

TIME-LIMITED SOCIAL SKILLS GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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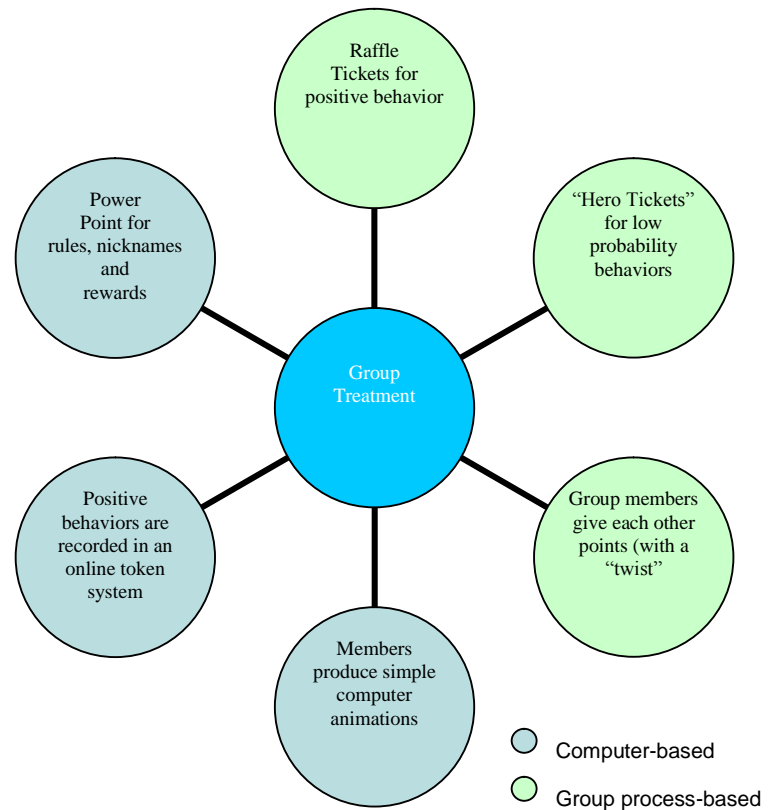
Introduction: The L.U.N.C.H Group (**L**earning, **U**nderstanding, **N**egotiating, **C**ommunicating, and **H**elping) is a time-limited Social Skills Group therapy program for children 9-13 and 13-17 which has now been running for four years. The L.U.N.C.H. Group meets for twelve sessions throughout the school year (Spring, Fall) or ten sessions over five weeks (Summer).

Population Served: Students diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome or High Functioning Autism; ADHD; Nonverbal Learning Disabilities; Oppositional Defiant Disorder; Social Shyness; and OCD. Typical behaviors addressed in the program have included:

- Difficulty socializing with peers
- Difficulty handling changes in routines
- Worries, fears, or rigidity that interferes with daily functioning
- Difficulty controlling anger
- Challenges with shyness
- Trouble making or keeping friends

Program Description: Students learn effective ways to manage social skills challenges while practicing positive social interaction strategies. Parents complete a pre-assessment and participate in a telephone interview prior to their child being accepted.

Students learn to use computer animation and digital video as a group. In the initial sessions, they develop PowerPoints that identify group rules and target behaviors. Students receive raffle tickets for positive behaviors. They can also earn raffle tickets by giving compliments or receiving them from other students. Group members have the opportunity to play games and earn points for their "game playing" behavior. Outside of group they participate in an online point system that rewards them for demonstrating identified target behaviors. During each session, they eat at nearby restaurants in order to practice identified social skills. Two parent meetings are held where families receive detailed guidance to help support changes in their child’s behavior. For the summer program, there is also a "BBQ day," where students shop for food and help make a meal which they eat in the office courtyard.



Results: The L.U.N.C.H. Group Program has shown efficacy in reducing a broad range of externalizing behaviors while improving working memory skills. Parents reported that fewer behavior problems and increased attention to task occurred, as shown in figures 1 and 2 (Gale & Yamashita, 2003). There was variability among students, with those with behavioral initiation difficulties and attentional problems making more gains than students with more classically autistic or severe oppositional behaviors. About 25% of participants have returned for additional programs, with some having attended 3 or 4 times. Behavior improvement has been noted in: cooperation, following directions more consistently, reduced emotional lability, reduced rigidity, improved hygiene, and willingness to try new foods (Gale, 2004).

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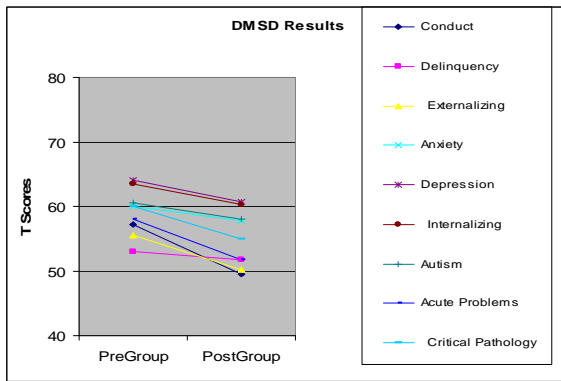


FIG 1

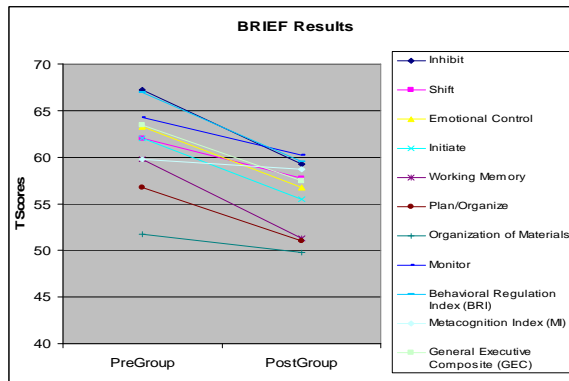


FIG 2

Summer 2004 L.U.N.C.H. Group Feedback (Parents for Child/Adolescent Programs)

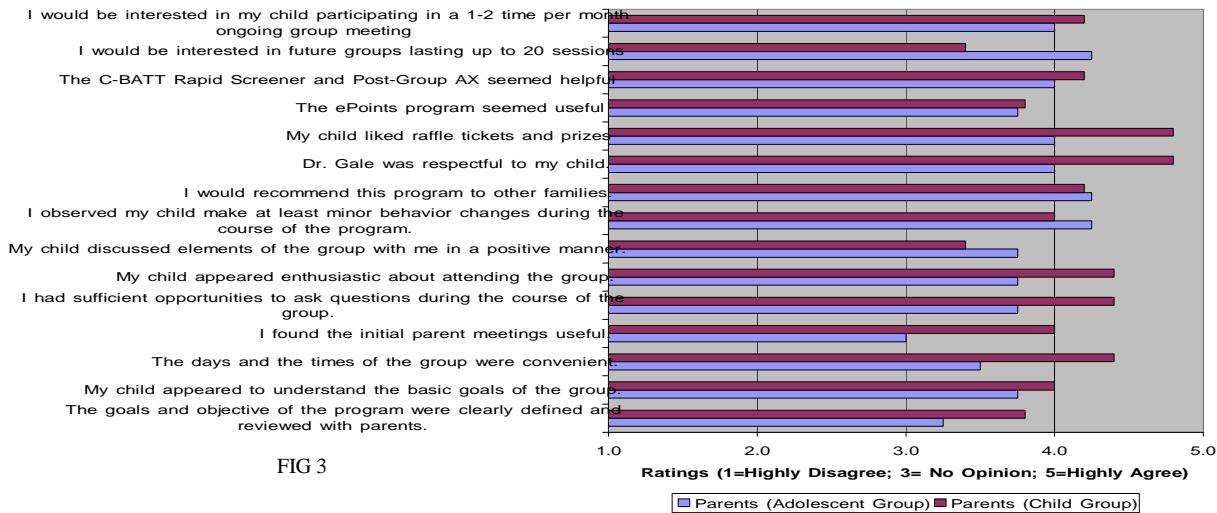


FIG 3

Summer 2004 L.U.N.C.H. Group Feedback (Children & Adolescents)

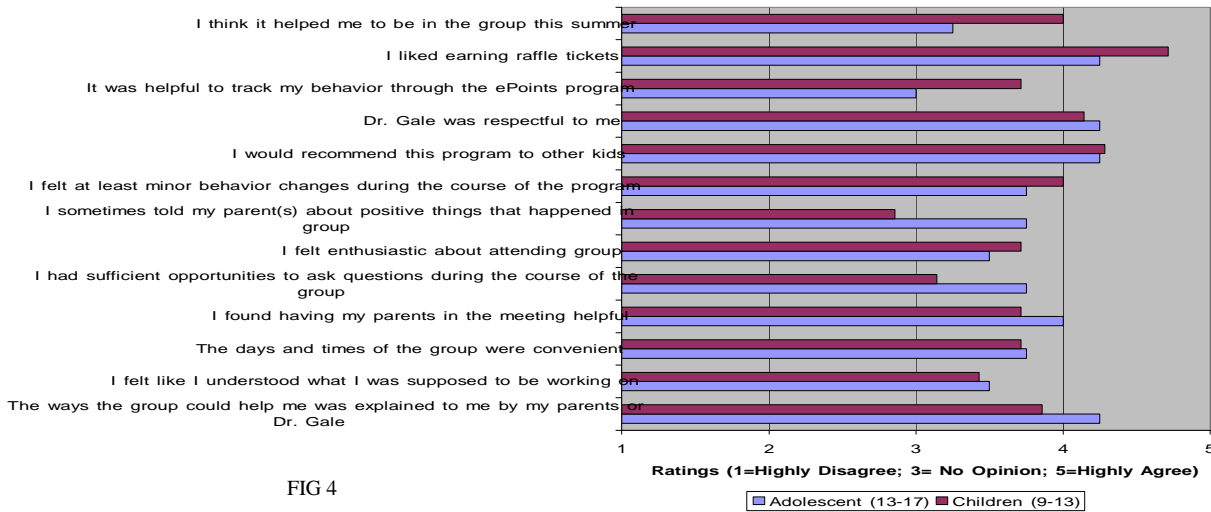


FIG 4

References

Gale, B. M. (2004). Learning, Understanding, Negotiating, Communicating, & Helping: Introducing L.U.N.C.H. Groups, a multimodal empirically supported group treatment model for treating children and adolescents with Asperger's syndrome and high functioning autism. Paper presented at 38th Annual Meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Behavior Therapy, New Orleans, LA.

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