



TIP SHEET~ Repairing a relationship with a child who has Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Repairing a relationship with a child who has ODD can be challenging but is crucial for their emotional well-being and development. Here are five evidence-based practical tips parents can use to mend and strengthen their relationship with a child who has ODD:

1. Practice Positive Reinforcement:

Evidence shows that positive reinforcement can be highly effective in managing ODD behaviours and improving the parent-child relationship. Offer praise and rewards for your child's positive behaviours and efforts to cooperate. Be specific in your praise, highlighting the behaviour you appreciate. For example, say, "I'm really proud of how you followed instructions today."

2. Use Effective Communication Strategies:

Communication breakdowns often contribute to conflict between parents and children with ODD. Evidence-based communication strategies include active listening, empathy, and assertive communication. Listen to your child's concerns and validate their feelings, even if you don't agree with their behaviour. Using "I" statements can help express your feelings without blaming or accusing your child. For instance, say, "I feel upset when we argue all the time."

3. Implement Consistent Discipline:

Research consistently demonstrates that consistent discipline is crucial when dealing with ODD. Set clear, age-appropriate rules and consequences, and consistently enforce them. Avoid power struggles by calmly stating the consequences in advance and following through. Be firm but fair in your discipline and avoid punitive or harsh punishments.

4. Seek Professional Guidance:

Evidence-based interventions such as Child- Focused Parent Work (CFPW) and Behavioural Parent Training (BPT) have been shown to improve parent-child relationships and reduce ODD behaviours. Consider involving a trained psychologist who specialises in working with children and families. They can provide guidance, teach you effective strategies, and create a structured treatment plan tailored to your child's needs.

5. Practice Emotional Regulation Together:

ODD often involves emotional dysregulation. Teach your child emotional regulation techniques, such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness, or using a feelings chart. Practice these techniques together to help your child manage their intense emotions. When both you and your child can regulate your emotions, conflicts are less likely to escalate.

Remember that repairing a relationship with a child who has ODD takes time and patience. It's essential to remain consistent, empathetic, and committed to the process. Seek support from professionals, support groups, and other parents who have faced similar challenges. Building a positive and trusting relationship with your child can be a transformative experience, benefiting both their emotional well-being and your family dynamics.