

Advice for parents/carers on how to manage oppositional behaviour

DO:

- Tackle one thing at a time – forget the state of his/her room, his/her smelliness, his/her language
- Say what you mean and carry it out otherwise don't say it
- Use descriptive praise at every opportunity – thank you for that, I am really proud of you, you have proved me wrong, nice one, I have always said you are a helpful/kind/polite/sharing boy/ girl. Well done! You were fantastic! Look at you! I am over the moon! It feels great because everything is changing for the better. Etc, etc.
- Reward his/her efforts – if he/she tells you where they are, even if he/she is not supposed to be out, say “Thanks for telling me where you are. Remember, you will get your reward/treat when you get in on time.”
- Even if he/her swears, tell them you are pleased he/she has come home!
- Get near him/her and smile, lightly touch him/her on the shoulder.
- Keep sentences short – VERY SHORT!
- Let him/her know you are in control even if you don't feel it.
- Tell him/her “OK we have got a problem but we can solve it”.
- Keep your voice even
- Remember the times when you get it RIGHT

DON'T:

- Tell him/her you can't cope
- Tell them they are useless
- Swear at him/her
- Shout
- Hit
- Change the rules
- Use empty threats
- Plead and beg
- Use emotional language when there is a drama going on
- Set them up to fail “Promise you will never do that again”

Points to consider for parents and carers:

- Remember this is not about you and your feelings. However desperate you feel. He/she needs to feel that you are in control – whatever he/she says. Boundaries are about love, not punishment.
- When he/she is angry, tell them calmly “When you are ready, I am here to listen to you”
- When his/her defences are down, and they are crying out for help, give him/her your full and undivided attention. “OK, let's talk”
- Find a quiet place with no interruptions - say “OK, I am here to listen”. You could even write down the points he/she is making.
- Don't interrupt or ask “WHY” – because he/she will likely say “because”and justify it back to themselves
- Reflect back “You seem very sad/angry/let down about that” or “That must have been very frightening/hurtful/upsetting”
- After something has gone wrong and things have settled, say “OK, how can we have done things differently?”
- At this stage, you are helping him/her clarify things. Keep your voice reassuring and controlled. Accept what he/she feels is the truth for them.
- Don't say “Yes but....” You are just a tool to help him/her solve their problems, it's not how you feel about them
- Jot down three issues and look for solutions, however small.
- Watch the soaps on TV together and talk about the characters' feelings/reactions

(After ADHD foundation)