



# 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. ACT LIKE A COP:**

When you're pulled over for speeding, the police officer doesn't yell. He asks what you did, and then doles out punishment. Channel this approach to stay cool-headed and under control.

## **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.