“PAWSS”: A Peer Training Program to Support the Social Engagement of People with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Presented by

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Introductions

Who are you?  Who are we?
Training Objectives

Participants will:

- Identify 2 reasons why peer support is effective
- Name three ways the PAWSS program incorporates PMII (Peer Mediated Instruction and Intervention)
- Name three barriers to interventions that involve peer support
- Identify the meaning of the acronym of the “PAWSS” Peer Program
Why do you think peer supports is effective?
It’s All About RELATING...

KIDS relate to KIDS
Because they:
• Talk the same talk
• Have the same rules
• Play the same play
• Find similar things funny

ADULTS relate to ADULTS
Because they:
• Talk the same talk
• Operate under the same norms
• Find the same things entertaining
• Have similar humor

“Adults don’t know what it’s like to be a kid because they are not a kid anymore.”

“You will find the humor in this when you are older.”
Peer Support …

• Is a strategy that nudges the adults into a secondary role, having peers be the model of social skills in a naturalistic setting.

• Adheres to the principle that by teaching typically developing peers ways to interact with their classmates with ASD, more social opportunities for learning can be created.

• Allows for typically developing peers to assist individuals with ASD to complete academic work, group projects, and socially interact.
Peer Support IS NOT...

• **Peer support is NOT** placing individuals with ASD with their peers in the same space at the same time and hoping some friendship will happen.

• **Peer Support is NOT** assuming that individuals with ASD will engage with their peers by participating in common activities such as: bowling, lunch, recess, and PE.

• **Peer Support is NOT** assuming that typically developing peers know how to “engage” and support a person with ASD.
Evidence Based Practice is a multi-step process to make informed decisions based on ...
NPDC definition of Peer Mediated Instruction and Intervention

“Peer–mediated instructions are used to teach typically developing peers ways to interact with and help learners with ASD acquire new social skills by increasing social opportunities within natural environments. With PMII, peers are systematically taught ways of engaging learners with ASD in social interactions in both teacher-directed and learner-initiated activities” (English et al., 1997; Odom et al., 1999; Strain & Odom, 1986).

- National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders (NPDC)

Five steps of PMII

PMII
Peer Mediated Instruction and Intervention

1. Selecting the peers
2. Training the peers
3. Supporting the peers
4. Implementing in the classroom settings and throughout the day
5. Extending initiations across the day
PAWSS: A Peer Training Program

- Initially created in 2007, at Camp Rising Sun.
- In 2010-2015 the curriculum was continually refined, and taught outside the camp setting.
- For the past 7 years it has been used by four year olds through adults in social therapy groups, 8-18 year olds in the residential camping setting, adults participating in integrated community classes, teens participating in community groups, school programs, and with professionals who work in a variety of settings with individuals with ASD.
- The PAWSS program has been assessed each year through a pre/post test for it’s effectiveness. These tests indicate the program is effective and beneficial in a variety of settings.
- The PAWSS training utilizes an acronym of five letters (PAWSS) corresponding to five actions (Position, Ask, Wait, Short, and Simple) that support social interaction.
The PAWSS program is systematic method of teaching and supporting peers to understand “how” to interact and play with a person with ASD. It effectively helps a peer; structure the environment, understand their role, and encourages generalization of skills.
Five steps of PAWSS

“PAWSS”

1. Selecting the peers
   *Three key indicators of a successful peer*

2. Training the peers
   *Four key objectives to training*

3. Supporting the peers
   *Five creative ways to support*

4. & 5. Implementing and extending initiations in the classroom settings and throughout the day
   *Six ideas to coach a peer to enhance social skill development in a person with ASD*
PAWSS as an Evidence Based Practice

PMII
Peer Mediated Instruction and Intervention

1. Selecting the peers
2. Training the peers
3. Supporting the peers
4. Implementing in the classroom settings and throughout the day
5. Extending initiatives across the day

“PAWSS”

1. Selecting the peers
   *Three key indicators of a successful peer*
2. Training the peers
   *Four key objectives to training*
3. Supporting the peers
   *Five creative ways to support*
4. & 5. Implementing and extending initiations in the classroom settings and throughout the day
   *Six ideas to coach a peer to enhance social skill development in a person with ASD*
Three Key Indicators of a Successful Peer:

1. Skill Set

Peers seem to be more successful if they are able to understand the perspective of others and sustain their attention for a give-and-take of conversation.

2. Age Group

Peers under 18 should be within 2-4 years of the children with which they are interacting. The ages of adults does not seem to be significant.

3. Desire and Opportunity

Peers need to have a desire to help or assist others. It requires waiting and patience, and sometimes it is not always fun. Peers also need opportunities to be in the same physical space and/or activities as individuals with ASD (share recess, PE, ride the bus, lunch, passing periods).
### Four Training Objectives:  
**At the end of a 30-60 minute structure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peer Objectives:</th>
<th>Coach Objectives:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify one aspect of ASD</td>
<td>1. Facilitate the PAWSS training with a group of 1-12 selected peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Name two difficulties a person with ASD may experience</td>
<td>2. Identify and model the five actions of the acronym of PAWSS</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Label two strengths a person with ASD may have</td>
<td>3. Be available and willing to demonstrate five ways to support peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Identify the five actions of the acronym PAWSS</td>
<td>4. Be available and willing to demonstrate the six ways to coach a peer to use PAWSS</td>
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Five Creative Ways To Support Peers

How support is presented will depend on the age and skill set of the peers. Support will also be given at three times: training, on-site implementation, and send-off for generalization.

Training
1. Encourage questions and practice scenarios during training
2. At the end of the training, give the participants a tangible reminder of PAWSS (certificates, stamps, blank dog tags, bracelets, etc.)

On-Site Implementation
3. Verbally reinforce use of individual steps of PAWSS
4. Reinforce the effort of each PAWSS step with a tangible reinforcement (stamps, posters of names, bracelets, school wide reinforcement program)

Generalization
5. An age-appropriate final tangible can be given at the end of the onsite implementation period to remind the participants to use PAWSS in the community (dog tags with engraved PAWSS acronym, PAWSS bracelets, PAWSS Passports, PAWSS tattoos, certificates, school specific idea)
Six Ideas to Coach a Peer

Coaching is an age appropriate method of explaining, encouraging, and demonstrating an action to meet a goal.

1. The Coach needs to be comfortable around people with different behaviors, communication, and social skills.

2. The Coach needs to have the knowledge of PAWSS and understand the actions associated with the acronym.

3. The Coach needs to be close in proximity to see what pieces of PAWSS the peer is implementing positively and which pieces they need support with.

4. When the Coach notices what pieces of PAWSS is not working, then he/she needs to break it down into smaller steps.

5. The Coach then needs to physically demonstrate each acronym of PAWSS with the person with ASD while the peer is observing. Provide positive feedback by verbally telling the peer what they are doing correctly and what changes they could make.

6. When the Coach notices that a peer has an understanding of PAWSS and can implement it without difficulty, have them begin to teach it to someone else.
Barriers to using peers to support people with ASD?
Barriers to Peer Support...

- Time constraints for training
- Difficulty in the time commitment
- The difference of opinion in using labels
- The value difference in learning academics as opposed to social skills
- Openness by people to recognize sometimes kids can support people with autism more than we can
- Recognize when peer support is not working and figure out how to support success
- Perpetuating the myths:
  - People with autism want to be alone
  - Both parties will not gain from the experience
  - Individuals with ASD need to be “high functioning” to benefit from PMII
“PAWSS”

“Position, Ask, Wait, Short, and Simple”

A Peer Training Program to Support the Social Engagement of People with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Kathleen “Mo” Taylor, OTR/L with Lauriann King

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How to Use This Booklet

- Gather your participants in a group
- Set this booklet up to look like an easel
- Flip the booklet to the title PAWSS TRAINING page
- Notice that you, as the facilitator, have a page facing you

- The light blue box outline, on top, is what participants see
- The dark blue box outline, in the middle, tells the facilitator what to say, and
- The blue dashed box, on the bottom, is an activity to do

Have fun, and remember you are making the world a more tolerant place!
The Participants would see this...

We’re the same?
We’re different?
The Coach would see this...

**They see this:**

We’re the same? We’re different?

**Say this:**

You will all have more in common with people with ASD than you have different. If you like to do _____, (swimming/video games/eat ice cream...) then do _____! (stomp your feet/stand up/cover your eyes...)

- Teens may want to walk around and find the group that likes the same _____, (music, movies, pizza...) **think age appropriate**

**Do this:**

- Gather in a group
- This is a game to help us notice how we are the same, and how we are different
- “If you like swimming stomp your feet!”
- Activities to choose from: reading, camping, video games, comics, martial arts, flying on a plane, fishing, riding scooters, trampoline jumping, your own ideas
- Reflect “Just because you are different it does not mean you can’t be friends or hang out (kids who like different movies, kids who like different food can still be friends)
The Participants would see this...

Having a difference with your ability to **socially interact** can make it difficult to:

• Know how close to stand to someone
• Know what to talk about
• Know how to take turns
• Know when to stop talking
• Know how to make a friend

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The Coach would see this...

They see this:
Having a difference with your ability to socially interact can make it difficult to: Know how close to stand to someone, Know what to talk about, Know how to take turns, Know when to stop talking, Know how to make a friend

Say this:
Look around the room (or do a game) and notice what social skills we are using now. What skills are we using that might be hard for a person with ASD?

Do this:
- Point out the following: how did you know how close to sit to him?, How did you know how loud to speak? Are you thinking about what others think?
- We have learned these skills easily and these are the skills that are hard for a person with ASD
- Option: Play a game and identify the social skills each participant is using (Boring object game/Yes game/Pass the Movement/Mime game...)

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The Participants would see this...

**P = Position**

Stand close to the person with ASD so they know you want to talk or play
*(an arm’s distance is great!)*

Turn your body towards the person
*(point your shoulders towards the person)*
The Coach would see this...

**They see this:**

P = Position
- Stand close to the person with ASD so they know you want to talk or play (an arm’s distance is great!)
- Turn your body toward them (point your shoulders toward the person)

**Say this:**

Read page
Watch what we mean about positioning yourself
Practice doing “P”

**Do this:**

- Have the group stand up and get in pairs
- Ask them to stand an arm’s distance from their peer
- Ask them to turn their body so their shoulders are facing each other
- Have them discuss something fun for a minute or two
The Participants would see this...

**P = Position**
Stand close and face your body toward the person

**W = Wait**
Give them time to respond

**A = Ask**
You may need to start the play or conversation

**S = Simple**
Don’t use a lot of words

**S = Short**
Short games or conversations are the best

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The Coach would see this...

They see this:
PAWSS flow chart

Say this:
Read page

Do this:
• Ask if there are questions
The Participants would see this...

By learning PAWSS

You are smarter

By using PAWSS

You are helpful

By doing PAWSS anywhere

You will make a difference in this world!

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The Coach would see this...

They see this:

• By learning PAWSS you are smarter
• By using PAWSS you are helpful
• By doing PAWSS anywhere, you will make a difference in this world!

Say this:

Read page

Do this:

• Go to next page

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Reinforcers:
Was “PAWSS” helpful?

“Yes, position really helped me realize how important it is to get close so they are aware of your presence.”

Two-thirds of peer campers & CITs felt the PAWSS program had helped them very much at camp, and over 80% said they would use it anywhere, not just at camp.
Thanks

Over the past 30 years, I feel honored to have worked and learned with hundreds of individuals with ASD and their families. It is my hope that people will use this program to socially interact and get to know these great people.

I believe...

A simple program can make a big difference.

And...

Teaching the next generation to appreciate people with ASD will make this world a kinder, more accepting place for everyone.
Are the people with ASD the only one’s Benefiting?

NO....

Being a peer to support and learn with people who are different can:
- Builds self esteem and confidence
- Help a person develop independence and responsibility
- Help a person recognize their own strengths and weaknesses
- Increase their ability to engage diverse individuals
- Promotes understanding and tolerance of those that are different
- Naturally builds leadership skills
- Increase an understanding to not take things for granted
- Encourages team work
- Increase social skill develop
- May play a role in reducing bullying
- Increased patience
- Increased understanding of ASD
- Makes the BOX of Normal a bit bigger

*Parents response to having their child participate in a Peer Program:*
  57% indicated it was important,
  while 36% said it was extremely important
  Yes this 97% total
  *(Jones, 2007)*
Next Steps:

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