

## **Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD): Tips for Parents**

Developed in collaboration with the mental health centers of NBHP and FBHP & the Client and Family Advisory Board

- 1. Participate in your child's treatment.** The more involved parents and caregivers are in therapy, the more successful the outcome. Be actively involved in creating a treatment plan and setting goals for your child and family. Individual therapy for the child alone is not an effective treatment approach. Talk to your family's therapist if certain techniques don't seem to be working so that you can modify and improve them. See Resources (attached) to learn more.
- 2. Practice parenting skills** you learn. Talk with your significant other and/or others in the household, to develop a consistent plan for responding to your child's behavior:
  - a. recognize and praise your child's positive characteristics and things your child does well;
  - b. set reasonable, age-appropriate limits and enforce consistent, reasonable consequences;
  - c. model positive behaviors that you want your child to have;
  - d. pick your battles and try to avoid power struggles by prioritizing the things you want your child to do (safety should always come first); and
  - e. offer acceptable choices to your child, giving him/her some control.
- 3. Create structure and spend quality time** together. Empower your child to set goals and stay on track with daily activities. Build time in daily schedules (even five minutes) to spend time with your child doing something enjoyable. Listen to your child. Giving children random positive attention can motivate them to engage in more positive behaviors. Consistent, reliable structure (morning/bedtime routine) helps children learn what is expected and avoid power struggles.
- 4. Encourage your child's participation in extracurricular activities** that promote peer involvement such as school programs, athletics, faith-based groups, or community centers. Being around peers who model appropriate behaviors can be helpful for your child.
- 5. Take care of your child's physical health.** Be sure your child has regular appointments with a Primary Care Physician (PCP). Inform the PCP of the treatment your child is receiving for ODD or any other mental health issues, including medications prescribed. Good nutrition and exercise help promote good sleep habits and improved mood and energy level.
- 6. Be alert to your child's symptoms.** Sometimes children with ODD have other emotional or learning difficulties that can be treated if recognized. These can include depression or anxiety, anger problems, or learning disabilities. Tell the therapist if you notice mood changes, behaviors become worse, include aggression towards people or animals, or destruction of property.
- 7. Communicate regularly with your child's teachers, doctor and therapist.** Ask questions if something is unclear. Talk with teachers about your child's behaviors, progress at school, and consistency in empowering your child to reach his/her goals.
- 8. Take care of yourself.** Parenting a child with ODD can be challenging and frustrating at times. Get support for yourself from friends, family, or other parents of children with ODD. Develop outside interests, and try to spend some time outside of the home to restore your energy. Learn ways to calm yourself so that you can model "keeping it cool" for your child.
- 9. Be hopeful.** Most kids with ODD do make improvements with parental involvement, support, and guidance. It can sometimes take awhile to change family patterns, and you may notice that your child is testing you more than usual when you start using new skills, but stick with it! The more patient and consistent you are with the child, the more likely you will see results.

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### **Resources for Parents**

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Facts for Families: English

<http://aacap.org/page.wv?name=Children+with+Oppositional+Defiant+Disorder&section=Facts+for+Families>

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Facts for Families: Spanish

[http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/informacion\\_para\\_la\\_familia/los\\_ninos\\_con\\_el\\_trastorno\\_de\\_desafio\\_y\\_oposicion\\_no\\_72](http://aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/informacion_para_la_familia/los_ninos_con_el_trastorno_de_desafio_y_oposicion_no_72)

Mayo Clinic-information on ODD

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

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry-Where to find help for variety of child mental health topics- for parents

[http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/where\\_to\\_find\\_help\\_for\\_your\\_child](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/where_to_find_help_for_your_child)

Barkley, R. (1998). *Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behaviour*. New York: Guilford Press.

Webster-Stratton, C. (1992). *Incredible Years: Trouble Shooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3-8*. Toronto: Umbrella Press.