

Oppositional Defiant Disorder

Children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder often lose their temper, often argue with adults and defy adults' requests or rules. Additionally, they often blame others for their mistakes, deliberately annoy people, and can be angry and resentful.

The Harris School (THS) helps children with ODD in many ways. Children with ODD have become stuck in patterns of interaction where they act out in order to get what they want and have internalized a sense that they are "bad". The teachers of THS are trained to avoid punitive interactions with students and the power struggles that typically happen with children with ODD. Classroom responsibilities are presented as choices with logical/natural consequences for not completing them. If a child refuses to complete their work, that is their choice, there is no punishment; the child will simply be told they will not be able to "move on" to the next activity. By taking the power out of the child's refusal and contextualizing the consequences as a choice, the teacher is empowering the child and removing the sense that they are "bad" because of their actions. Another typical feature of children with ODD is the tendency to "act-out" to receive the attention they have come to expect. These acting-out behaviors (including talking out of turn, attempting to distract the class, and negative statements to the teachers) are responded to by addressing the other students and ignoring the provocative behaviors, thereby removing the power of the actions. THS also helps children with ODD through weekly group therapy for the older students that encourages self-reflection and the examination of the motivations and emotional states underlying their and others' actions through a skill called "Mentalizing".