

Behavioral Disorders

What are Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders?

Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders involve consistent patterns of behaviors that “break the rules.” All young people break some rules, some of the time. More serious oppositional behavior is a normal part of childhood for children two and three years old and for young teenagers. At other times, when young people are routinely oppositional and routinely defiant of authority, a mental health disorder may be identified.

Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders include, but are not limited to, Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder

In Oppositional Defiant Disorder, the rules broken are usually those in the family and the school. Oppositional Defiant Disorder may occur in children of any age and in adolescents. Sometimes Oppositional Defiant Disorder leads to Conduct Disorder.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder are seen in a pattern of:

- Angry/irritable mood
 - Regular temper tantrums
 - Often becoming easily annoyed
 - Often appearing resentful
- Argumentative/defiant behavior
 - Arguing with adults, especially those who are authority figures
 - Refusing to obey rules at home and school
 - Deliberately annoying others
 - Failing to take responsibility for bad behavior or mistakes
- Vindictiveness
 - Resentment and looking for revenge

Conduct Disorder Behaviors

In Conduct Disorder, the rules broken include the regulations and laws made by society. Conduct Disorder usually occurs in older children and adolescents.

Conduct Disorder behaviors are seen in a pattern of:

Source: <http://www.mhawestchester.org/content/behavioral-disorders>

- Aggression toward people and animals
 - Aggressive behaviors that threaten or harm people or animals
 - Starting fights, using a weapon, and/or mugging
- Destruction of property
 - Purposefully setting fires, breaking windows or graffiti
- Deceitfulness or theft
 - Stealing, bullying or lying
 - Shoplifting or trespassing
- Serious violations of rules
 - School truancy and running away from home
 - Staying out at night against parent's rules

What Causes Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders?

Research has identified both biological and environmental causes for Disruptive Behavior Disorders. Youngsters most at risk for Oppositional Defiant and Conduct Disorders are those who have low birth weight, neurological damage or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Youngsters may also be at risk if they experienced a range of childhood traumas or adverse experiences. Such experiences may include neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, separation from their biological family and subsequent disrupted substitute care such as multiple foster home placements, or living in poverty.

How can Disruptive, Impulse-Control, and Conduct be treated?

Many of the factors that cause Disruptive, Impulse-Control and Conduct Disorders happen very early in a child's life, so it is important to recognize the problems as early as possible and get treatment. The treatment that has shown the best results is a combination of:

- Specialized parent skills training
- Behavior therapies to teach young people how to control and express feelings in healthy ways
- Coordination of services with the young person's school and other involved agencies
- Parent training and therapy with the child or adolescent, most effective when done in the family home

No medications have been consistently useful in reducing the symptoms of Oppositional Defiant or Conduct Disorders. Medications may be helpful to some young people, but they tend to have side effects that must be monitored carefully.