



BRIDGE ROAD FACT SHEET

ODD – Oppositional Defiance Disorder

NB: The information in this document has come from the websites listed below in the reference section. Bridge Road School has created a summary of useful information relevant to the families and students that attend our school.

Victorian Better Health states ODD is one of a group of behavioural disorders known collectively as disruptive behaviour disorders, which include Conduct Disorder (CD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Early intervention and treatment is important, since children with untreated ODD may continue to be difficult and antisocial into their adult years. This can impact on their relationships, career prospects and quality of life. Some children with ODD will develop the more serious conduct disorder (CD), which is characterised by aggressive law-breaking and violent behaviours.

Characteristics of ODD

ODD behaviours usually surface when a child is at primary school, but the disorder can be found in children as young as three years of age.

A child with ODD may:

- Become easily angered, annoyed or irritated
- Have frequent temper tantrums
- Argue frequently with adults, particularly the most familiar adults in their lives such as parents
- Refuse to obey rules
- Non-complaint, persistent refusal to comply with the instructions provided
- Hostile and argumentative towards peers
- Use of inappropriate language
- Seem to deliberately try to annoy or aggravate others
- Have low self-esteem
- Have a low frustration threshold
- Seek to blame others for any accidents or bad behaviour.

Diagnosis of ODD

ODD is professionally diagnosed by a child psychologist, child psychiatrist or paediatrician specialising in behavioural disorders. Diagnosis involves detailed interviews with the child (if they are old enough), parents and teachers, and comparing the child's behaviour with the checklist for ODD contained in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* from the American Psychiatric Association.

Treatment of ODD

Treatment options for ODD may include:

- Parental training – to help the parents better manage and interact with their child, including behavioural techniques that reinforce good behaviour and discourage bad behaviour. This is the primary form of treatment and the most effective. Social support is increased if the parents are trained in groups with other parents who have children with ODD
- Functional family therapy – to teach all family members to communicate and problem-solve more effectively
- Consistency of care – all carers of the child (including parents, grandparents, teachers, child care workers and so on) need to be consistent in the way they behave towards and manage the child.
- Individual psychotherapy
- Cognitive behaviour therapy
- Social skills training

Where to get help?

- Your doctor
- Australian Psychological Society – Find a Psychologist Service Tel. (03) 8662 3300 or 1800 333 497
- Child Psychiatrist
- Paediatrician
- Association for Children with a Disability Tel. (03) 9818 2000 or 1800 654 013

Things to remember

- ODD is a childhood behavioural problem characterised by constant disobedience and hostility.
- The quality of parenting seems to be an important factor in the development of ODD.
- Treatment options include parent management training and family therapy.

Avoid

- Threatening and convincing
- Responding emotionally or debating and arguing
- Interactions in front of others and giving many consequences.

Things to do

- Give choices and simple instructions.
- Be brief and listen
- Build a positive relationship
- Walk away when feeling stressed or out of control
- One to one interaction can be more effective
- Use predetermined consequences
- Give clear verbal reminders and warnings

How you can respond

- “Let me know when you are ready with your decision”
- “Take your time and think about it”
- “It is your choice and you are aware of the rules”
- “I am sure you will make a good choice”

Secure Start suggests some simple hints for managing oppositional behaviour:
<http://securestart.com.au/managing-oppositional-and-defiant-behaviour/>

1. Get to the root of the problem:

It can be important to understand what may trigger your child or young person. For example, do they tend to be more defiant when they are tired, or when they don't understand what to do or think that they cannot do it? Understanding what can lead to the behaviour can help you manage such situations better in the future. For instance, if you ask a child who is not yet able to tidy their bedroom to do so, they may refuse. However, pacing this in an age appropriate way might help (e.g. asking them to help you put their toys in a box).

2. Treat your child like you want to be treated:

It's important to set a good example to your child for how to express an opinion, disagree or resolve conflict. By showing how to do this in a respectful manner, you are modelling to your child an important skill that they can go on to emulate. It can also be helpful to remember that we all have bad days and to make allowances for your child at times. For instance, there are times when we snap when tired or stressed. Recognising that your child is also vulnerable to influence by their situation and mood can help us gain a helpful perspective on our expectations of their behaviour.

3. Be clear and consistent, but compromise when appropriate:

Research has shown that ODD may be more common in households where there is too much flexibility or the opposite, where there are too many rules, control and micromanaging. It's important to be fair and consistent. If you show that you are likely to change your mind through a bit of added pushing, your child will quickly pick up on this and try to push to get their own way. Stay firm on important issues and have all members of the household upholding the same values and rules. In saying this, remember to pick your battles. It's not important to 'win' all the time. You can say 'that's not how I remember it, but none the less....' 'None the less' and 'regardless' are both phrases that can come in very useful when you have a child who can be quite oppositional!

You might want to consider how you communicate your wishes to you child. For example, when you **ask** your oppositional child to perform some task or other (e.g. 'we're crossing a busy road now; can you hold my hand, please?'), your child essentially considers that they have a choice whether to comply or not. However, forced options might be more successful (e.g. 'we're crossing a busy road and you can hold my left hand or my right hand; it's your choice?'). Such ways of phrasing things tend to encourage compliance but also give the child the sense that they have some control in the situation. And, given that most arguments with children that have become oppositional are about power and control, helping them to take appropriate amounts of control over the situation can be helpful. Remember, when we are parenting children, the aim is not to have full compliance at all times, but instead to raise thinking, caring individuals who are able to navigate their lives successfully.

4. Try not to lose your cool and help them find theirs

When you lose your cool, you are showing your child that you have lost control. For the oppositional child, this may give them the sense that they have 'won'. If your child is feeling distressed about a situation, it can be helpful to nurture and soothe them to help them calm down. This might be resisted by an oppositional child, but in the long run it may help to remind them that they are the child and that your role is to help and protect them. Give them a hug when appropriate, put a blanket round their shoulders or rub their arm. Show support when you can.

5. Work on the other relationships in the house

Children who are living in environments where there is a lot of conflict tend to show more oppositional behaviour. So, if there is conflict in the relationship between the parents in the home, this may exacerbate the problem. It might therefore be worth considering engaging in couples counselling to address any issues outstanding.

REFERENCES

<http://www.educationandbehavior.com/category/oppositional-defiant-disorder/>

http://comprehensivepsychology.com.au/child_assessment_testing_behaviour_difficulties.html

<http://securestart.com.au/managing-oppositional-and-defiant-behaviour/>

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/health-daily-care/mental-health/odd>

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/oppositional-defiant-disorder-odd>