

TIME OUTS

Be sure to read these instructions every day for at least one full week. Do not skip. Its important to get these instructions into your brain.

Time outs are about self-control (not controlling the other). Calling time out means I feel out-of-control (not that the other is Out of control). Time outs do not feel good - don't expect them to create relationship closeness. Don't expect your partner to be happy or receive it well.

When you take one. Time-outs DO NOT repair relationships. You may calm down and feel safe, when you try to re-engage, things could still feel tense or unsafe. This is normal, though unpleasant. Do not expect a time-out to fix anything other than you gaining self-control.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. One person INITIATES a time out: if that's you, then own the fact that you are losing control and affirm that if you don't take time out, you fear damage will come to the relationship. Also say what you will do and how long you will take. Then count inside your head "1-one thousand, 2-one-thousand" up to 5...waiting for your partner to respond.

EXAMPLES:

a. I'm feeling out-of-control, I need to take time-out. I don't want to be hurtful so I'm going to take 40 minutes to walk the dog and calm myself down. (count to 5 inwardly, wait for a response)

b. I'm really anxious right now and I need to take time-out to calm down - I don't want to do something I'd regret if I stay. I'm going to go to the bookstore for 30 minutes to get centered. (count to 5 inwardly, wait for a response)

c. I'm really angry and upset right now and I need to take time-out because I don't want to hurt you or for us to get stuck in a fight. I'm going out into the yard for a half hour. (count to 5 inwardly, wait for a response)

2. The other person **RESPONDS** to the statement within 5 seconds. If that's you, then acknowledge the other person's need, their concern for potential damage, and what they will do to take time-out.

EXAMPLES:

a. I hear that you need to take time out cause you're afraid you'll say something hurtful and that you're going for a walk for 30 minutes.

b. You're afraid things will get worse, so you're taking time out at the bookstore for 40 minutes.

3. The **INITIATOR** says "OK, I'm going now" and then leaves

4. If there is no response within 5 seconds, the **INITIATOR** can repeat themselves one time. If there is still no response after a second 5 seconds, then the **INITIATOR** says "I'm going to go now" - and then leaves.

5. The **INITIATOR** is responsible for:

a. Taking the action as they said they would. (so if you said you'd go for a walk, then go for the walk - don't change plans).

b. Setting an alarm for the length of the time out (its easy to loose track of time).

c. Contacting the other at the end of the stated time with an update.

EXAMPLES:

a. Its been 40 minutes, and I'm feeling in control of myself.

b. Its been 40 minutes, and I'm still feeling out of control - I'm going to take another 40 minutes - you are responsible for giving an update in another 40 minutes.

6. If you **BOTH** can agree to resume the conversation, go for it. If not, table it till therapy.

If you are the INITIATOR, hope for the best, but do not expect the other person to be understanding or compassionate towards you - they may feel hurt and somewhat abandoned. Try to be understanding of this. The time out is about self-control, and secondarily it keeps the relationship safe from further damage. It does not create a relationship repair.

If you are the RESPONDER, hope for the best, but do not expect the other to be understanding and compassionate towards you when they feel in control again - they may continue to feel upset with you. Try to be understanding of this. The time out is not designed to create warmth and closeness, but to prevent relationship damage and promote self-control.

If there is an urgent need to communicate during a time-out, it is best to limit that communication. Texting is a good way but not always recommended (especially if there's an emergency). Limit the communication by getting focused before making contact. Try to be as clear and specific about what is needed. Do not expect a warm welcome or understanding.