Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

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Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is a diagnosis given to children who display a pattern of negative and defiant behavior to parents, teachers and others who have authority over them. Many children disobey their parents or teachers from time to time. In fact, oppositional behavior is very common in preschool children and teenagers. It is important that we do not mislabel these normal “phases” of childhood as signs of a behavioral disorder. *Children with ODD have frequent run-ins with authority figures and are oppositional far more often than other children their age.*

Boys are more likely to be diagnosed with ODD than girls, especially before puberty. Children typically begin to show signs of ODD at preschool age. While some children do begin showing symptoms later, it would be very unusual for symptoms to begin later than about 13 or 14. Only about 3.3% of children are given this diagnosis, and it happens at around the same rate across different countries and cultures.

The following is a list of signs that may suggest that a child has ODD (APA, 2013). Be careful; as mentioned earlier, many children are oppositional from time to time. Children with ODD really stand out from other kids due to their poor behavior. Also, this pattern of behavior must have been going on for at least 6 months before the diagnosis of ODD can be considered.

**Signs of Oppositional Defiant Disorder**

1. Temper-tantrums, even over small disagreements, and very upset when they do not get their own way.
2. Argues with adults, especially with those in authority.
3. Defies or deliberately refuses to follow rules or directions given by adults.
4. Deliberately annoys people, continues a behavior after being asked to stop several times (e.g., touching things, saying something, making sounds, etc.).
5. Blames others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior.
6. Seems easily irritated by others (might be viewed as “touchy”).
7. Seems angry and resentful much of the time, walks around with a sour-puss expression much of the time.
8. Often wants to “even the score” with others, is spiteful toward others (at least 2 times in the last 6 months).

These children often need special attention while growing up to overcome their behavior problems. Unfortunately, the special attention they receive often comes in the form of almost non-stop punishment, teasing by siblings and peers, and being singled-out as the problem child at home.

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and school. Like other children with behavior problems, they often have low self-esteem and do not get along with brothers, sisters, and kids their own age. They also may have school problems related to their poor classroom behavior and problems with classmates.

If the condition is not successfully treated in childhood and the early teens, the child is likely to have greater problems in their teenage and early adult years. For example, children with ODD are vulnerable to having problems with drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and early sexual activity. As teenagers, their parents often complain that they are “running around with the wrong crowd” and that they cannot seem to control them anymore.

While this report gives specific information for identifying signs and symptoms of ODD in children, parents and others should not try to diagnose any type of behavioral or emotional disorder in their children or themselves. It is important to keep in mind that sometimes there are other things going on with a child that can increase the likelihood of these sorts of behaviors, such as grief, depression, abuse, frustration at school due to learning disabilities, or other issues. A diagnosis of ODD can only be made with confidence by a mental health professional who has been specifically trained in the assessment and treatment of this disorder. If you are having concerns, it would be a good idea to talk to your child’s doctor, school counselor or another child professional for guidance and referral to a specialist for evaluation.

Reference