• Pediatric healthcare providers recognize how difficult your role as a parent is with this challenging child. You still may want to remind us about how exhausting it is to have a child with behavior issues.

• Please write down and tell us about every positive step that is being made as you parent your child.

• Always build on your child’s particular positives; give your child praise and positive reinforcement when he shows flexibility or cooperation.

• Your child’s problems are “loud” problems – they stand out for all to notice (as opposed to anxiety, which is more of a private child problem). You may be bombarded by others in your community telling you about your child’s behaviors.

• The journey of working with a child who has problem or disruptive behaviors can be frustrating, draining, and isolating. This Website connects you to a vast array of resources and links that can help you better understand challenging children: http://www.livesinthebalance.org/.

• We want you to be well informed so you can teach others what you know. Your child’s behaviors get “louder” and more obvious to others when he or she doesn’t have the skills to deal with the demands being placed on him or her.

• Your child’s difficulties are complicated, and may have come with the child. Maybe it is in their hard wiring – their brain anatomy and connections. Maybe it is in subtle temperament qualities; maybe it is compounded with traumatic experience. Maybe your style of parenting is perfect for one type of child but not such a “good fit” with this child’s strong personality traits. Another significant factor is family stress, and family distress, including socioeconomic status.

• Whatever the combination of factors, there is no blame, rather there is assurance that your child can learn to be more flexible, and can learn problem-solving skills, and can get better at tolerating frustration.

• Recognize that, as Dr. Greene writes in the “Explosive Child,” “children do well if they can.”

• Your child longs for your approval, so provide it when your child does something positive.

• Because your child has some very real challenges with his or her “wiring” and temperament, possibly genetics and early developmental stress, it is very likely that your child has trouble with 1) flexibility, 2) frustration tolerance, and 3) problem solving (From The Explosive Child, by Ross W. Greene, 2010), just as other children lag behind in acquiring academic or athletic skills.

• Some of the skills that children similar to yours (with problem behaviors) have trouble with include:**
  
  Difficulty handling transitions – shifting from one mind-set task to another
  Difficulty reflecting on multiple thoughts or ideas simultaneously (disorganized)
  Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem
  Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive)
  Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words
  Difficulty managing emotional response to frustration in order to think rationally
  Chronic irritability and/or anxiety, which significantly impede capacity for problem solving
• One of the biggest favors you can do for an explosive child is to identify the lagging skills that are setting the stage for his challenging behavior so that you and others understand what is getting in his way. Also, identify what problems may be causing explosive episodes and what helps to calm your child down. You and the teacher can keep a journal of these observations.

• Build in some extra minutes for the child to comply with your request. Your child may have trouble “switching gears” and moving to the new activity. Don’t add time for their time-out for every minute they stall on the way. That is the way they are wired – they are slower to process a change in activity.

• Take a break or time-out if you are about to make the conflict with your child worse. This is good modeling for the child for using self-control strategies.

• The best parenting style is a warm and involved guiding approach – providing discipline. Being consistent and firm, yet loving, is the best approach.

• Build on the positives of your individual child (an example would be the COPE exercise in the Child Handout – where you and your child list three positive things particular to your child, and you display those prominently and bring those up regularly and add to them).

• Dr. Greene writes, “Good parenting means being responsive to the hand you were dealt.”

• Your child likely had developmental “lags” or challenges in these areas:
  Difficulty seeing the “grays”: concrete, literal, black and white thinking
  Difficulty deviating from rules or routine
  Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, or novelty
  Difficulty shifting from original idea or solution
  Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan

• Pick your battles. Prioritize the tasks you want the child to do, or habits you want to develop.

• Avoid power struggles. The child with ODD has trouble avoiding power struggles so you may have to go the “extra mile” to avoid getting into the battle of wills.

• Set up reasonable, age-appropriate limits with consequences that can be enforced consistently. Review these with an expert you trust, such as your pediatrician or nurse practitioner. Once these are set, feel confident they are what are best for the child, and stick consistently with your limits and consequences.

• All “adults” that are authorities in your child’s life should also know your rules and also consistently enforce them. If the other parent disagrees, then there must be a plan made that all of the important adults in that child’s life can consistently enforce.

• Your child has difficulty sorting out what to do if rules are not black and white.

Because of this difficulty – the adults caring for and parenting this child will have to be SUPER CONSISTENT in consistently enforcing the rules.

• Sticking to your expectations is very important. If you eventually give up your resolve and give in, the child will learn to persist until you give in.

• Remember that the problem behaviors may escalate, get worse at first, as the child “tests” the new parenting approaches.

• Parents will need to make special efforts to care for themselves. The strong-willed, explosive child consumes so much of the parent’s time and energy; it is easy to become exhausted physically and mentally. Maintain interests other than your child and ODD.

• Parents can seek out support from other parents who are raising challenging children. When you
receive regular calls from the school or child care setting with complaints about your child’s behavior, you need sounding boards. You need people around you who support your heroic efforts in parenting this child.

- Remember, much of the intense effort you are putting into your child is directly focused on making sure that other people will want to be around them. You have a good parenting goal.
- Please know that your healthcare provider knows and applauds how much time and energy you are investing – to make the tiny steps that seem undetectable but, in fact, are the necessary steps for your child’s march toward success.

The *Explosive Child* book by Dr. Greene promotes a collaborative problem-solving approach. That approach has been incorporated into this resource page for parents. There is an excellent Website for you to check out this approach to see if it fits with your family values/preferences.

**Resources**

Fact Sheet: Children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder
http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_with_odd

**Lives in the Balance**: a nonprofit organization to advocate on behalf of behaviorally challenging children and their parents, teachers, and caregivers. Free Web-based resources are available at http://www.livesinthebalance.org/.

The research evidence to support “collaborative problem solving “can be found on this Website: http://www.explosivechild.com