

# MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

## UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING BEHAVIOR CONCERNS IN CHILDREN WITH ADHD

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP  
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While acting out and defiance are not a symptom of ADHD, many children who have ADHD display these types of behaviors. Impulsivity and inattention can make it difficult for children with ADHD to tolerate tasks that are repetitive, take a lot of effort, or that they find boring. Once a child with ADHD becomes overwhelmed, he or she may lash out or even throw a tantrum. Years of constant conflict with adults and authority can lead to larger concerns with defiance down the road and can continue into adulthood. In this edition of TidBIT, we talk about why some children with ADHD have behavioral concerns as well as strategies and resources to help with these concerns.

### Why do children with ADHD act out?

Children with ADHD typically do not have ill intent behind their behaviors. Hyperactivity and impulsivity may lead to a behavior such as running away from you at the park to check out something they think is cool. These behaviors lead to negative interactions with adults. Children with these behaviors are constantly being told their behavior is wrong. Hearing this repeatedly can lead them to act aggressively toward the people telling them their behavior is wrong. For children with ADHD, tasks that require a lot of effort can be severely resisted. When these tasks are interrupting a pleasurable activity, such as playing video games, the results can be more intense than intended. Something as simple as being asked to do homework while they are playing on their phone can lead to tantrums, defiance, and power struggles.

### Tips for minimizing acting out behaviors in children with ADHD

- **Yelling will not work**-A child who rarely misbehaves may react and comply when you raise your voice, however, this is often not effective for children with ADHD. When a child is being yelled at repeatedly, they will start to believe this is normal and will likely stop paying attention.
- **Punishment may not work**-Similar to yelling, the more a child is punished, the more they will become unaffected by punishment. When you are already in a constant state of punishment, a little more punishment no longer matters.
- **Structure is important**-Children with ADHD need more structure than children who do not have ADHD. They need clear instructions on acceptable behavior from the adults in their lives.
- **Catch good behavior**-We are often focused on catching and correcting bad behavior but praising good behavior is also important especially for children who have ADHD. Behaviors often escalate with constant negative interaction.

If making changes have not been helpful in minimizing behaviors, you may want to consider the following.

- **Talk to your child's pediatrician or primary care physician** -If your child continues to struggle with behavioral concerns related to their ADHD diagnosis, talk with your child's pediatrician or existing outpatient healthcare provider. They may recommend further interventions such as medication, therapy, or further evaluation. If you are seeking a mental health outpatient provider for your child, you can contact the behavioral/mental health number on the back of your child's insurance card for information on in network providers in your area. You can also contact Case Management Unit (CMU) at 717-232-8761 for further support in accessing mental health services. For more information on CMU services, visit <https://www.cmupa.org/>.
- **Parenting classes**-No parent is perfect and sometimes help is needed. A parenting class is a great way to reset and work on managing a child with acting out behaviors. Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) is an evidence-based parenting program which helps parents of children up to 12 years of age. They have several service levels to choose from and specialize in helping parents of children with behavioral concerns. More information on Triple P can be found at <https://www.triplep.net/glo-en/home/>. For access to the Triple P program in Dauphin County, you can go to [www.pacounseling.com/triplep](http://www.pacounseling.com/triplep) or call Pressley Ridge at 717-216-8929. If you are interested in learning more about different types of parenting programs, you can go to <https://childmind.org/article/choosing-a-parent-training-program/>.