**ADHD OR ODD?**

Is it ADHD or ODD? This is a common question that comes from doctors, parents and even teachers. These two diagnoses are very close to each other and can be hard to diagnose. But in reality, these two diagnoses are very different! In this article I am going to show you the signs and symptoms of both so that you can get an understanding of which is which. Trust me, this will help you out with understanding so much more than what I knew when I first started.

I am a foster parent and have been on my fostering journey for a year now with my husband. We have had 8 children in our home. Out of those 8 children we have had 3 of them with behavioral issues. We thought oh man! This has got to be ADHD. This is what everyone is talking about. These kids are extremely hyper, disruptive, disrespectful and they just don’t care! We were so worn out we did no think we could handle fostering anymore because we thought all foster kids were going to be that way.

Well that is not always the case.

Why do kids act this way?

Well these kids act this way because they are put through abuse, neglect, trauma, and many other things in their lives at such young ages. This is so sad because kids that are ages 0-5 are the ones that start to show it more because they cannot express their feelings. Children that want to express the way they are feeling whether they are just mad, irritated, or even bored. They cannot express how they fell about whey they are being triggered because of the disability that they have. The way it works is a lot harder for other kids so they lash out or have very high extreme behaviors. Other kids without these disorders are able to tell you; “I am so mad right now!”, “I am sad because of this, or that” and it is easier to control that anger.

What is ODD?

Oppositional defiant disorder-A disorder which a child is labeled as defiant and disobedient towards any authority like figures. These are also known as parents, teachers, older siblings, caseworkers, and so on. The cause of this disorder is unknown but the studies do show that the cause is most likely from genetics or environmental factors. Number one known as trauma. Its honestly so sad to see children go through this disorder as they cannot help it as much as we want to think they can.

What are symptoms of ODD?

Symptoms of ODD consist of constant refusal to listen to instructions or rules, stubbornness to compromise with adults or peers, will refuse to accept responsibility and will need to be asked over and over, easily annoyed or irritated which will lead to anger, they will be annoying or irritate others on purpose just to make them mad because they feed off of negative attention, yelling at adults and peers on purpose, deliberately testing any limits or boundaries that they possibly can to get in trouble, and blaming other for their mistakes when they do get in trouble or just saying they did not do something when clearly they are the only child around.

What can I do if my child has these symptoms?

If you feel like your child is having symptoms of ODD then you will need to make an appointment to get an evaluation for your child. The appointment needs to be made with a child psychiatrist or a qualified mental health expert. They will do a test with parents and teachers about the child’s behaviors and might also want to do an observation on your child to see what is going on. In some cases, your child might need mental health testing or evaluated at a children’s mental hospital for 3-10 days to get a good look at what is going on. Once they find a diagnosis and your child is now diagnosed with ODD you will most likely need to put your child on medication and do a strict medication management. A known medication for a child with ODD is called risperidone. This medication will help your child with behaviors. If you feel like this medication does not help with behaviors please make sure to stay in contact with their Dr. who prescribed it as they might need a different dose or a different medication.

How to parent with a child who has ODD?

Parenting a child who has ODD is a lot different than parenting a child who does not. You want to kind of stay in the zone of what is called “positive parenting”.

Positive parenting is making sure you are taking an approach that is more sensitive to what a child’s need are and addressing behaviors with respectful ways.

You want to make sure you are creating a safe and interesting environment for your kid to live so they do not get bored and always have something to do. Use constant consistency and scheduling. Kids with ODD do not like being off on schedule they will act out because they are confused to what is going to happen next. Make sure you are using a calming voice and if they try to argue with you, let them know that is not ok and walk away until they are ready to talk. When a child is lashing out and throwing a tantrum try explaining to them that it is not ok and not safe for them as they can get hurt and they an hurt others. If they continue with the tantrum maybe sit them out or have them sit in their room until they are ready to talk or calm down. Sometimes alone time can help calm someone down. Remember you only want them to sit out for as long as their age. So, if you child is 7 then that is only 7 minutes. We do not want them to think that we hate them.

If you instruct your child to do something and they start going but then stop in mid cycle, make sure to tell them, hey! I see that you are going to the bathroom to take a bath that is a good job but can we make it all the way there and then we can play with the dog later? Kind of cheer them on while still giving instruction. They will like that and continue to do their job. If you want more resources on how to do positive parenting there are so many articles and videos out there with awesome people ready to help you out.

ODD is hard for children but as long as they have positive surroundings, healthy relationships with peers and consistency they will go a long way! We just have to work hard and make sure they are comfortable with their lives. But we also have to support them and make sure they know right from wrong and what is to be expected of them. Fidgets are really good to keep them busy and so are tablets. I know a lot of people are harsh on screen time but kids can learn a lot with learning games. Chores are good as well it teaches them responsibility. You got this! And they do too. It takes a while to learn and get it down but I promise you once you do, it’s a whole new world.

What is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder- A brain disorder that affects how you pay attention to things, sit still long enough, and how to control your behaviors. This disorder happens a lot with children and some doctors will misdiagnose because some parents just have hyper kids and just put a child on the diagnosis for it. You have to be very careful because of the symptoms it can be easy to misdiagnose. If anyone has this diagnose you may notice that they are having trouble in school, home, church or even sports because they cannot stay focused long enough to complete a full task. They will often get distracted and leave their task behind. They may also be more fidgety than others and just cannot sit still.

Where does ADHD come from?

This disorder is easily passed down from parents or family. If you had ADHD when you were a child then you will pass this along to your children. This can be passed simply if anyone in your family had it including your parents. If you smoked or drank alcohol while pregnant your child is more prone to develop ADHD from the exposure. Another thing that can cause this disorder is premature birth. And last but not least a lower level of activity level may be associated with why your child may have ADHD as well.

Some people will try to use the excuses of children who have ADHD have it because they ate too much sugar, because of food additives, allergies and immunizations but none of that has been proven to be true at all.

What are symptoms of ADHD?

Symptoms of ADHD consist of being unable to sit still for long periods of time especially during times where we need to be quiet like church, school, and work. Constantly fidgeting with fingers, moving legs, messing with hands. Being unable to concentrate on specific tasks that have been given. Getting sidetracked very easily. Unable to wait their turn. Talks a lot like they are nervous and then keeps rambling. Acting without thinking of what they are doing and the outcomes of their actions. Interrupting conversations and excessive physical movement. The main symptoms every seems to find with this disorder breaks down to hyperactivity, no attention span and impulsivity.

Children with ADHD often seem to have trouble at home or in school. learning is hard for them as they cannot focus on what is going on in the classroom with what is being taught as every little thing that is moving or making a sound will distract them. Children with ADHD tend to get in trouble more in school because they like to act out and think their being funny in front of other children which tends to be a negative outcome after wards. Adults with ADHD will have trouble with work because of the same thing. They do not have a long attention span to pay attention to one task. They will start to do one thing and then go to another and forget the task that was at hand.

What do I do if my child has ADHD symptoms?

If you feel like your child has fell into more than two of these symptoms I would suggest you make an appointment with their pediatrician or a local mental health professional for children. These doctors will be able to observe and evaluate your child to see if they fall under the category of ADHD they will also send home a survey for parents and teachers that will help them with that as well. This survey is called a Vanderbilt. It surveys the child to see what behaviors and problems they have at school and at home so the doctor can help you further to see what kind of diagnosis and treatment they can do for you.

ADHD is not curable but it is treatable. When the doctor finds out they have ADHD they will find some kind of treatment regimen for your child which will usually consist of a diet and medication for the child to take daily. ADHD is a lifelong diagnosis that will always need to be treated.

How do I parent my child that has ADHD?

Lots of PATIENCE! You will have to learn how to be patient and I know that is hard but the easiest way to parent a child with ADHD is learning how to parent patiently. Other than that your parenting would go along with the parenting lines of ODD.

So to conclude this article it is very hard to tell the difference. It was for me for sure! But once you are able to get help your child will feel so much better as they are going to be able to focus and express themselves and maybe even make some friends! With our little one she has both of these diagnoses. If you come across where they have both you always want to get the ADHD treated first before the ODD. So that you can make sure it is not just ADHD. There are so many resources out there that can help you and so many parenting groups that can help you. If you are a foster parent you can ask your licensing worker for more classes to learn about these things and be more knowledgeable. My husband and I are learning every day and it will take more learning that that.