

# What is ODD?

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## Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder) is diagnosed in both girls and boys around the age of 8, although it seems to affect more boys than girls. A child with ODD is openly aggressive towards others, is hostile in non-hostile environments, and shows repeatedly defiant behavior.

While research has tried to find the causes of ODD, no definitive evidence has been discovered. Some ODD children seem to develop the disorder following a traumatic or abusive situation. Others seem to have inherited the disorder from a biological relative. Regardless of the source of the problem, the child will struggle in more than one environment

such as home, church, or school.

Unfortunately the ODD child may have other issues as a result of ODD behavior such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, bi-polar, and substance abuse. It is essential to get an early diagnosis of ODD to minimize the potential harm the child may do to either themselves or to others. Often a psychiatrist can prescribe medication to reduce the depression and anxiety thereby reducing the intensity of the ODD behavior.

If the child is not properly

treated at a young age, they may grow up to have more serious conditions such as Conduct Disorder or Anti-social Personality Disorder. In both cases, these disorders can lead to destructive lifestyles and choices.



## Signs and Symptoms of ODD

Here are the signs and symptoms of an ODD child (Note—the child does not have to display all of the signs in order to be properly diagnosed), however these conditions must be present for at least six months in more than one environment:

- ◆ Does not follow adults' requests
- ◆ Appears angry and resentful of others
- ◆ Argues with adults and authority figures
- ◆ Blames others for own mistakes even when the

mistakes obviously theirs

- ◆ Has few or no friends or has lost friends
- ◆ Is in constant trouble in school
- ◆ Loses temper easily
- ◆ Spiteful or seeks revenge
- ◆ Touchy or easily annoyed
- ◆ Stubborn or rigid
- ◆ Frequent temper tantrums that are not age appropriate

- ◆ Resentful of others
- ◆ Parents are distressed and exhausted
- ◆ Learning is impaired due to constant need to discipline
- ◆ Aggressive towards siblings or peers
- ◆ Lack of self-esteem
- ◆ Believes others are placing unreasonable demands on them

# Classroom Accommodations

Some of these accommodations are difficult but if you apply these strategies with empathy instead of anger, the ODD child will respond better.

Strategies for you:

- Do not show intense emotions with the child no matter how you feel in the moment as these emotions are seen as your area of weakness which can be later manipulated by the child.
- This is not personal, so don't take it that way.
- Recognize that you have control in your classroom; do not give control to the child.
- Greet the child individually and daily.
- Do not argue with the child. "I respect you too much to argue."
- Speak calmly and respectfully. Do not use sarcasm.
- Be consistent.
- Have an emergency or crisis plan in place that involves your administrator ahead of time.
- Remember the child must choose to modify their behavior, you cannot force this issue.

Strategies for the classroom:

- Have a "cool down" place in your classroom that is available to all student who need a break. If the child becomes angry, ask them to go to the cool down area and give them five minutes at least to regain control. Then address the student privately.
- Praise should be specific and sincere but not embarrassing.
- Do not ask "Why" questions as these questions immediately place the child on the defensive. Rather ask "Who", "What", "Where", "When" and "How" questions.
- Try first to understand things from the child's point of view however obvious the situation may appear at first.
- As much as possible, get down to the child's level to speak with

them so you are not physically above them.

- Avoid arguments. The child will constantly try to draw you into an argument, so walk away or change the subject to stop the discussion from turning into an argument.
- Avoid statements like, "You never work," "You are too smart," or "You did not study."
- Do not set unreasonable expectations; expectations for a ODD child are different than for other children. The child will act out during the day so don't expect different.
- Do not give the child a second chance, consequences must happen the first time but must be appropriate and fair. Do not give warnings, just state your expectations and expect they will be followed.
- Whenever possible, use actions such as removing dangerous things (running with scissors) instead of lectures (why this is bad).
- Recognize child's control tactics of interrupting, asking for repeat instructions, asking to leave classroom, getting out of their seat, walking ahead of an adult, mumbling, ignoring, hitting, stealing, lying, learned helplessness and not turning in work but do not address every single one. You can recognize an attempt at control without give consequences for every time. Too much discipline can be as bad as too little.
- Use positive statements such as, "I'll help you as soon as you return to your seat" over negative statements.
- Handle minor incidents in the classroom to minimize administrator's need to intervene.
- Have regular parent-teacher meetings at least two times per year to maintain good contact and monthly emails.
- Have the child participate in designing their own behavior plan.

- Do not send daily notes home to the parents. Behavior that needs correction at school should be handled at school. Parents should not be adding additional correction at home.
- When you need a break from each other, send the child to another teacher for a quick errand.

Strategies for discipline:

- Address only the behavior. Do not devalue the child.
- Look for ways to praise the child, the ratio should be three praises to one correction.
- Allow child to experience natural consequences such as being hungry because they threw their lunch away.
- Have child write out a four part response as disciple: role they played, others who participated, their suggestions for resolution and how to avoid the incident in the future.
- Offer the child a way to "save face" when corrected or embarrassed.
- Consequences for inappropriate behavior must be given without anger, lectures, or sarcastic statements.
- When the child steals, two times the value of the property stolen must be given back. A child can complete chores in the classroom to work the stolen property off.
- When the child lies, play along at first to see how far they take it then apply logic to dismantle the lies. Do not show anger and do not lecture.
- If the child harms themselves or another student, do not ask "Why did you do that?" rather recognized that they might have been harmed as well at some point. Instead state the obvious emotion, "I see that you are angry with \_\_\_\_, I do not harm you when I am angry."