

PEERS 2: An Experiential and Process-Oriented Social Skills Group for Teens with High-Functioning Autism

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Introduction

The Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS[®]) is an evidence-based social skills group for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). **Adolescents who attend PEERS show gains in knowledge of rules of social etiquette, increase in get-togethers with peers, and better quality of friendships** (Hall et al., 2018). However, post-group analyses suggest that **PEERS attendees may still have difficulty with socially appropriate responding in social situations** (Lordo et al., 2016)

Over the years, many parents and adolescents who have completed PEERS have communicated interest in joining a supplementary group that would help expand and generalize the skills taught in PEERS.

The aim of this leadership project was to (1) assess parents' interest in a PEERS supplementary group, and (2) develop PEERS 2, an experiential and process-oriented group for adolescents and parents who have completed PEERS.

PEERS 2 Overview

PEERS 2 group will offer adolescents with ASD and other social skills difficulties the opportunity to generalize and practice the skills learned in PEERS in the community with the guidance of group leaders. The 8-week curriculum will consist of five process-oriented and skill building sessions, and three practice-oriented sessions in community locations. Parents will participate in parent-only sessions, and will attend community outings with their teen.

PEERS 2 Teen Curriculum

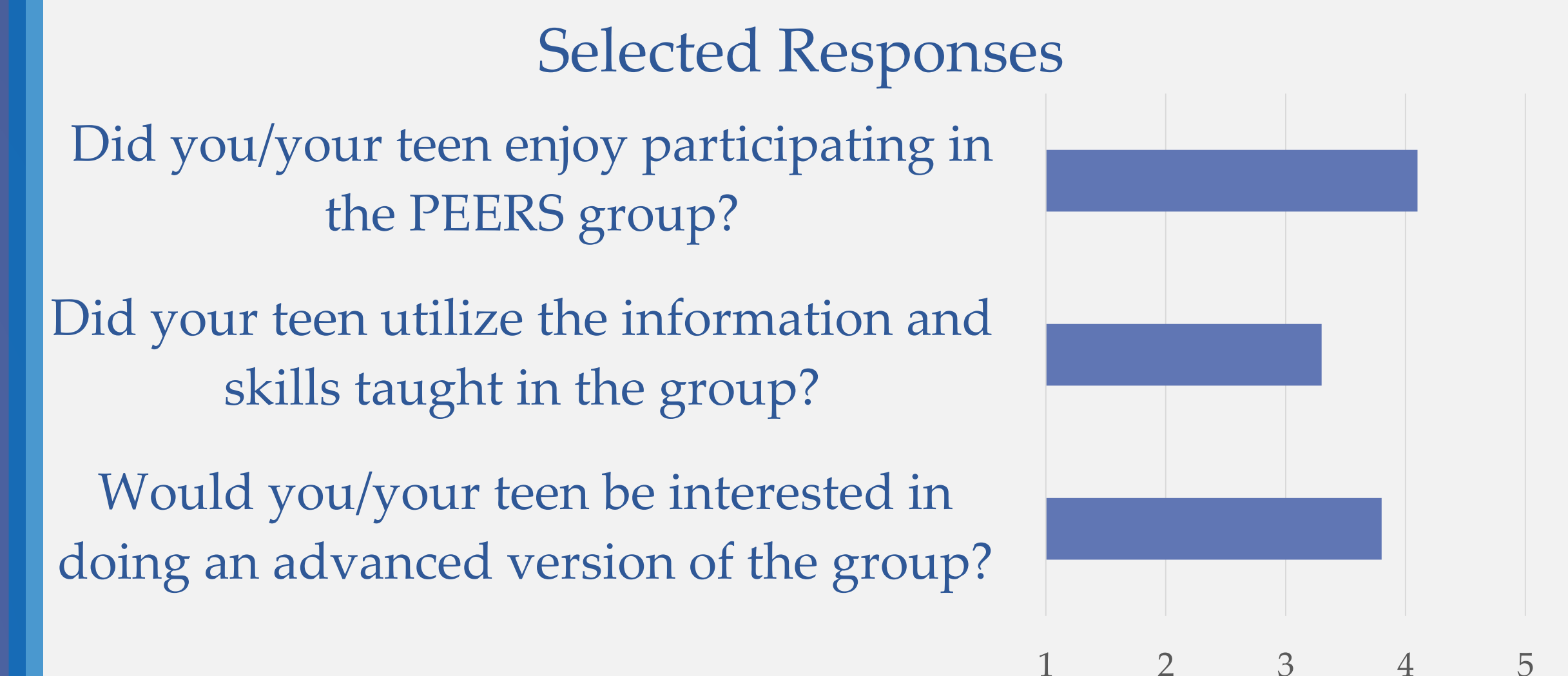
Weekly Topics

- Week 1: Intro/Starting and Maintaining Conversations
- Week 2: Entering and Exiting Conversations
- Week 3: *Group Outing at Food Court*
- Week 4: Good Sportsmanship
- Week 5: *Group Outing at Bowling Alley*
- Week 6: Conflict Resolution/Self-Advocacy
- Week 7: *Group Outing at Arcade*
- Week 8: Graduation/Pizza Party



Parent Survey

Parents who recently completed PEERS were asked to complete a satisfaction survey (N = 6). Parents rated items on a 5-point scale (*Not at all* to *Very Much*).



Overall, parents and teens enjoyed the PEERS group and were highly interested in a follow-up group to continue to learn and practice social skills. **Parents noticed that their teens moderately used the skills learned in group in the community.**

Qualitatively, parents mentioned that they would like for their teens to **continue to learn how to build upon their relationships and learn how to use their skills in social and community settings**, such as at work and on dates.

Session Structure

- 1) Process Group Outing (15 minutes)
 - Review teens' goal for outing
 - Discussion questions (What went well? What could you try differently next time?)
- 2) Didactic (10 minutes)
 - Review a skill learned in PEERS
- 3) Process/Discussion (15 minutes)
 - What is something that you do well with [in regard to this topic]
 - What has been challenging for you?
 - How have you practiced this skill?
- 4) Wrap Up
 - Discuss next community outing
 - Identify goal and complete goals worksheet
 - Bring parents and teens together to discuss teens' individual goals

Next Steps

PEERS 2 will be offered in the Fall of 2019

Parents and teens will complete assessment measures (Social Responsiveness Scale-2 & Quality of Play Assessment) pre and post group to assess adolescents' social skills, and frequency and comfort engaging with peers in social settings.