

Supporting a child with Oppositional Defiant Disorder to integrate effectively at school

These top tips are to help teachers support children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), who tend to push back and often appear to challenge authority.



What is ODD?

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is the term given to describe when a child displays a certain pattern of behaviours that includes: losing their temper frequently, defying adults, being easily annoyed and deliberately annoying others.

The key elements displayed by children with ODD include the following characteristics:

- Argues with adults
- Refuses and defies
- Angry and defensive
- Spiteful and vindictive

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- 1** Have clear expectations of academic, and behavioural targets, and agreed rewards and consequences.
- 2** Make sure they are clear that they are responsible for their actions, no matter “that he/she started it” or “I’m tired” etc.
- 3** Be consistent in your approach, and handle disruptions with a response that includes no emotion, and not too much talking. Consider non-aggressive body language and offer the child an ‘escape hatch’ to calm down.
- 4** Catch them doing it right. Try to achieve praise to correction of behaviour in a 4:1 ratio.
- 5** Sometimes look for the draw. Very defiant children are into power and control. Let them save face by providing them with two options, where either one is OK with you. “Please put your phone in your bag, or on my table, and we will chat about this at the end of the class”.
- 6** Know that your job is to set boundaries, but the child’s job is to test them, and that discipline means being prepared to make unpopular decisions.

- 7** Use assertiveness as opposed to aggressiveness, but eliminate sarcasm and other forms of put-down.
- 8** Don’t ask “why?” ask “what?” “What should you be doing now?” and use either/or and when/then, “Lewis either you complete your assignment now or during your break time”, “Sheena when you have put the chair back under the table, then you can go”.
- 9** If it’s not working in class, get to know them better. ‘Everybody has a price’ and ‘everybody listens to someone’. Find out what motivates them and who has influence with them.
- 10** It’s not behaviour management, it’s mood management - their mood, your mood and the mood of others. Analyse your own mood and don’t take it personally - it is not about you it is about them.

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This was supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Flynn Pharma Ltd.