

Managing Difficult or Defiant Children

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) is a disorder that is characterised by negative or defiant behaviour (usually directed towards an authority figure) that is worse than the normal "testing" behaviour most children display from time to time. Children who have ODD are repeatedly disobedient, easily angered and argumentative. Attempts to reason often backfire as the child perceives rational discussion as a continuation of the argument. An ODD child is often resentful and easily irritated by others. Additionally, they are impatient and frequently disregard adults' requests or rules.

Below are some suggestions that may aid in the reduction of difficult and ODD behaviours:

1. Shutting Down Power Struggles

- **Eliminate arguments:** Allow the student to feel the consequence - resist the desire to tell the student what they did wrong.
- When the student does something inappropriate, **don't respond in anger**. Express your sadness as you give him the consequence (e.g. you make me feel really disappointed and upset that you have to sit out)
- **Never say "I told you so."** If a child gets hurt because they disobeyed you, don't exacerbate the issue and state that you were right.

2. Reducing Defiance

- **Focus on the positives.** Defiant children usually hear nothing but criticism. Acknowledging their good behaviour encourages them to repeat the good acts,
- Solidify your relationship with your student by providing positive **acknowledgement and praise** when they do act appropriately

3. Make the child responsible for the problems they're causing through use of consequences

- **Consequences should not be delivered in anger as punishment usually is;** it should be delivered with sadness and empathy (this may take some practice so always deliver a consequence when you feel ready to act in an appropriate manner)

4. Location and Rules for Time Out/Sitting Out

- Provide a location for time out/sitting out for your student to think about the consequences and if possible have a place away from other students so they can calm down. Once the student has been provided (calm) instructions to move to the time out/sitting out location, they will need to stay there for a set amount of time. Once this time is reached, go over to the student and ask them how they would handle the situation differently next time?" (**This will display learning**). Acknowledge the student's answer and allow them to re-join the class and move on from the issue

Importance of Communication with Parents and Teachers

Keep communication between yourself and the parent/teacher frequent so you are aware of what is happening at home or school and if there is a possibility it might be a 'bad' day.