

USING TIME-OUT FOR BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

Preparations

1. Purchase a small portable kitchen timer.
2. Select a place for time-out. This could be a chair in the hallway, kitchen or corner of a room. It needs to be a dull place (not your child's bedroom) where your child cannot view the TV or play with toys. It should not be a dark, scary, or dangerous place—the aim is to remove your child to a place where not much is happening, not to make him feel afraid.
3. Discuss with your spouse which behaviors will result in time-out. Consistency is very important.

Practicing (If your child is three or older)

1. Before using time-out for discipline, you should practice using it with your child at a pleasant time.
2. Tell your child there are rules when in time-out:
The timer will start only after he is quiet. Ask your child what would happen if he or she talks or makes noises when in time-out. Your child should say the time will be reset or something similar. If they do not say this remind them of the rule.
3. After explaining the rule and checking out your child's understanding of the rules, go through the steps under "Procedures" below. Tell your child you are "pretending" this time.
4. Mention to your child you will be using this technique instead of spanking, yelling, or threatening.

Procedures

1. Following an inappropriate behavior, describe what your child did in as few words as possible. For example, say "time-out for hitting." Say this calmly and only once. Do not lose your temper or begin nagging. If your child has problems getting to the chair quickly, guide them with as little effort as needed. This can range from leading him part way by the hand to carrying him all the way to the chair. If you have to carry him, hold him facing away from you.
2. Practice with a two-second time-out initially, until you are certain the child understands they must be quiet in order to get up. Gradually increase the length of time they must sit. After you are using time-outs that are at least a minute long, begin to use the timer to signal the end of time-out.
3. The rule of thumb is a maximum of one minute of quiet time-out for each year of age. A two-year-old would have two minutes; a three-year-old, three minutes; and a five year-old, five minutes. For children five years and above, five minutes remains the maximum amount of time. If your child makes noises, screams or cries, reset the timer. Do this each time the child makes any annoying noises. If your child gets off the chair before the time is up, replace them on the chair and reset the timer. Do this each time the child gets off the chair.
4. After your child has been quiet and seated for the required amount of time, the timer will ring. Walk over to him, place your hand on his back and simply say "okay." Apply gentle pressure to their back with your hand for a second to let them know it's all right to get up now. Do not even comment on the time-out.
5. After a time-out period, your child should start with a "clean slate." Do not discuss, remind, or nag about what the child did wrong. Within five minutes after time-out, look for and praise good behavior. It's wise to take your child to a different part of the house and start them in a new activity.

Things to Check When Time-out Doesn't Work

1. Be sure you are not warning your child one (or more) times before sending them to the time-out chair. Warning only teach your child that they can misbehave at least once (or more) before you'll use time-out. Warnings make children's behavior worse, not better.
2. All adults who are responsible for disciplining your child at home should be using the time-out chair. You should agree when and for what behaviors to send your child to time-out. (You will want new sitters, visiting friends, and relatives to read and discuss time-out guidelines.)
3. To maximize the effectiveness of time-out, you must make the rest of the day ("time in") pleasant for your child. Remember to let your child know when they are well behaved rather than taking good behavior for granted. Most children would prefer to have you put them in time-out than ignore them completely.

4. Your child may say “Going to the chair doesn’t bother me” or “I like time-out,” Don’t fall for this trick. Many children try to convince their parent that time-out is fun and therefore not working. You should notice over time that the problem behaviors for which you use time-out occur less often.
5. When you first begin using time-out your child may act like time-out is a “game.” They may put themselves in time-out or ask to go there. If this happens, give your child what they want—, put them in time-out and require them to sit quietly for the required amount of time. They will soon learn that time-out is not a game. Your child may also laugh or giggle when being placed in time-out or while in time-out. Although this may aggravate you, it is important for you to ignore them completely when they are in time-out.
6. TV, radio, or a nice view out the window can make time-out more tolerable and prolong the length of time your child must stay in the chair by encouraging them to talk. Try to minimize such distractions.
7. You must use time-out for major as well as minor behavior problems. Parents have a tendency to feel that time-out is not enough of a punishment for big things. Consistency is most important for time-out to work for big and small problems.
8. Be certain that you child is aware of the rules that, if broken, result in time-out. Frequently, parents will establish a new rule (“Don’t touch the new stereo”) without telling their children. When children unwillingly break the new rule they don’t understand why they are being put in time-out.
9. Review the time-out guidelines to make certain you are following the recommendations.

When your child is in Time-out:

- Don’t look at him or her.
- Don’t talk to him or her.
- Don’t talk about him or her.
- Don’t act angry.
- Do remain calm.
- Do follow the written guidelines.
- Do find something to do (read magazine, phone someone) when your child is crying and talking in time-out.
- They should be able to see you.
- They should be able to tell you’re not mad.
- They should be able to see what they are missing.

TODDLERS

To encourage independent play activities.

Begin an activity with your toddler that you think they will enjoy. Play with them the whole time the first couple of times that you do it.

Provide many “love pats” during the play activity.

Pick an isolated play activity. An isolated play activity is an activity that is best performed by one person. For example, building Legos is something that children do well alone. A social play activity is an activity that requires two people in order to do it. An example would be playing catch with a ball.

Begin to excuse yourself from the activity at times when you can tell that your child is actively engaged. Excuse yourself for a very brief period of time, perhaps for only five seconds while you walk over to the kitchen counter and return directly to the activity.

After about two days of excusing yourself for only 5 seconds. If your child can play for 5 seconds, plan to be gone for 7 or 8 seconds. In this fashion gradually increase how long you are gone based upon your child continuing with his play while you are gone. What you are aiming for is to be able to leave without interrupting the activity that your toddler is doing.

Over time, perhaps two or three months, gradually stay away from your toddler for longer and longer periods of time, until you notice that you can be gone for extended periods of time. As you are able to excuse yourself for increasingly longer periods of time, don’t forget to provide your toddler with You should discipline yourself to take advantage of every naturally occurring opportunity to teach your child self-quieting skills. If your child comes up to you with their feelings hurt, or after falling off their tricycle, try to refrain from saying anything. Rather, hold them against you, without saying a word while you rub their back and pat them. In this way, they will learn that you are a great source of comfort when they need

you. But, they will also learn that you don't quiet them down—they are responsible for quieting themselves down.

Using time-outs for discipline is another way of teaching toddlers self-quieting skills. Every time that you send your toddler to time-out and they quiet down, they are learning self-quieting skills. While there may only be one or two opportunities in a day to let a child naturally quiet himself down, using time-outs can create many opportunities for the same skills to be practiced.

If you keep reminding your toddler that they must be quiet when they are in time-out, they will never have the opportunity to self-quiet. They must learn to quiet down without any help from you whatsoever. That means that, if they are having a horrendous tantrum—you must let them quiet down. To comfort a child who is having a tantrum only encourages them to have more.

Remember, the more opportunities, and the closer the opportunities are to each other, the quicker your toddler will learn self-quieting. periodic, brief, nonverbal, physical contact. In this way your toddler will get the enjoyment out of playing and the affection from you from the same activity.

With time and practice your toddler will learn how to entertain himself without the need for assistance from you. The more they play alone, the more they can accomplish on their own and the more sense of satisfaction they will derive from their play activities.

TIME IN

By their very dependent nature, newborns and young infants require a lot of physical contact from their parents. As they get older and their demand characteristics change, parents usually touch their children much less. By the time children are four years old, they are usually toilet trained, can get dressed and undressed themselves, can feed themselves and can bathe themselves. Thus if parents don't conscientiously put forth an effort to maintain a great deal of physical contact with their child, he or she will be touched much less than they did at earlier ages. There are several things that parents can do to help offset these natural changes.

1. *Physical proximity.* During boring or distracting activities, place your child close to you where it is easy to reach him. At dinner, in the car, in a restaurant, when you have company, or when you are in a shopping mall, keep your child near you so that physical contact requires little, if any, additional effort on your part.
2. *Physical contact.* Frequent and brief (one or two seconds) nonverbal physical contact will do more to teach your child that you love him than anything else you can do. Discipline yourself to touch your child at least fifty times each day for one or two seconds—touch him anytime that he is not doing something wrong or something that you disapprove of.
3. *Verbal Reprimands.* Children don't have the verbal skills that adults do. Adults often send messages that are misunderstood by children, who may interpret verbal reprimands, nagging, pleading, and yelling as signs that their parents do not like them. Always keep in mind the old expression, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all."
4. *Nonverbal contact.* Try to make most of your physical contact with children nonverbal. With your children, physical contact usually has a calming effect, whereas verbal praise, questioning, or general comments may only interrupt what your child was doing.
5. *Independent play.* Children need to have time to themselves—time when they can play, put things into their mouths, or stare into space. Generally, children don't do nearly as well when their parents carry them around much of the time and constantly try to entertain them. Keep in mind that, although your baby may fuss when frustrated, she will never learn to deal with frustration if you are always there to help her out. Give children enough freedom to explore the environment on their own, and they will learn skills that they can use the rest of their lives.

Remember:

Children need lots of brief, non-verbal physical contact. If you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything at all.

