

Developmental Stages

Typical Child and the Child with Oppositional Defiant Disorder



Preschool Age

Typical Child

- Full of energy and likes to ask “why?”
- Wants to do things him or herself
- Beginning to want to play around or with other children
- Ready to learn limits of expected behavior and accepted actions

Child with ODD:

- Struggles to accept “no” and limits on behavior
- Nearly daily tantrums
- Consistently resorts to screaming and throwing things when given directions

Elementary Age

Typical Child

- Very active but needs quiet time
- Tends to respect adults
- More give-and-take relationships with peers and enjoys time with friends
- Likes to be helpful at school
- Beginning to assert independence

Child with ODD:

- May refuse outright to follow directions
- Insists on doing things his or her own way, even if that hasn't worked in the past
- Struggles to get along with peers in appropriate ways



Middle School Age

Typical Student

- Enjoys being around peers, but may be uncertain how to navigate social currents
- Lots of energy, physically and mentally
- May act both like a child at times and an older teen at other times
- Struggles with planning and organization
- Wants to understand the reason behind rules and expectations

Student with ODD:

- Major struggles with peer interactions
- May appear angry or annoyed with others frequently
- Rebellious toward most adults until a relationship is formed with one or two.



High School Age

Typical Teen

- Prefers being around friends to adults or to being alone
- Wants to be an individual while also being part of the group
- Beginning to use more planning skills and to think through actions
- Can be rebellious, indifferent, or cooperative with adults, depending on mood

Teen with ODD:

- Seems to look for other students who struggle with rules and social expectations
- Insults or argues with adults on consistent basis

