

General Tips for Working with Conduct Disordered Children

- ☑ Set limits and boundaries.
- ☑ Treat with respect, but do not tolerate the youngster being aggressive or abusive.
- ☑ Don't overreact to displays and manipulations.
- ☑ Look for a "hook" - some way to make the sessions entertaining or interesting.
- ☑ Accept that some youngsters may not be candidates for individual therapy - consider other modes such as group treatment.
- ☑ Consider the individual's cognitive ability level.
- ☑ Don't lecture, scold, or preach.
- ☑ Cultivate an attitude of curiosity with regard to the youngster's behavior.
- ☑ Make yourself useful (e.g., job seeking skills or how to talk to girls/boys).
- ☑ Enlist the help of individuals outside the family to engage the family (e.g., clergy or teachers).
- ☑ Be aware that the family may espouse antisocial attitudes.
- ☑ If you can't get a family, make one - via parole officers, family service workers, foster parents, etc.
- ☑ Be aware of (and curious about) the adolescent's popular culture.
- ☑ Don't try too hard to be cool or act like something you are not.
- ☑ Don't be a bore.
- ☑ Assess silence: willful (oppositional) vs. genuinely quiet kid—use writing, drawing, humor and exaggeration.
- ☑ Confront discrepancies (stated plan vs. actions; affect vs. verbalizations)—ignore minor annoyances
- ☑ Judicious use of self-disclosure

Adapted from Bernstein (1996)