

# Oppositional defiant disorder



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

No! This two-letter word isn't as small and irrelevant as you may like to think. Frequently saying no, especially for a child or adolescent, could be a sign of ODD or Oppositional Defiant Disorder. Of course, saying no is normal when expressing a negative view or a dissenting opinion, but if your child is often defiant, it may be cause for concern.

How often is "often"? Melanie Haiken of Health Day has an interesting answer/analogy. She said, "*For most children, episodes of oppositional behavior are like the raisins in the oatmeal cookie-undeniably present, but not the main event. For a child with ODD, there are so many raisins that it's hard to see the cookie.*" This implies that saying no or exhibiting defiance for a child with ODD happens so often that the true personality of the child is masked.

This isn't normal or the standard in a child of a certain age or developmental level. If the defiance is a sign of ODD, your child is at a disadvantage. Untreated, the condition can get worse, contributing to their difficulty in interacting with people in any setting.

### *The Normal Defiant Child*

Not every defiant child has ODD. According to the Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, "*All children are oppositional from time to time, particularly when tired, hungry, stressed or upset. They may argue, talk back, disobey, and defy parents, teachers, and other adults. Oppositional behavior is often a normal part of development for two to three year olds and early adolescents.*" The criteria used by professionals to indicate ODD are also typical for any child having a bad day, or going through a phase

when they become independent or develop a keener sense of individuality.

*The difference is in the frequency and intensity of the behavior.*

Frequent and openly obstinate and argumentative behavior can be a sign of ODD. These behaviors need attention if they happen often, if the manifestations are severe, or if the behavior violates social norms or the rights and safety of other people.

### *The ODD Child*

A child with ODD manifests a pattern of irritable, angry, and argumentative behavior. They will refuse to follow rules, argue with people in authority, and be resentful of their siblings or peers. They will also deliberately annoy others or make them angry. The condition is defined by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry as “ *an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that seriously interferes with the youngster’s day to day functioning.*”

Generally, the symptoms are exhibited in places where the child is most comfortable, such as at home. Some children may also exhibit their defiant behavior at school, so it is advisable that you stay in the loop by communicating with teachers. To find out whether the defiant behavior that your child exhibits is a symptom of ODD, get your child evaluated by a therapist. Some noteworthy symptoms are:

- *Arguing excessively with adults*
- *Frequent temper tantrums*
- *Active defiance*

- *Refusing to comply with requests or follow rules*
- *Deliberately attempting to annoy or upset people*
- *Blaming others for misbehavior and mistakes*
- *Being “touchy” or easily annoyed by others*
- *Seeking revenge*

If your child is defiant, working with a therapist is recommended, because defiance isn't only a feature of ODD-it can also be a symptom of other emotional conditions, such as depression and bipolar disorder. If your child has ODD, they can also be vulnerable to developing ADHD or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, as well as other learning difficulties.

### *Beating ODD Before It Ruins Your Child's Chances*

ODD has a pretty high occurrence among children and adolescents, but its causes have not been clearly established, and helping your child manage it could be difficult. This is a good reason to seek help from a capable therapist contracted with Carolina Counseling Services in Pittsboro, NC.

Uncontrolled ODD not only makes your child vulnerable to many other emotional conditions and relationship-disrupting and life-disturbing behaviors, but can also lead to conduct disorder over time and ruin their chances for a quality life beyond childhood. With early treatment, the outlook for ODD is good. Mild ODD often improves as the child grows older.

Your life as a family may also be turned upside down by your child with ODD, who may be argumentative and difficult to discipline. Your usual parenting style may not work on a defiant child. A therapist can empower you as a parent to encourage your child to be more agreeable, cooperative, and

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obedient. Rather than engage in unproductive and exhausting power struggles, seek help from an experienced therapist independently contracted with Carolina Counseling Services in Pittsboro, NC. Call now to make the first appointment!