

# OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER



**Black Mental**  
Wellness

*The Mecca of Black Wellness*



*Updated June 2018*

Many people may exhibit a negative, irritable, or disrespectful mood from time to time. However, individuals with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) display a persistent pattern of refusing to comply with requests or expectations for at least six months. ODD is most commonly diagnosed in children and adolescents but may be present in adults as well. Milder versions of ODD may only be present in one setting such as just at home or only at school, while more severe presentations of ODD are displayed in multiple settings. Behavior that is consistent with ODD may range from behaviors that are displayed as passive defiance, where someone may ignore a command or request to more severe outbursts that may be expressed through yelling, disrespectful language, or threatening behavior. People with ODD typically have impaired relationships with their friends, family, and co-workers.

For someone to be diagnosed with ODD, their behavior has to be outside of what is considered normative for their age, developmental level, environment, and culture. For instance, it is common for toddlers and adolescents to display oppositional behavior from time to time, so for a diagnosis of ODD to be made, those behaviors would have to be displayed more frequently and be of greater severity than their peers. Unfortunately, many children of color are often misdiagnosed with ODD or identified as children with behavior problems because of misunderstandings about cultural differences in communication, racial biases, and lack of a thorough evaluation. Many children who are diagnosed with ODD, may actually be suffering from trauma, anxiety, or a learning disorder.

## Symptoms of Oppositional Defiant Disorder:

- Loses temper easily
- Frequently touchy or easily annoyed
- Frequently angry and resentful
- Argues with adults or authority figures
- Defies or refuses to comply with rules or requests from authority figures
- Deliberately annoys other people
- Blames others for their mistakes or behavior
- Displays spiteful or vindictive behavior

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Stay calm when behavior escalates. If you respond to negative behavior with aggressive behaviors or highly emotional reactions such as yelling or threatening, the child's behavior will likely get worse and you will enter into a power struggle in which no one wins.
- Use a calm and neutral tone of voice when the child is angry, rather than raising your voice to match his/hers.
- Explicitly state what your expectations and rules are and what the consequences are for not following those rules.
- Rather than focusing on what the child is doing, state what you will or will not do when certain behavior is demonstrated (e.g., "I will let you have the tablet when you are seated; I will give you ice cream when you are quiet."). This approach focuses on what you will do and allows the child to have the choice in his/her behavior, rather than getting into a power struggle.
- Point out opportunities for the child to make choices even for little things. For example, you might say, "You can take your bath first or you can eat dinner first. Which would you like?"
- Provide reinforcement and praise when appropriate behavior occurs. Stay vigilant and look for instances when the child is displaying appropriate and positive behavior, and let them know specifically what you noticed.
- Provide instructions in brief and simple terms.
- Correct behavior, but do not criticize behavior. Despite how frustrated you may become, remember to exhibit respect and constructive behavior.
- Be proactive and not reactive. Work with a professional to develop a plan to respond appropriately when defiant behavior occurs.

## MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR ODD

Contact a culturally competent mental health provider to discuss the symptom presentation and treatment options for ODD. You can also contact your primary care provider to obtain a referral for a mental health professional.

- Seek a mental health provider who specializes in behavior therapy. Through behavior therapy, you can get assistance with developing a plan to manage and monitor your child's behavior, and help you reduce your feelings of stress.
- Individual therapy can be helpful in identifying strategies to control anger, appropriately express feelings, solve problems, and improve social skills.
- Family therapy can help improve family relationships, identify sources of conflict, and improve communication among family members.
- When discussing treatment options, be sure to ask providers what evidence-based programs they use that are effective in providing support to parents of children with ODD.
- When discussing treatment options, be sure to ask providers what evidence-based programs they use that are effective in providing support to parents of children with ODD.
- Consider joining a parent support group. You will have an opportunity to get support, learn from others, and develop some helpful strategies to address oppositional and defiant behavior.
- To identify licensed mental health professionals in an area near you review the following websites: [Therapy for Black Girls](#), [Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#), or [Psychology Today](#)

**"All children need love, support, and respect. Be the example you hope your children will emulate."**

**~ Dr. Dana Cunningham**

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.BlackMentalWellness.com](http://www.BlackMentalWellness.com)



@BlackMentalWellness



Black Mental Wellness



@WellnessBlack



**Black Mental**  
Wellness

*The Mecca of Black Wellness*

## RESOURCES

- To increase your understanding of ODD, review this summary by the [Child Mind Institute](https://childmind.org/article/what-is-odd-oppositional-defiant-disorder/) (<https://childmind.org/article/what-is-odd-oppositional-defiant-disorder/>)
- Please see this link, <http://www.educationandbehavior.com/strategies-for-oppositional-defiant/>, for some additional tips on responding to children with disruptive behavior provided by Educationandbehavior.com
- [Collaborative and Proactive Solutions](https://www.livesinthebalance.org/parents-families) (<https://www.livesinthebalance.org/parents-families>) has several resources to help support parents of children with behavior problems.

This fact sheet is developed, owned and distributed by Black Mental Wellness. Fact sheets may be reproduced for personal or educational use without written permission, but cannot be included in material presented for sale or profit. Fact sheets may not be reproduced or duplicated on any other website without written consent from Black Mental Wellness. Organizations are permitted to create links to the Black Mental Wellness website and fact sheets. All factsheets can be viewed and printed from <http://www.BlackMentalWellness.com>. Contact Black Mental Wellness at [info@BlackMentalWellness.com](mailto:info@BlackMentalWellness.com) for questions or additional information.