

## **Help for the Noncompliant Child**

“You know, he’s your child, so you always love him. There were just times I couldn’t stand his behavior!” said a young mother who brought her 7 year old son to Bedford Counseling Associates for treatment. She went on, “He’d do stuff he knew would get on my nerves just to bug me, or at least that’s how it felt.”

Every child will sometimes misbehave and be stubborn, even willful, at times. When a continuing pattern of behaviors emerges that is disruptive to family functioning and serves to undermine the parent/child relationship, then something needs to be done to interrupt this “battle of wills”.

The 7 year old mentioned above came in for treatment following the separation of his parents. He resided full-time with his mom and older sister, who was not presenting behavioral issues. He was seen as stubborn and often obstinate with some beginnings of controlling behavior toward his mom. For example, when it was time to leave for school in the morning, he would “dawdle,” often making the entire family late for their morning appointments. He had begun throwing tantrums, like a much younger child, which were resulting in household items becoming broken, when he could not have his own way.

“The good news,” said Diana Schryver, a therapist at Bedford Counseling, to this mother during the first session, “is that we have something that typically works fairly well and pretty quickly with these types of behaviors.” Helping the Noncompliant Child (HNC) is an evidence-based practice designed to decrease negative attention-seeking behavior by increasing positive interactions between parent and child. It works effectively with children in the 3-8 year old range and is designed to be completed in roughly 12-15 sessions depending on how quickly the family progresses through the skills being taught.

The skills taught in Phase I of the program are designed to increase the positive attention a parent pays to the child thereby decreasing negative attention-seeking behavior on the part of the child. Phase II helps parents to give clear commands to their children, and set consequences for non-compliance. In the end, some “standing rules” are set that are considered to be expectations within the household and help with the order of everyday life.

This family flew through the program because once the negative patterns of interaction were interrupted with the very early HNC skills, order and balance were restored to their family fairly quickly and the additional skills were able to be implemented in a very natural and comfortable progression.

Helping the Non Compliant Child is an approach offered at Bedford Counseling Associates and at The Mental Health Center of Greater Manchester’s Child and Adolescent Services. For more information or to determine if this is a course of action that you should consider, please feel free to call 668-4111 and ask for the Scheduling Office.

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