



## Oppositional and Strong Willed Kids

Having an oppositional child affects the entire family and also presents problems both socially and academically for the child. If your child exhibits negative behavior that is frequent and stands out when compared with other children of the same age and developmental level, you could be dealing with a defiant child.

The key in dealing with difficult children is in parenting them. Ineffective parenting in the early years can set in patterns of behavior that only increase and persist. For patterns to change, it is imperative that parents intervene early and get support and learn strategies for managing themselves and their difficult child. Secondary to parenting effectively is therapy for the child to learn to manage their emotions and gain problem-solving skills.

So here are 8 tips I believe are a must for handling a strong willed child.

- The parent child relationship must be on solid ground. Make sure your child feels connected to you and her emotional needs are being met.
- Keep your emotions in check. Your escalation will only exacerbate the situation.
- Focus on their positive behavior. The tendency is to be more focused on bad behavior. The more encouragement they get, the less the negative behavior will persist.
- You should not engage nor should you try to control them. Oppositional children want power and control and they like to set up arguments. They know how to push buttons.
- Choices can work beautifully. Use them often.
- Validate their feelings. If they don't first learn to manage their emotions, they will never learn to handle their behavior.
- Most parents want to use consequences and punishment. They are not necessary. You want to discipline which means to teach, guide and nurture. When they mess up, lovingly and respectfully guide them in the right direction.
- Be empathetic, then set firm limits without yelling and being angry.

There are many determined children around and they have so many positive traits. Often, they are kind, sensitive, generous and passionate kiddos, but we lose sight of the goodness in them. At the end of the day though, IF we can understand the determined personality and learn the best skills and tools to break the negative cycle, these are the kids who end up being movers and shakers.