SERIOUS GAMES AND EMOTION TEACHING IN AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS: A COMPARISON WITH LIFEiSGAME PROJECT
QUEIROS C. 1, ALVES S. 1, MARQUES A.J. 2, OLIVEIRA M. 1, ORVALHO V. 3
1 Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Porto University, PORTUGAL, 2 School of Allied Health Sciences, Porto Polytechnic Institute, PORTUGAL, 3 Faculty of Sciences, Porto University, PORTUGAL

Objectives: Present empirically valid computer games in teaching emotions and facial expressions recognition for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders and compare them to the LIFEiSGAME project. Understanding emotions is crucial for social interactions, enabling individuals to accurately recognize intentions of others and foster appropriate responses (Bal et al., 2009). People with Autism Spectrum Disorders have marked deficits in these areas with consequences to their lives. Recently, technology plays an active part in helping these individuals to understand emotions and recognize facial expressions (Baron-Cohen et al., 2004; Mota, 2012; Tanaka et al., 2010). LIFEiSGAME is a serious game, developed in Porto University, empirically grounded, that recalls to state-of-art technology and aims to develop facial recognition skills in these children. Design and Method: Bibliographic research took place between February-August, 2011. Two independent researchers using key-words “Emotions”; “videogames or computer games”; and “autism or ASD”, recalled to EBSCO, Google and Google Scholar search engines, parents’ forums and registered special education organizations websites to look for computer games that aimed to teach emotions to people with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The methodology was based on content deductive analysis and games were characterized in terms of origin, objectives, target-population, emotions considered and game design. Results and Conclusions: We found 18 computer games, but only 6 showed empirically validated/published results. Majority had no reference to research work and no professionals of education or psychology were involved in game design. LIFEiSGAME has the advantage of being a computer game that is empirically and theoretically grounded, uses front line technology and includes a multidisciplinary team of professionals in order to achieve scientific validation. Technology is a useful resource for Autism Spectrum Disorders (Golan & Baron-Cohen 2006), but research in this topic is necessary to avoid the misuse of non-scientific tools, that can lead to counter-productive interventions.

SETTING UP AND SPREADING PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS FOR SUCCESSFUL LIVING (PESL) SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING IN SINGAPORE, ASIA
LEONG J.
Institute of Mental Health, SINGAPORE

Objectives: Social Skill Training is an evidence-based practice for persons with all psychiatric disorders; this is even more important for those recovering from schizophrenia and other psychiatric disability. Is Personal Effectiveness for Successful Living (Social Skills Training Groups) effective in Asia and how does these groups spread over 2 years? Design and Method: In Personal Effectiveness for Successful Living, participants are empowered to set personally relevant goals in life and work out weekly interpersonal goals that provide a stepwise pathway to long term goals in areas such as finding and keeping a job, improving family relationships, establishing independent living, acquiring stress management skills, developing social skills and problem-solving as well as inviting people to join in physical exercise for weight management. This is done in a small group setting of 5-8 trainees and homework is given out at the end. Staff from referring source are also encouraged to sit in and initially observed. These staff are then asked to be co-trainers in order to further enhance their own personal effectiveness during their own daily interactions with trainees. Results: Working on trainees’ Personal Goals is highly motivating with high attendance rates as well as high homework completion rate. Step by step small successes led to fulfillment of meaningful and satisfying long term goals. Conclusions: Using a 15-items Trainer Competency Checklist for debrief after every session had helped skilled up our staff and community partners who joined our groups. Increased competency led to spread of this modality with 5 groups running at out-patient setting, several launched by Community Partners and another launching Bilingual Chinese-English PESL.