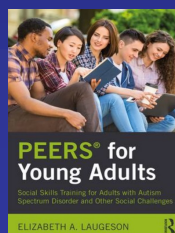
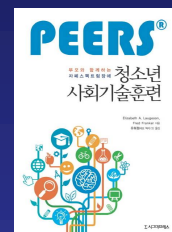
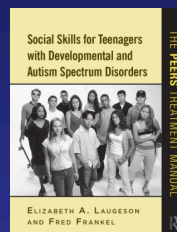
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## Background about PEERS®

- International program
  - Developed at UCLA in 2004
  - Adolescent program has been translated into over a dozen languages
  - Used in over 25 countries
- Evidence-Based Social Skills Programs:
  - PEERS® for Preschoolers
  - PEERS® for Adolescents
  - PEERS® for Young Adults



## Identifying Peer Rejected and Socially Neglected Youth with ASD

- Peer rejection
  - Teasing and bullying
  - Bad reputations
  - Actively seeking out peers
  - ADHD, Mood disorders, Impulse control disorders
- Social neglect
  - Isolated and withdrawn
  - Ignored and unnoticed
  - Actively avoiding peers
  - Anxiety, Depression



(Volkmar & Klin, 1998; Bauminger & Kasari, 2000; Orsmond, Krauss, & Seltzer, 2004; Koning & Magill-Evans, 2001; LeCouteur et al., 1989; Marks, Schrader, Longaker, & Levine, 2000; Ghaziuddin & Gerstein, 1996; Twatchman-Cullen, 1998; Hemphill & Siperstein, 1990; Church, Alisanki, Amanullah, 2000)

## Consequences of Peer Rejection

Peer rejection is one of the strongest predictors of:

- Mental health problems
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
- Juvenile delinquency
- Early withdrawal from school



(Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smiroldo, & Bamberg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)

## Consequences of Peer Rejection

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Low self-esteem
- Substance abuse
- Poor academic performance
- Suicidal ideation
- Suicide attempts



(Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smioldo, & Bamberg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)

## Bullying and Peer Victimization Among Adolescents with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

- Teens with ASD are NINE times more likely to experience peer victimization than “non-disabled” peers
- 94% of teens with ASD report experiencing some form of peer victimization in the previous year
- Teens with ASD and comorbid ADHD are FOUR times more likely to engage in bullying behavior
  - Teens with ASD without ADHD do not differ from typically developing teens in rates of engaging in bullying behavior



(Olweus 1973, 1993; Rose et al., 2009; Dinkes et al., 2006; Potaat & Espelage, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Schwartz, 2010; Perry et al., 2001; Doren et al., 1996; Little, 2001, 2002; Montes & Halterman, 2007; van Roekel et al., 2010; Whitney et al., 1992; Martlew & Hodson, 1991; O' Moore & Hillery, 1989)

## Risk Factors for Peer Rejection Among Adolescents with ASD

### High Risk Factors:

- Less socially competent
- Fewer friendships
- Less peer support
  - Less bystander support

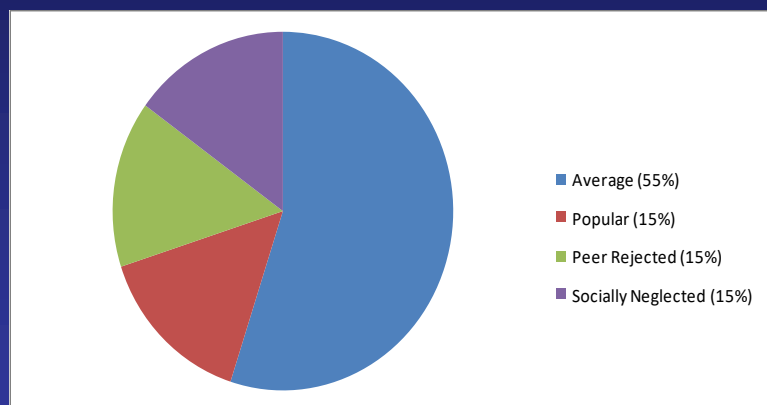


### Protective Factors:

- Friendships are known to protect against victimization

(Olweus, 1973, 1993; Rose et al., 2009; Dinkes et al., 2006; Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Schwartz, 2010; Perry et al., 2001; Doren et al., 1996; Little, 2001, 2002; Montes & Halterman, 2007; van Roekel et al., 2010; Whitney et al., 1992; Martlew & Hodson, 1991; O' Moore & Hillery, 1989)

## Categories of Peer Acceptance in Adolescence



The Science of Making Friends  
(Laugeson, 2013)

## Defining Bullying

- Subtype of aggression
- Negative actions directed at a student or groups of students that are either:
  - Repetitive
  - Chronic
  - Characterized by power imbalance
- Bullying behaviors take on a variety of forms including:
  - Physical
  - Verbal
  - Relational (rumor spreading, social exclusion)
  - Electronic (cyber bullying)



(Olweus, 1973, 1993; Rose et al., 2009; Dinkes et al., 2006; Poteat & Espelage, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Schwartz, 2010; Perry et al., 2001; Doren et al., 1996; Little, 2001, 2002; Montes & Halterman, 2007; van Roekel et al., 2010; Whitney et al., 1992; Martlew & Hodson, 1991; O' Moore & Hillery, 1989)

## Clinical Example: Teasing

### QUESTIONS:

What are most children and teens told to do in response to teasing?

What do most children and teens with ASD do in response to teasing?



## Rules for Handling Teasing

- Do not walk away, ignore the person, or tell an adult
- Don't show you're upset or tease back
- Act like what the person said did not bother you
- Provide a **SHORT COMEBACK** that shows what the person said was lame:
  - Whatever!
  - Anyway...
  - So what?
  - Big deal!
  - Who cares?
  - Yeah and?
  - And your point is?
  - Am I supposed to care?
  - Is that supposed to be funny?
  - (Shrug shoulders)
  - (Roll eyes)
- Then walk away or remove yourself



(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014)

## Clinical Example: Physical Bullying

### QUESTIONS:

What are most teens told to do in response to physical bullying?

What do most teens with ASD do in response to physical bullying?



## Avoiding Physical Bullying

- Avoid the bully
  - Stay out of reach of the bully
  - If the bully can't find you, he can't bully you
- Plan your route
- Lay low when the bully is around
  - Don't draw attention to yourself
  - If the bully doesn't notice you, he won't bully you
- Don't provoke the bully
  - Don't use the strategies for teasing with the bully
- Don't tease the bully
- Don't police the bully
  - Don't tell on the bully for minor offenses
  - Discreetly tell an adult if someone is in danger
- Don't try to make friends with the bully
- Hang out with other teens
  - Bullies like to pick on teens who are by themselves
- Stay near adults when the bully is around
- Get help from an adult



(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014)

## Clinical Example: Cyber Bullying

### QUESTIONS:

What are most teens told to do in response to cyber bullying?

What do cyber bullies want their victims to do?





## Addressing Cyber Bullying

- Don't feed the trolls
- Don't react
- Have friends stick up for you
- Lay low online
- Block the bully
- Save the evidence
- Get help from supportive adults
- Report cyber bullying to the proper authorities
  - Webmasters
  - Service providers
  - School
  - Law enforcement (extreme cases)



(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014)

## PEERS® Handling Rumors & Gossip

### How to avoid being the target of gossip:

- Avoid being friends with gossips
- Don't be enemies with the gossips
- Be as neutral as possible with the gossips
- Don't spread rumors or gossip about people



(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014)



## Clinical Example: Rumors and Gossip

### QUESTIONS:

What do most adults tell children and teens to do when they are the target of rumors and gossip?

What is the natural response to someone spreading a rumor about you?



## PEERS® Handling Rumors & Gossip

### What to do if you're the target of gossip:

- Every instinct we have is **WRONG**
- Don't try to disprove the gossip
- Don't show that you're upset
- Don't confront the source of the gossip
- Avoid the source of the gossip
- Act amazed anyone would **BELIEVE** or **CARE** about the gossip
  - “I can't believe anyone would believe that.”
  - “Can you believe anyone cares about that?”



(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010;  
Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson,  
2014)

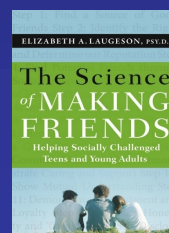
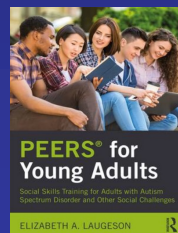
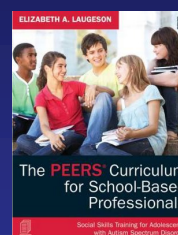
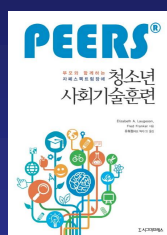
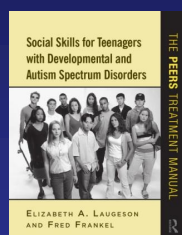
## PEERS® Handling Rumors & Gossip

### Spread the rumor about yourself:

1. Find an audience
2. Find a supportive friend
3. Acknowledge the rumor
  - “Did you hear this rumor....”
4. Act amazed anyone would BELIEVE or CARE about the rumor
  - “I can’t believe anyone believes that.”
  - “People are so gullible.”
  - “People need to find something interesting to talk about.”
  - “People need to get a life.”
5. Repeat with other supportive friends

(Laugeson & Frankel, 2010; Laugeson, 2013; Laugeson, 2014)

## PEERS® Resources



**UCLA** PEERS® Clinic



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

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