Hey, I have a story to tell you. Please listen, because it’s about a boy who wanted to share his story. And, if you’re out there listening to this, it might be a story about you, too. I mean, I’m not sure if it is about you—so that’s why I want you to listen, ok? Here goes:

“See, I used to get in a lot of trouble at school. Teachers were always yelling at me, telling me to sit down and be quiet. Some teachers, they got me, you know, realized why I was who I was, but sometimes they had no clue and that’s when the real battling would go down. When they yelled, man, you can bet I yelled back. One time I even pushed one of them. In those days I didn’t care what any stupid teacher thought of me. I told my parents to shut it, too, if they said annoying stuff. You won’t believe me, geez, I fought and I fought for so long. I caused problems for probably that whole school year back in fifth grade. I was in detention more times than I can count. To be honest, it was getting really ridiculous, and I was only getting more violent and angry by the day. I would start throwing a fit, screaming at this jerk or that loser in the front row, especially if things didn’t go my way, and the next thing you know every principal, guidance counselor, and social worker my teacher could come up with would be running in the door. I was ten then. Now I’m practically an adult—fifteen and shaving three times a week. I’m much more mature now, and I guess I can say I’ve gotten some help on the way.
So these feelings I was having—this yelling, defying everyone left and right, and saying “get the heck out of my way”—that went on for a long while. You see, my doctor, after he talked with my parents and teachers, said I was odd, I mean, not odd like weird, but the actual letters with periods after each one... O-D-D. O.D.D. is the quick way to say oppositional defiant disorder. Basically, I couldn’t get along with the people who told me what to do. I didn’t realize they usually knew what was best for me, I just would say “no!”, no matter what.

I lost more friends that year, and not even the ones I was mean to or yelled at. It just seemed like I was always in trouble, and kids stayed away from me to get out of the line of fire. No one wanted to call me a friend, in case the teacher thought they were like I was. I guess now that my old best friends understand what was wrong, and why I wasn’t myself for so long—fighting with grown-ups and all that—things are more back to normal. But it took awhile, you know, like water boiling on the stove. I had to learn a lot, and practice being a different kind of kid. I’ve gotten pretty good, and I think if you feel the way I did back when I was ten, you might wanna try some of the things that worked for me. You ever hear a coach or someone say, “practice makes perfect”? I was lucky; I found a really cool kind of coach. Well, they call her a therapist, but she was someone who I could talk to—she wouldn’t rat me out to my parents or any other grown-up—and we’d make plans to get better. I wanna tell you about her, ok? And if it sounds good, promise me you’ll find someone like her? Alright? I know your parents can help you find a therapist, or maybe your teacher, or whatever, but you have to listen to these people, they’ll help you stop fighting with grown-ups, and let you see why going along with the program is a good idea.
So anyway, after the school realized that it wouldn't be good to try to help me just themselves, my parents took me to this therapist I was talking about. The therapist talked to me with words I could understand—my level, you know. She said that a lot of kids have ODD. Well, not like every other person in the freaking cafeteria line, but enough that I didn’t feel so much like a weirdo anymore. Maybe 2-16% of kids, so that’s pretty many, you know?

Then, we started figuring out how to make things better. She helped me using this thing called cognitive behavior therapy. I just say the letters CBT for short—it’s easier. It was so cool because I made the plans for getting better and nicer to adults, and I worked things out on my own terms, when I was ready. She just kinda helped me realize stuff I already sort of knew. And, while I was at my CBT sessions, my parents went to parent training, too. I guess it wasn’t entirely my fault that I was so out of control, fighting with everybody. They had to do some learning, too, at this thing called Parent Management Training. Boy, I hated them so much back then, and thought everything was their fault. It’s crazy, though, that they loved me so much that they went to these helpers to figure stuff out, too. They learned how to make a family schedule and stick to it, and not get so frustrated when I would have a tantrum and throw stuff everywhere. When I would see them calm, cool, and collected, I would kinda chill, too. So we all worked as a team. And for a little while we decided if I should maybe take some medicine to help, too. It turns out that medicine wasn’t right for me, but don’t be scared if the grown-ups think medicine would help you. You never know if ODD is all you have—maybe you have some other things going on, like trouble paying attention, or you might get irritable or sad, and life doesn’t have to be
like that. Sometimes while you and your therapist are figuring things out, some medicine can help you clear your mind even better.

I’m pretty glad my parents took me to this therapist when I was ten. I have to tell you why, but it is sort of tough to talk about this. See, my buddy down the street was just like me growing up. In all the good ways, and in all the bad ways. Well, he fought with grown-ups a lot, too, and would annoy anyone he could, any time he was able—just like me. Well, his parents didn’t really do anything about it right then; they thought maybe he was just going through a phase or something. I went to therapy back then, I was really nervous, and felt sort of weird at the beginning. I was pissed because he never had to go talk about his anger, and I did. But, boy am I glad that I did. See, my buddy, well, he didn’t go to therapy, and he got worse — got suspended all the time, and when we were 14 he started drinking. He hung with the wrong crowd, and now instead of getting to go to therapy with his parents, like I did, they had to send him to rehab. He was kinda locked up, so he could get away from the booze, and I’m not sure, but someone said he was smoking stuff, too. I never knew, but my therapist says it’s true, that sometimes if you don’t get help and you have ODD, that kids can end up making worse choices later on. I feel bad for my buddy, you know, because everything worked out for me, and it could’ve been the same for him, too. You just never know, right?

So anyway, my story isn’t that special. It’s just about a kid who couldn’t get along with adults, really made everyone’s life miserable—including his own. And, this anger and rage kept going for months and months. Something had to change, and it did, and I’ve never felt better. It’s like when you finally get to take your heavy
backpack off when you get to your house at the end of the day. Weight was lifted... I didn’t fight with people as much, and I started to make more friends. I had beaten O.D.D. I’m so pumped though, because you can, too. You just have to get in the zone, psych yourself up—it’s not going to be easy. But, focus on the changes you need to make, and remember you’re not alone or weird for having this problem. Listen to the grown-ups’ advice, and sooner or later you’ll be happy with the relationships you have with other people, and other people will feel the same way about you, too. Hey, good luck—I know you can do it.

*This case is based on a fictional account.*
References


