

# Oppositional Defiant Disorder



## Symptoms or Behaviors

- Sudden unprovoked anger
- Arguing with adults
- Defiance or refusal to comply with adults' rules or requests
- Deliberately annoying others
- Blaming others for their misbehavior
- Easily annoyed by others
- Being resentful and angry

## About the Disorder

Students with oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) seem angry much of the time. They are quick to blame others for mistakes and act in negative, hostile, and vindictive ways. All students exhibit these behaviors at times, but in those with ODD, these behaviors occur more frequently than is typical in individuals of comparable age and level of development.

Students with ODD generally have poor peer relationships. They often display behaviors that alienate them from their peers. In addition, these students may have an unusual response to positive reinforcement or feedback. For instance, when given some type of praise they may respond by destroying or sabotaging the project that they were given recognition for.

Some students develop ODD as a result of stress and frustration from divorce, death, loss of family, or family disharmony. ODD may also be a way of dealing with depression or the result of inconsistent rules and behavior standards.

If not recognized and corrected early, oppositional and defiant behavior can become ingrained. Other mental health disorders may, when untreated, lead to ODD. For example, a student with AD/HD may exhibit signs of ODD due to the experience of constant failure at home and school.

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## Educational Implications

Students with ODD may consistently challenge class rules, refuse to do assignments, and argue or fight with other students. This behavior can cause significant impairment in both social and academic functioning. The constant testing of limits and arguing can create a stressful classroom environment.

## Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- Remember that students with ODD tend to create power struggles. Try to avoid these verbal exchanges. State your position clearly and concisely.
- Choose your battles wisely.
- Give 2 choices when decisions are needed. State them briefly and clearly.
- Establish clear classroom rules. Be clear about what is nonnegotiable.
- Post the daily schedule so students know what to expect.
- Praise students when they respond positively.
- Avoid making comments or bringing up situations that may be a source of argument for them.
- Make sure academic work is at the appropriate level. When work is too hard, students become frustrated. When it is too easy, they become bored. Both reactions lead to problems in the classroom.
- Avoid "infantile" materials to teach basic skills. Materials should be positive and relevant to students' lives.
- Pace instruction. When students with ODD have completed a designated amount of a non-preferred activity, reinforce their cooperation by allowing them to do something they prefer or find more enjoyable or less difficult.
- Allow sharp demarcation to occur between academic periods, but hold transition times between periods to a minimum.
- Systematically teach social skills, including anger management, conflict resolution strategies, and how to be assertive in an appropriate manner. Discuss strategies that the students may use to calm themselves when they feel their anger escalating. Do this when students are calm.
- Praise students when they respond positively.
- Provide consistency, structure, and clear consequences for the student's behavior.
- Select material that encourages student interaction. Students with ODD need to learn to talk to their peers and to adults in an appropriate manner. However, all cooperative learning activities must be carefully structured.
- Minimize downtime and plan transitions carefully. Students with ODD do best when kept busy.
- Maximize the performance of low-performing students through the use of individualized instruction, cues, prompting, the breaking down of academic tasks, debriefing, coaching, and providing positive incentives.
- Allow students to redo assignments to improve their score or final grade.
- Structure activities so the student with ODD is not always left out or is the last one picked.
- Ask parents what works at home.

## Resources

### American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

3615 Wisconsin Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20016-3007  
800-333-7636

[www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

*Information on child and adolescent psychiatry, fact sheets, current research, practice guidelines*

### Anxiety Disorders Association of America

8730 Georgia Avenue, Suite 600  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
240-485-1001

[www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)

### National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

Office of Communications  
6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184, MSC 9663  
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

866-615-6464

[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)

*Free educational materials for professionals and the public*

### SAMHSA'S National Mental Health Information Center—Center for Mental Health Services

PO Box 42557  
Washington, DC 20015  
800-789-2647

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)

- The NIMH and the SAMHSA websites each have publications tabs that lead to several current and reliable publications. The other websites listed above also have extensive listings of resources.

While it is important to respect a child's need for confidentiality, if you work with children or families, you are legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. For more information, consult "Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect: A Resource Guide for Mandated Reporters," available from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

This fact sheet must not be used for the purpose of making a diagnosis. It is to be used only as a reference for your own understanding and to provide information about the different kinds of behaviors and mental health issues you may encounter in your classroom.