

Conduct Disorder

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More and more we are hearing, on the news, that children and adolescents are displaying troublesome patterns of antisocial behavior. Such behavior patterns include a combination of chronic disobedience, aggression towards others and animals, temper tantrums, lying, and stealing to name a few. The outcomes of Conduct Disorder are serious and severe, such as physical or emotional injury, disability, death, and property damage or loss. Statistics show that more than half of mental health clinics consist of children with Conduct Disorder.



Clinicians use the term “Conduct Disorder” to describe a persistent pattern of child antisocial behaviors that violate fundamental social rules and/or the basic rights of others. Parents often ask me how common Conduct Disorder actually is. Studies show that in Elementary School, 2% of girls and 7% of boys are diagnosed with Conduct Disorder. In Middle School, 2-10% of girls and 3-16% of boys are diagnosed and in High School, 4-15% of both boys and girls. Overall, 2-6% of children and adolescents display symptoms of Conduct Disorder.

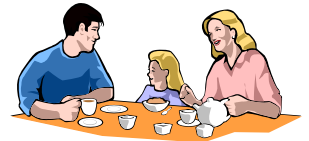


Antisocial behavior is serious and statistics show 50% of children who display antisocial behaviors during elementary school continue to do so during adolescence. Generally, 40-75% of adolescents who display antisocial behavior continue as adults. Children who begin antisocial behaviors during elementary school are most at risk for conduct problems and disorders as adults. The average age antisocial behavior is displayed and can become serious is at age 8 or 9. Parents will often see these behaviors, if a child has Conduct Disorder, as early as 3rd to 4th grade, such as lying, cheating, stealing, fighting with peers, siblings, or parents. Children with hyperactive behaviors are also more likely to have an early onset of Conduct Disorder. This does not mean if your child has A.D.H.D you need to be overly concerned, but impulsive, hyperactive, inattentive behaviors can relate to more behaviors that could be as severe as Conduct Disorder. Most studies show family related problems are usually a huge factor such as alcoholism, psychiatric problems, and mental health issues in the home. Each of these problems can disrupt the ability of a parent to effectively discipline and monitor their children.



In my opinion, Top 10 Strategies to Assist with Conduct Disorder:

1. **Monitoring** – hour to hour each day. Know where your child is, who he/she is with, what he/she is doing, who his/her friends are, etc.
2. **Teach social consideration** to your child and monitor these behaviors closely. Use role playing, openness of communication, etc.
3. Have your child **evaluated** by a psychiatrist and work with a support system. Note: children may not show behavior during an initial office evaluation. It is important to continue with ongoing diagnoses, and it's best to make evaluations in your child's natural environment.
4. **Establish a working alliance** with the teacher for school interventions as needed. Students spend more time at school per day than at home. Teachers have very valuable feedback about your children that can be crucial.
5. **Behavior Family** is a great approach where social interactions between parents, teachers, and peers are modified to reinforce a child to relearn correct and appropriate behaviors and move away from aggression and inappropriate behaviors.
6. **Cognitive Therapy** is starting with the child's thought processes, or cognition of a child's core issue, which will help them better solve interpersonal problems.
7. **Family therapy** is a great way to change family communication processes and dynamics in the home.
8. **Group therapy** is a valuable tool; it's very important for children to understand they are not alone and have social networks, which leads to more positive child behaviors.
9. Parents do the best they can, but can use **parent/family training and classes** to educate and train themselves to better deal with a Conduct Disorder child; this is proven to be highly beneficial.
10. I talk about **token economy systems** often and highly recommend a program of earning points, money, or privileges that can be traded in for specific rewards with appropriate behavior.



In conclusion, take time to spend time with, model to, and love your children. It is the best gift and investment you can ever make to assure they are happy, safe, balanced, and staying out of trouble. Show respect and love to your children; in turn they will take this and respect and love themselves and others.



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