



## Parenting Tips

### Defiance or Impulsivity?

How can you tell the difference between defiance and impulsivity? Sometimes the line is fuzzy, but the biggest factor has to do with awareness. The child exhibiting annoying behavior is often not aware of what he's doing or doesn't have a good repertoire of socially appropriate behaviors. Some parents believe that because they said, "stop tapping" yesterday, today's tapping must be

defiance. This may not be the case.

Children often engage in impulsive or annoying behaviors and need some training to overcome these habits. Some children are just seeking attention; others have nervous habits like twirling hair or making various noises with their mouths. Still others are trying to engage in relationships but lack the social cues necessary to be successful.

Remember, annoying behaviors need to be handled differently than intentional disobedience and defiance. Annoying behaviors are best met with a retraining goal in mind. Raise your child's level of awareness by gently pointing out the problem. Offer alternatives to teach him what he should do instead, "Tom, you need to stop. Your interruptions are unkind. Remember to look and listen before you start talking. Then you can say, 'excuse me' and show your self-control by waiting."

Also, don't forget to affirm small steps of progress with praise to keep your kids moving in the right direction. Proverbs 16:21 says that "The wise in heart are called discerning, and pleasant words promote instruction." Before reacting, take the time to discern whether your child's behavior is the result of defiance or simple immaturity. It may take patience, but you can help your children make significant changes by offering positive instructions and gentle reminders.

*This parenting tip comes from the book [Good and Angry, Exchanging Frustration for Character in You and Your Kids](#) by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN.*