What is Oppositional Defiant Disorder?

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) in children is a psychiatric disorder that can persist into adulthood. Students with ODD have an underdeveloped conscience and poor relationship skills. They display a great deal of aggression and purposefully annoy others. The actions of these children seriously interfere with their functioning at home and at school. Being defiant and argumentative are typical ways children ages two to three and young adolescents behave; however, students with ODD exhibit a pattern of these behaviours beyond age three and throughout their school years.

Childhood actions associated with ODD are:
- Being easily aggravated and annoyed;
- Irritating others intentionally;
- Exhibiting sudden, unprovoked anger;
- Blaming others for their mistakes or for their misbehaviour;
- Refusing to comply with adult requests;
- Bragging about being mean and never truly being sorry;
- Lying;
- Being vengeful without provocation; and
- Provoking conflict among peers, family members and other adults.

The cause of ODD is unknown. Some researchers have speculated that ODD results from incomplete child development. These children do not seem to learn the coping skills that most children absorb early in life. The disorder may also be related to a child's temperament and the family's reaction to it. Intervention and treatment of these children should begin as early as possible.

TIPS FOR RELATING TO A CHILD IDENTIFIED AS HAVING ODD

1. Have clear expectations, firm rules and boundaries.

2. Realize that any sort of change in the child's normal routine may be upsetting.

3. Provide recognition when the child exhibits appropriate behaviour. However, be aware that since many children with ODD feel compelled to do the opposite of what you want, avoid direct, lavish praise.

4. Avoid raising your voice or exhibiting any emotion. Be neutral and calmly say something like: "Since you broke the rule this is what you will do." Be like a referee who simply states the consequence and holds the player accountable. Do not allow the child to argue. Just restate what happens when a rule is broken.

Taken from an article by Leah Davies, M.Ed.