



10 Rules for Parents of Defiant Kids with ADHD

Your child is blatantly defiant and confrontational, and standard discipline doesn't work. So what's next? Follow this action plan.

1. STAY POSTIVE:

Rewarding good behavior works better than punishing bad behavior. Boost your child's self-esteem by "catching" him behaving well and doling out praise. Higher self-esteem and fewer transgressions will follow.

2. TREAT BEFORE YOU PUNISH:

Never discipline your child for behaviors that are symptoms of ADHD. Once your treatment plan has symptoms under control, you will know which behaviors are punishable.

3. USE YOUR WORDS:

Instead of overreacting — and teaching your child to fear mom or dad — be a model of how to behave when you're upset.

4. AVOID MELTDOWNS:

Plot an escape strategy for tough events like family parties in order to ensure a quiet, tantrum-free goodbye. Conspire with your child, and say, "It's time to be a magician and become invisible." Then, stage your exit.

5. KEEP YOUR COOL:

Your child is fiery and mad, yelling and pushing your buttons. Human nature is to yell back, but this rarely accomplishes anything positive. Instead, work diligently and deliberately to stay cool-headed and under control. Breathing exercises may help you achieve this unflappability

6. BE CLEAR ABOUT RULES AND CONSEQUENCES:

Explain what behavior is not allowed, and exactly what consequences are at risk. Then, consistently enforce the rules.

7. PLAY BEFORE PUNISHING:

Make time to have fun with your child, and strengthen your bond in a positive way by completing creative projects together, for example.

8. KNOW YOUR CHILD'S PATTERNS:

Probe your child's quirks and hypersensitivities. True understanding will help you differentiate willful defiance from emotional overwhelm. Know his triggers, and have a plan for potentially explosive situations.

9. DETERMINE THE TRUE CAUSE:

Comorbid conditions — like oppositional defiant disorder — may cause behavior problems. See a specialist if you think your child might have more than ADHD.

10. ASK YOURSELF IF YOU'RE CONTRIBUTING:

Could you have ADHD, too? It's commonly genetic, so an undiagnosed parent might have a temper that flares more often, or impulsivity that undermines discipline efforts. Take our [self-test](#), then seek a diagnosis and treatment.