

# Time-outs

## Definition of a Time-out

“Time-out” is a simple technique for getting out of a situation that might otherwise lead to abuse or unhealthy communication. Any member in a relationship uses it when they feel angry and or afraid. To use a time-out, you need to be aware of your own tension / explosiveness level, and be willing to walk away when you feel that you are too angry to work out a problem. The first step is for you to understand what a time-out is and what it is not.

## A Time-out Is...

- A chance for you to get away from an argument and cool down so that you can better solve the problem when you come back
- An opportunity to find some appropriate release or refocus for emotional conversations
  - Exercise / Healthy Behaviors
  - Mindfulness / Grounding Techniques
  - Relaxation / Coping Techniques
- A short break taken from a hot situation
- A message from you to the other members of the relationship that you care enough about them to take some time to cool down

## A Time-out Is Not...

- A chance to go out and have fun with your friends
- A time to watch TV, drink, do drugs or engage in violent behavior
- A time to spend a day or two away from the other members of the relationship

## Use Of A Time-out Can...

- Reduce violence between partners or friends
- Reduce your need to control people
- Contribute to greater trust in your relationship
- Make it possible to start solving the difficult issues and differences in your relationship
- Increases your sense of personal power

## **Guidelines For Taking A Time-out**

1. Decide in advance the amount of time each person can be gone and how time extensions can be arranged. Typically, this time is for 15–20 minutes.
2. Remember, any member of the relationship can use it. The other members of the relationship must agree to honor the time-out.
3. As tension builds, one person becomes concerned and decides on using a time-out (remember to listen and look for cues).
4. That person clearly states, “I am taking a time-out.” It is important to not use phrases often used in arguments such as: get off my back, leave me alone,... etc
5. After making a time-out decision, the person leaves the situation. All discussion stops.
6. The person staying allows the other to leave and spends time alone working to reduce stress (i.e. exercise and other healthy behaviors, mindfulness and grounding techniques, and relation and other coping techniques – No drugs, alcohol, or TV).
7. When the time-out is over, members of the relationship come together and decide when to finish the discussion.
8. Finish the discussion at the appointed time or take another time-out as needed