

TIME OUT PROCEDURE

TIME OUTS are useful tool for managing anger and stopping a “regrettable incident”. Ideally it’s a contract with your partner – *“we use this procedure, and respect the use of it whenever we feel necessary in this relationship.”* But it can be applied with or without the other’s cooperation/consent.

PROCEDURE:

1) When you feel yourself getting angry, your body getting tense, or you begin to feel early signs of being flooded, say out loud the TIME OUT STATEMENT...

“I’m beginning to feel angry/flooded/lost (etc.), I need to take a time out.”

2) DESIGNATE A SPECIFIC AMOUNT OF TIME (20 mins to 1 hour) and keep to that time period – come back when you say you’re going to come back.

3) LEAVE THE SITUATION, the person and place. Be out of eye-and-ear-shot.

4) MENTALLY CALM YOURSELF with relaxing images, self-talk, funny video, reading non-activating literature.

5) DO SOME NON-ACTIVATING PHYSICAL EXERCISE with walking, stretching, yoga – running or cardio exercises are not encouraged because it elevates heart rate.

6) RETURN AND CHECK-IN, if BOTH of you want to talk about what angered you then keep FAIR behaviors and Active Listening skills in mind.

THINGS TO AVOID WHEN TAKING TIME OUTS:

- 1) AVOID DRINKING OR USING DRUGS – these often escalate anger.
- 2) AVOID AGGRESSIVE ACTIVITIES – such as punching pillows, chopping wood, & yelling to no one, since violent behavior increases anger.
- 3) AVOID DRIVING – anger on the road can result in an accident.
- 4) AVOID ANGRY RUMINATIONS – the goal is to DETACH FROM THE ACTIVATING MATERIAL, not think about who’s right and rehearse because this only escalates anger.
- 5) AVOID THE PERSON AND PLACE – contact with the other person even if it seems “benign” can re-ignite the anger.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON TIME OUTS

TIME OUTS can feel awkward at first because anything that not “natural” does. Learned behavior takes time. The more you practice the more you will be able to use it when you need it. If you practice, precede the TIME OUT statement with “This is a practice time out” then follow the regular time out procedure.

TIME OUT CONTRACT

When I realize that my (or my partner's) anger is rising, I will say "I'm taking a time out" and when I'm coming back. If I cannot speak without aggression I will give the "T" signal and this means I'm taking a time out and will be back in 20-minutes. I will leave at once. I will not hit or kick anything and I will not slam the door. I will follow the procedure and return no sooner or later than the time I stated. I will try not to focus on my resentments. When I return I will start the conversation with my piece of the misunderstanding no matter how small then share my concern (Softened Startup).

If my partner gives a "T" signal and leaves, I will return the sign and let my partner go without a hassle, no matter what is going on. I will also follow the Time Out procedure and try to not focus on my resentments. When my partner returns, I will start the conversation with my piece of the misunderstanding no matter how small then share my concern (Softened Startup).

Name _____

Date _____

Name _____

Date _____