

FINDING STRENGTH IN SURRENDER

Babies are dependent on their primary caretakers for strength. Through repeated experiences of having infantile frustrations met, they bond with parents when they are between 2 and 36 weeks old. If this bond does not happen because needs were not met or anticipated before any frustration could happen, young ones never internalize a caregiver or authority figure. They cannot soothe or govern themselves. Instead, they act out rage from unmet needs by trying to rule everyone around them. They become masters at minimizing their behavior and denying risks.

Four or more items marked below suggests that the self has become deprived of nurture causing a willfulness that runs over everything in its path. For a defiant personality to be fully present, serious conduct problems are generally evident before the age of 15 and solidified into a consistent pattern (not just when high) after 18.

Defiant Personalities¹
<input type="checkbox"/> Act unlawfully by repeatedly performing acts that are grounds for arrest. <input type="checkbox"/> Are deceitful and repeatedly lie, use false names, con others, or act unfaithfully. <input type="checkbox"/> Act impulsively by failing to plan ahead, abusing drugs or alcohol, and moving a lot. <input type="checkbox"/> Are irritable and aggressive with repeated physical fights or assaults. <input type="checkbox"/> Are reckless and disregard the safety of self or others. <input type="checkbox"/> Are consistently irresponsible with financial obligations, children, or steady employment. <input type="checkbox"/> Lack remorse and show indifference or make excuses for hurting, mistreating, or stealing. <input type="checkbox"/> Can appear competitive but are poor losers, distrustful, shallow, stubborn, and charming.
<small>¹ Adapted from criteria on pp. 649–650 with permission from the <i>Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders</i>, 4th edition. Copyright 1994, American Psychiatric Association.</small>

These characteristics cannot be explained wholly by care given in the first 9 months of life. These personalities may be predisposed to overreact to stimuli and handle that stress by striking out. Inhibitory centers of the nervous system may be underenergized. Difficulties in infancy may have interfered with normal attachment and increased the likelihood of abuse or neglect. Some people may have attached as infants but later lost a bond with a primary trust figure and then rejected authority.

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE

Because people who defy society rarely feel depressed, anxious, or guilty, they have little desire to change until their rampage of self-will is (externally) stopped. Even then, they will have difficulty “surrendering” to another without a hidden agenda. This bond of trust is needed to (1) accept feedback about exploitive behavior, (2) explore advantages of self-control and delay of gratification, (3) identify excuses for willful behavior, (4) learn to understand others and negotiate, and (5) manage self-discipline and anger. If impulses can be controlled and consequences anticipated, defiant people can focus on changing beliefs that trigger many of their behaviors.

Directions: Mark any of the thoughts you get in your worst moments. Then Identify beliefs you would like to have and affirm these new ideas regularly.	
Turn Defeating Thoughts into	... Beliefs That Promote Change
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm weak/a loser if I don't defend myself. <input type="checkbox"/> My needs come before rules or others. <input type="checkbox"/> Others help me get power, money, or sex. <input type="checkbox"/> I can only rely on or trust myself. <input type="checkbox"/> Success means power, control, and survival.	<input type="checkbox"/> My power comes from understanding others. <input type="checkbox"/> I can ask for what I want and negotiate. <input type="checkbox"/> Others provide support for growth and change. <input type="checkbox"/> I can rely on others and learn to trust them. <input type="checkbox"/> Success comes from achieving and learning.