



UNDERSTANDING OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER

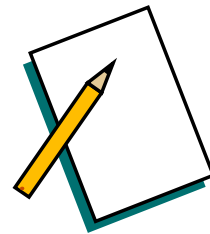
Most children can be difficult and challenging at times. Especially teens. But if your child or teen is consistently angry, argumentative, and disruptive to authority figures (including parents), your child may have Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). As many as 1 in 10 children may have this disorder in a lifetime. In younger children, ODD is more common in boys. In older children, it occurs about equally in both boys and girls. Symptoms usually begin by the time the child is eight years old.

Symptoms

It can be difficult to tell the difference between a child who is strong-willed or emotional and one who has ODD. Certain states of development, especially, are associated with oppositional behaviors (such as the terrible twos and the early teenage years). If your child's behaviors are persistent, have lasted more than six months, and are clearly disruptive to the family or school environment, there may be a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder.

Children with ODD may be negative, defiant, disobedient, and hostile to authority figures. They may regularly and consistently:

- have frequent temper tantrums
- be excessively argumentative with adults
- refuse to comply with adult requests or follow adult rules
- deliberately annoy others
- blame others for their own mistakes or misbehaviors
- be easily annoyed
- have frequent outbursts of anger and resentment
- be spiteful or vindictive
- swear and use obscene language
- say mean and hateful things when upset
- be aggressive toward peers
- have difficulty maintaining friendships
- have academic problems



What Causes Oppositional Defiant Disorder?

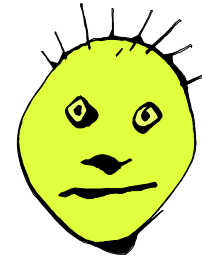
We are not yet sure. Some contributing factors may be:

- the child's inherent temperament
- the family's response to the child's style
- a genetic component that when coupled with certain environmental conditions (such as lack of supervision, poor quality child care or family instability) increases the risk of ODD
- a biochemical or neurological factor
- child's perception that he or she isn't getting enough of time and attention from parents
- having a parent with a mood or substance abuse disorder

- experiencing abuse or neglect, harsh or inconsistent discipline, or lack of supervision
 - exposure to violence
 - child's own substance abuse
- (mayoclinic.com)

My Child Fits This Description—What Can I Do?

Like other mental health conditions, ODD is not easy to diagnose. Physicians and mental health professionals rely on their clinical judgment, information from parents and teachers, and information from the child. Additionally, symptoms of ODD can appear similar to those of ADHD, which can make diagnosis difficult. Often both diagnoses are given. Children with ODD may also have depression or anxiety. If this is the case, it is important that these conditions be treated in addition to the ODD, to improve the effectiveness of treatment of ODD. In fact, through treating the other conditions, it is possible that ODD will disappear completely.



Treatment of ODD should involve both a medical doctor and a mental health professional. The doctor will, as needed, be able to provide medications to treat related mental health conditions. The mental health professional can help parents with parenting skills, and provide family counseling to help improve communication and give family members an opportunity to learn how to work together. Individual counseling with the child can help the child learn to manage anger.

Successful treatment involves commitment and follow-through by parents and others responsible for care of your child. An important aspect of treatment is for parents, no matter how difficult the child is, to show consistent, unconditional love and acceptance.

Certain parenting skills are very important for helping to improve your child's behavior. You will want to give effective timeouts, avoid power struggles, remain calm, offer your child choices, establish family schedules, and use consequences effectively. At first, your child will most likely attempt to undermine your increased parenting skills. Be prepared with a plan to manage this if it happens.

If your child shows signs of OCD, please seek help immediately. Without treatment, children with OCD may experience rejection by peers due to poor social skills, and aggressive and annoying behavior. When started early, treatment is usually very effective.

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Sources

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/oppositional-defiant-disorder/DS00630>

<http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/oppositional-defiant-disorder>