

Time-Outs

- Taking a **time-out** means that an individual removes herself/himself from a stressful or anger-provoking situation. This gives the individual an opportunity to calm or cool down rather than act aggressively.
- Taking a time-out is the most basic anger management tool to use and practice.
- Time-outs are self-imposed; they are not imposed by others.
- Time-outs can be especially effective in the “heat of the moment” to stop from reaching a “10” on the anger meter.
- Time-outs are also effective when used with other tools such as taking a walk, or talking to a trusted friend or family member.
- Using time-outs is a skill that takes practice.
- Using time-outs is a skill that can help stop the escalation of anger from annoyance to extreme upset to rage.

When to Call a Time-Out:

- Before calling a time out, make sure everyone involved in the discussion has agreed beforehand that time-outs are okay.
- Anyone calling a time-out can physically leave the discussion.

Note: *When someone calls a time-out, everyone understands that you’ll resume the discussion when everyone’s feeling calmer.*

- It’s okay to take more than one time-out. Take as many time-outs as you need to maintain a reasonable level of discussion that has the potential to solve the problem.



Steps to Taking Time-Outs:

1. First, identify the anger cues, such as feeling increased bodily tension that let you know your anger is increasing.
2. Second, say out loud, "I'm beginning to feel really angry, and I need to take a time-out."
3. Third, tell the other person (or people) that your time-out may last for about an hour.
4. Fourth, physically leave the situation.
5. During the time-out:
 - *Do not use alcohol or drugs.*
 - *Do not drive.*
 - *Do something healthy to reduce your anger (such as going for a walk, exercising, or talking to someone who wasn't involved in the situation who can help you calm down).*
 - *Use relaxation skills, such as muscle relaxation or deep breathing.*
 - *Take a "mental" time-out, too, which means deliberately avoiding any thoughts that might fuel your anger.*
 - *Consider doing something physical, such as gardening, or working in a shop with tools, or cooking.*
 - *This can help shift your thoughts to the manual activity and away from the original cause of your anger.*
6. When the time-out has ended, check in with the other person (or people) to determine if the time is right to resume your discussion.
7. Continue to monitor your anger level as you resume the conversation.
8. Don't hesitate to take another time-out if your anger increases to the point it interferes with the discussion.
9. Never pressure or coerce someone into resuming a discussion if he/she prefers not to. Some topics are too "charged" to discuss without another person being there to serve as a moderator. If a moderator is needed, postpone further discussion until the moderator can be available.



Remember: *The first priority is to prevent violence and other aggressive behavior.*