

# Using “Time Out”

## Guidelines for Explaining Time Out to the Child:

- 1) Select a time to talk when everyone is relaxed and in good control.
- 2) Calmly explain the procedure to the child. Don't debate and argue with your child about time out.
- 3) Be sure to incorporate the following:
  - a. Time out behavior: spell it out specifically. It is important that the child know exactly what behavior will result in a time out.
  - b. Where the time out is.
  - c. How long the time out is.
  - d. Time out starts when he is quiet.
  - e. If he won't go to time out, the time it takes him to get there is added to his original number of minutes.
  - f. If he breaks something in time out, he needs to fix it; if he makes a mess, he needs to clean it up.
  - g. If he refuses to go to time out, he will receive a backup punishment

## Time Out Rules:

- 1) Be sure you can observe the behavior you want to stop
- 2) Select a room that is away from people and without anything interesting to do. *Do not lock the door!*
- 3) Stay calm.
- 4) Before using time out, explain and role-play going to time out; the child will cooperate.
- 5) Use time out immediately. Don't wait until matters get out of hand.
- 6) Don't threaten time out. Use it!
- 7) Don't debate or argue. Tell your child what he did wrong and calmly tell him to go to time out.
- 8) If the child goes to time out without having a tantrum, give praise and tell him why you're providing praise (for example, "I asked you to go to time out, and you went right away. That's great!").
- 9) If your child won't go to time out right away, the time it takes your child to get there is added to the original number of minutes.
- 10) Let your child know that time out starts when he is quiet and in the time out area.
- 11) If child absolutely refuses to go to time out, then use backup procedures such as restrictions, loss of privileges, or response cost. Make sure you let the child know ahead of time what will happen if he does not go to time out; for example, "you lose [privilege] if you don't go to time out." The child should be told of this when timeout is first introduced. Also, if the child refuses to go to time out he should be reminded calmly.
- 12) If child breaks something in time out, he needs to fix it. If child makes a mess, he needs to clean it up after time out.
- 13) Be sure to continue to praise appropriate behavior. In fact, this is the most important part of time out or any other punishment technique.

**Whenever you use a punishment technique, you must also use positive reinforcement for the behavior that is the positive opposite of the one you want to be discontinued.**

### **Variations of Time Out:**

- 1) Time out for problem behaviors away from home, such as at another person's home, a store, a mall, or a restaurant.
  - a. Before starting on an outing, clearly describe how you want your child to behave. This precaution will reduce the chances that a problem will occur.
  - b. At another person's home, send the child to an uninteresting place in the person's home or take the child to the car for time out.
  - c. At a store, require the child to sit or stand in a remote corner or aisle, or take the child to the car for time out.
  - d. At a mall, use a bench as the time out site.
  - e. At a restaurant, place the child at a nearby table or take the child to the car.
  - f. When giving timeout in a car, have the child sit in the back seat while you remain in the front seat or outside the car. Be sure to ignore the child while he is in time out.
  - g. If you cannot give time out in front of others, give a delayed time out; that is, send the child to time out immediately after returning home.
- 2) Time out from toys: removing toys from a child, which is useful for handling misbehavior when a child is playing with a toy or when two children are fighting over a toy or misusing a toy.
  - a. Calmly remove the toy from the child for 15 minutes.
  - b. Tell the child the reason for the toy time out.
  - c. When 15 minutes are up, the child may retrieve the toy.
- 3) Time out from the parent. The parent leaves, goes to another room, and does not respond until the child is calm. This is useful when a routine time out has failed to stop a child's escalating physical or verbal aggression or the child has lost control.
  - a. Separate yourself from the child, go to another room, and shut the door if necessary.
  - b. Wait until the child is calm for at least 5 minutes.
  - c. Praise the child for regaining a calm demeanor.
  - d. If the child is calm enough to discuss the problem, then approach it again; if not, wait until a more appropriate time.

### **Good Role Plays:**

- *Child goes to time out immediately*—remember to:

1) stay calm, 2) tell what the timeout is for and how long, 3) praise as soon as the child sits in the chair, and 4) praise when the time out is completed successfully by the child.

- *Adding time to time out*—remember to:

1) stay calm, 2) tell what the time out is for and how long, 3) look away as the child argues and debates, 4) increase the time minute by minute (slowly), and 5) praise your child when he goes to time out.

- *Child is noisy on the way to time out or in time out*—remember to:

1) stay calm, 2) tell what the time out is for and for how long, 3) praise as soon as the child sits in the chair, and 4) stop the timer when the child becomes noisy, and after the choice of either sitting quietly or losing a privilege.

- *Loss of privilege because child will not go to time out*—remember to:

1) stay calm, 2) tell what the time out is for and for how long, 3) increase the time slowly as child refuses to participate, 4) offer the child the choice of either sitting for the maximum time or losing the privilege, 5) take away the privilege.