



Defiance/Oppositional Behavior

All children misbehave from time to time. Misbehavior is part of normal development starting during the very early years through adolescence. Most children will “talk back,” lie, and/or disobey parents/caregivers at some point, but it is when this becomes more frequent that intervention may be warranted. As children age, expectations change and there is less tolerance/understanding when behavioral problems occur as it is no longer developmentally appropriate. Often oppositional and defiant behavior is seen in more than one setting but sometimes the behaviors may be isolated and only occur at home or at school.

Children/adolescents who have problems with oppositional and/or defiant behavior tend to:

- become easily annoyed, appear angry, and have frequent outbursts
- demonstrate upset that is out of proportion to the triggering event and have trouble calming down
- have difficulty getting along with authority figures (they may question or argue with everything a parent or teacher says and often actively refuse to do what is asked)
- resist/refuse to complete requests of others unless it is on their terms
- have difficulty taking responsibility for their mistakes and will often blame others
- have a difficult time “letting things go” and will try to get back at people if they feel they have been wronged

The following are treatment approaches that are recommended for behavioral problems:

- Behavioral interventions
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Education/training in social skills, problem-solving, and anger management
- Family interventions
- Medication when necessary

When to seek help:

- when outbursts are out of proportion to the child’s age (for example, daily temper tantrums are normal for a willful toddler but not so for a twelve-year-old)
- difficulties are occurring frequently and interfering with school functioning or with friendships and relationships with family members

Links:
Depression
AD/HD
Academic Concerns
Parenting