

Parenting Children With Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Children with ODD need to learn to take responsibility for their behavior and not use their diagnosis or disability as an excuse for inappropriate behavior. They need help learning how to:

- Set limits
- Curb sibling fighting
- Stop defiance, back-talking, lying and cursing
- Defuse explosive outbursts and uncontrolled anger
- Stay on task
- Do homework and chores
- Effective problem solving techniques

If their "acting out" has carried on for a long period of time and goes against what is socially acceptable, then your teen probably has a behavioral disorder. If your teen is self-destructive and adversely affects your family, then his or her behavior is clearly a problem.

Symptoms of ODD include the following behaviors:

- losing their temper
- arguing
- defying authority
- refusing adult requests or rules
- deliberately annoying others
- blaming others for their own mistakes or misbehavior
- being touchy or easily annoyed
- being angry and resentful
- being spiteful or vindictive
- swearing or using bad language
- moody and easily frustrated
- truancy from school (dropped out or expelled)
- increased involvement with, and loyalty to, delinquent peer groups
- greater isolation from other peers, family members
- stealing, shoplifting, running away, alcohol and/or drug abuse, sexual promiscuity

- problems with low self-esteem, low self-confidence, and/or depression

The causes of ODD are unknown, but many parents report that their ODD child was more rigid and demanding than the child's siblings from an early age. The symptoms are usually seen in multiple settings, but may be more noticeable at home or at school. Five to fifteen percent of all school-age children have ODD. Biological and environmental factors may have a role.

Oppositional defiant disorder appears to be more common in families where at least one parent has a history of a mood disorder, conduct disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, antisocial personality disorder, or a substance-related disorder.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder does not occur alone:

- 50-65% of ODD children also have ADD ADHD
- 35% of these children develop some form of affective disorder
- 20% have some form of mood disorder, such as Bipolar Disorder or anxiety
- 15% develop some form of personality disorder
- Many of these children have learning disorders

Teens with ODD plus ADHD are much more difficult to live with. Their destructive and disagreeable behavior is purposeful. They like to push their parents anger-buttons. Every request ends up as a power struggle. Lying becomes a daily habit. Getting a reaction out of others is amusing to them. They are rarely sorry for the hurtful things they say and do. And they believe nothing is their fault.

Parenting strategies often include a home rules contract (i.e., a written set of expectations that parents have of their teens and preteens). The contract includes basic rules, consequences and privileges.

The primary purpose of a home rules contract is for teens to be held accountable for their behavior while allowing parents to maintain a reasonable amount of control (i.e., teaching teens that there are consequences for breaking rules, the knowledge of which hopefully will transfer in the teen's mind to school rules as well as the legal system).

About the Author

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