

Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is characterized by an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that has serious effects on a child's day-to-day functioning. At some point during child development, most children express some form of oppositional behavior. When children are tired, hungry, stressed, or upset they are likely to argue, talk back, disobey, and defy parents, teachers, or other adults. However, if this type of behavior becomes frequent and affects a child's social, family, and school life, then his or her behavior may be caused by ODD.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Typical signs and symptoms of ODD include:

- Frequent temper tantrums
- Excessive arguing with adults
- Active defiance and refusal to comply with adult requests and rules
- Deliberate attempts to annoy or upset people
- Blaming others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior
- Often being irritable or easily annoyed by others
- Frequent anger and resentment
- Talking in a mean and hateful way when upset
- Seeking revenge

Parenting a child with a disruptive behavior disorder

Parenting a child with a disruptive behavior disorder, such as ODD or Conduct Disorder, can be very challenging.

Here are some tips to help:

- Think positive! Praise your child when he or she shows flexibility or cooperation.
- Time-outs are not only for children. If you feel you may react to a conflict with your child that would make it worse, take a break. Your child needs a role model to show him or her appropriate behavior.
- Pick your battles. Since a child with a disruptive behavior disorder has trouble avoiding power struggles, prioritize the things you want your child to do. If you give him or her a time-out in his or her room for misbehavior, don't add time for arguing.
- Set up reasonable, age-appropriate limits with consequences that can be enforced the same way each time.
- Take care of yourself. Try to work with and obtain support from the other adults (for example, spouse, teachers, and coaches) who know your child.



EVALUATION AND DIAGNOSIS

A child with ODD hears a lot of negative comments about him or herself. If ODD is not diagnosed, these negative comments can end up impacting a child's self-esteem and this can lead to a variety of other mental health issues. ODD is usually diagnosed in early childhood. If your child is oppositional, his or her behavior will be seen at home and in other settings, such as school, daycare, or other activities. If you think your child has ODD, your child may need a comprehensive psychiatric evaluation or psychotherapy evaluation. For more information, turn to **MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATIONS (p39)**.

TYPICAL CO-EXISTING DIAGNOSES

Most children with ODD have other mental health diagnoses. Common mental health diagnoses that co-exist with ODD include:

- Anxiety Disorders (p48)
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (p52)
- Conduct Disorder (p64)
- Depression (p67)
- Learning Disorders (p75)
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (p84)
- Substance Abuse and Dependence (p94)

TREATMENT

A psychotherapist can treat ODD. For more information on mental health specialists, turn to page 106 in **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**.

Comprehensive treatment for ODD needs to occur over a long period of time. Treatment needs to individually address each of the causes for the child's behaviors. Depending of the particular situation, different treatments may be needed. Treatment of ODD may include parent management training and medications. For more information, turn to **MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT (p147)**.

It is important to note that inoculation approaches are not effective. Inoculation approaches are "scared straight" methods that try to prevent the behavior by scaring the child with the consequences of the behavior. Examples of these approaches include putting a child in jail for a few days or sending him or her to boot camp.

If ODD is affecting the child's ability to learn, adjustments may need to be made in his or her education program. For more information on the school system, turn to page 118 in **MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT**.

RESOURCES

1-2-3 Magic: Effective Discipline for Children 2-12 (2004)
By Thomas W. Phelan

The Explosive Child: A New Approach for Understanding and Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children (2005)
By Ross Greene
www.explosivechild.com

Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behavior (1998)
By Russell A. Barkley and Christine M. Benton