



DISRUPTIVE, IMPULSE–CONTROL, AND CONDUCT DISORDERS

CONDUCT DISORDER

What it is:

Conduct disorder is characterised by behaviour that repeatedly violates the basic rights of others, or breaks major age appropriate societal norms and rules. This behaviour is classified into four groupings: aggressive conduct that causes physical harm to people or animals; non-aggressive conduct that causes property loss or damage; serious violations of rules; and deceitfulness or theft. For a diagnosis of conduct disorder to be made, three or more of these behaviours should be present during a 12 month period. These behaviours are usually manifested in a variety of settings, such as the home, school, social and occupational.

Symptoms of conduct disorder typically manifest in early childhood or adolescence, and onset after the age of 16 is rare. Individuals with conduct disorder may initiate violent behaviour, and react violently towards others. Bullying, intimidating behaviour, physically assaulting people or animals, or forced sexual activity are all possible behaviours in individuals with conduct disorder. There may also be deliberate destruction of other people's property, theft, and serious violations of parental or other authorities' rules. These disturbances in behaviour cause significant impairment in the individuals social, academic and occupational functioning.

Common symptoms:

1. Recurring behaviour in which the basic rights of other people are violated, or a violation of major age appropriate societal norms or rules.
2. Bullying, threatening or intimidating others
3. Initiating physical fights
4. Using a weapon such as a brick, broken bottle, knife or gun to cause physical harm to someone
5. Being physically cruel to people or animals
6. Forcing someone into sexual activity



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7. Deliberately destroying people's property, through setting fires or other means
8. Breaking into houses, cars or buildings
9. Shoplifting
10. Staying out at night after caregivers imposed curfew, beginning before the age of 13
11. Running away from parental or parental caregivers home
12. Often absent from school, beginning before the age of 13

Causes:

A difficult under-controlled infant temperament, and lower-than-average intelligence, particularly with regard to verbal IQ, have been found to be temperamental risk factors for conduct disorder. Physical and sexual abuse, parental neglect and rejection, harsh discipline, lack of supervision, early institutional living, frequent change in care givers, and family history of criminal and substance abuse disorders are all risk factors for the disorder. There is also a genetic factor, as the risk of developing conduct disorder is increased in children who come from a family with a history of conduct disorder, severe alcohol use disorder, depressive and bipolar disorders and schizophrenia.

Remember to always consult a mental health or medical practitioner regarding any questions you may have about a mental health diagnosis and treatment options.

This factsheet is based on information obtained from the DSM-5:
American Psychiatric Association, 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition.*