ADHD and ODD: Why ADHD Children and Adults Act Out

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ADHD and ODD: Confronting Disruptive Behavior

Do you have a child or know someone with ADHD who often misbehaves? Surprise... their behavior has nothing to do with ADHD. Introducing oppositional defiant disorder (ODD).

According to CHADD, a national resource for ADHD, up to half of all ADHD children have ODD. The good news is, unlike ADHD, it is possible for children to outgrow ODD. Like most disorders, there is no known cause for ODD.

What Is Oppositional Defiant Disorder?

ODD is a disruptive behavior disorder. Those who have it show patterns of anger, irritability, and other undesirable behavior. Most children go through a phase where they are defiant. This makes it hard to recognize ODD.

However, if your child shows symptoms of ODD for more than six months, they may have ODD. Symptoms for both children and adults include:

- Frequent anger and resentment.
- Spiteful or revenge-seeking attitude.
- Blaming others for their own mistakes.
- Often questioning rules and authority.
- Deliberately trying to upset others.
- Being easily annoyed by others.
- Often refusing to follow request.
- Excessive arguing with authority figures.
- Speaking harshly and using obscene language.

ODD symptoms can be mistaken for other disorders or trivial personal issues. It is important to see a healthcare professional for a proper diagnosis.

6 Ways to Discipline and Treat a Child With ODD and ADHD

Before we go any further, understand you aren't to blame for your child having ODD. Being mad at yourself or your child will only make the situation worse. Below are six ways you can discipline and treat your child:

1. **Offer praise and positive reinforcement.** Do this when your child shows signs of self-control, flexibility, and cooperation. Look them in their eyes and say "good job" or "I'm proud of you" after they follow your instructions.
2. **Avoid power struggles and arguments.** They will only drain your energy and stress you out. Your child

is not in a position to negotiate unless you give them an opportunity to do so. As someone who had ODD as a child, I would advise against trying to negotiate.
3. **Establish clear rules and consequences to go with them.** Your child won't follow the rules right away. It is only a matter of time before they get tired of suffering the consequences.
4. **Try collaborative problem solving (CPS).** CPS teaches children how to manage their anger and have more self-control in any situation. Parents sit down with their children, and together they figure out what changes they need to implement to get the child to act right. Learn more about CPS.
5. **Try family therapy.** This may not seem like a family issue, but it is. A child with ODD and ADHD can cause a lot of stress for their parents and have a negative influence on siblings.
6. **Try parent-child interaction therapy**. You and your child will do exercises together while you receive coaching from a therapist via an earbud. You will redefine your role as a parent and learn how to use positive reinforcement to dissuade undesirable behavior. Your child will learn how to behave better and understand their role as a child. The result of this therapy is a parent-child relationship with healthy and supportive interaction.

Medications are another option as well.

ADHD and ODD in Adults

Coming to terms with ODD as an adult will be challenging. Many will deny having ODD. Those who know they have it will probably refuse treatment. So what do you do?

First, figure out whether the person in question has ODD. Symptoms in adults can appear different from those in children.

An adult with ODD and ADHD may:

- Feel like "it's me against the world."
- Identify as a rebel.
- Feel misunderstood and disliked.
- Hate their supervisors and other authority figures, such as police and professors.
- Refuse to accept responsibility for their mistakes.
- Never acknowledge feedback or constructive criticism.

If those symptoms describe you or someone you love, it may be time to seek professional help and test for a diagnosis. Unfortunately, getting to this point can be challenging for adults.

3 Ways to Get Someone With ODD to See a Doctor

1. **Take it one small step at a time.** Don't tell someone they have ODD. If they do have ODD, that conversation won't go anywhere. Instead, prod them with a question like, "do you argue a lot" (if they say yes, ask why). Or text them a link to an adult ODD self-diagnosis quiz. Eventually, you can build these small steps up to a doctor's visit.
2. **Offer the person you suspect of having ODD a reward for going to see a doctor to get a professional opinion.** (Yes, use that exact terminology, avoid the word diagnosis!) This may sound childish, but let's face it, rewards motivate people to get things done.
3. **Stage an intervention.** Gather all the person's friends and family you can, and then sit down together with the person in question. Have everyone give their opinion on why the person needs to see a medical professional. I recommend doing this at home, or in any other private setting where the person is comfortable.

The Ugly Truth About Treating Adult ODD

When it comes to treating adult ODD, there are two paths one can go. They can either receive therapy from a healthcare professional or treat themselves.

Most will want to treat themselves. If you know someone with ODD, you may as well copy and paste everything under this heading and send it to them. Here are 6 of the easiest ways to treat adult ODD:

1. Exercise to burn off negative energy and reduce stress.
2. Learn to listen to understand, and not just to reply.
3. Understand that rules exist to keep you from hurting yourself and others.
4. Never say never or always when talking about yourself or others.
5. Learn what triggers your anger and avoid it.
6. See a psychologist.