

All parents face a similar challenge come June: “What will my child do during the summer?” This is an especially difficult question for parents with children who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Many families find an answer in summer camp, and recent research reported by Lopata, Thomeer, Volker, Nida, and Lee, in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, indicated that summer camp can be therapeutic for children on the spectrum. For example, these researchers directly promoted social skills by incorporating teaching, modeling, role playing, performance feedback, reinforcement, and transfer of learning in children between the ages of 6-13 years old. The program was called *Skillstreaming*. This has important implications for parents, because it shows that social skills can be taught using cognitive behavioral techniques. Although this study has several limitations, it is a step in the right direction because it was designed with a manual that clearly outlines each lesson. For parents considering social skills camp this summer, there are three main questions to ask:

1. Does the camp provide performance feedback and reinforcement to my child?
2. Does the camp have a manual or written lessons describing the social skills lessons to be taught to my child?
3. How can these skills be maintained and generalized at home?

If you'd like to read the actual research study, we provide the reference below.

Lopata, C, Thomeer, M.L., Volker, M.A., Nida, R.E., & Lee, G.K. (2008): Effectiveness of a manualized summer social treatment program for high functioning children with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 38, 890-904.