

Time In / Time Out

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Time-out is a form of discipline, which many parents have used to effectively replace spanking, screaming, and yelling. Time-out is essentially putting a child in a non-stimulating place for several minutes in response to a child's negative behavior.

Time-out can be implemented as a tool for parents who must deal with negative behaviors from three basic categories:

1. Parents are encouraged to initiate time-out if the child does not respond within 5 seconds of receiving a parental directive. Parents are reminded to give a child only one warning prior to assigning time-out as the child will learn to follow parental direction after one warning as easily as after five warnings.
2. Parents should use time out when unacceptable, negative behaviors occur. These behaviors can include temper tantrums, hitting, biting, breaking house rules, etc. Parents must decide together which negative behaviors will receive a time-out response. It is important for both parents to place the child in time-out immediately after the behavior occurs and every time a negative behavior is seen.
3. Parents should place their child in time-out every time a dangerous behavior is seen.

Time-out should be a place away from breakable objects or stimulation (e.g., toys, people, television, radio, window, etc.) or any other form of entertainment for the child. Many experts recommend time-out be spent sitting in a kitchen-type chair placed in the hallway, kitchen or corner of a room. Do not turn off the lights or use a closet for a time-out place. Time-out is not intended to scare the child, but to remove him from attention.

Explain to the child the purpose of time-out in terms the child can grasp. Parents should not forget to include what behaviors will result in time-out in their explanation to the child. General rules for time-out include:

1. The child is to be quiet when in time-out. Time will start over if the child is not quiet. Demonstrate this by re-setting the timer when the child is not quiet, it is not necessary to talk to the child while he/she is in time out as long as the procedure is explained well beforehand.
2. The child is to stay in his chair until allowed off by a parent. Time will start over if the child leaves the chair. Again, demonstrate this by resetting the timer.

Time-out should be initiated as soon as a child's behavior is determined unacceptable. Parents should identify unacceptable behaviors and inform the child that he must go to time-out. Parents should say this only once and do not say anything else to the child until time-out is over. If the child does not go to the chair when told, the parent is to guide the child or pick the child up and assist him to the chair. It is important to avoid any vows

made to "be good", screams, or crying made by the child in time-out. Parents and other family members should continue with normal, daily activities as if the child is not present. Many parents use kitchen timers to monitor time-out times. Time-outs are recommended to last one minute per each year of age up to a maximum of five minutes. When the kitchen timer goes off, the parent should ask the child if he is ready to get off the time-out chair. If the child says yes, then tell the child time-out is over. Parents should praise the child for good behavior soon after the time-out session is completed.

Consistent use of time out as a disciplinary strategies will maximize its effectiveness. Inconsistency often confuses the child and encourages the child to misbehave because they might "get away with it" that particular time.

Time-in describes a behavioral management procedure that is the opposite of time-out, when a parent observes a child with acceptable behavior and provides praise and positive attention. It is just as important as time-out. Some ideas to enhance time-in include:

1. Observe a child's activity often. Try to see your child being good!
2. Praise your child when they are good.
3. When praising your child, tell them exactly why they are being praised.
4. Offer your child physical attention including hugs, kisses, etc. in addition to verbal approval
5. Provide the child with positive input immediately after a good act is observed- don't wait. Praise is more effective when it is given immediately.
6. Don't say unfavorable statements such as "You did that well, but why can't you do it like that all the time?"
7. Share "third-handed compliments" with your child, such as when you hear a compliment about your child from someone else share these compliments with your child. Parents should share with each other good child behavior observed during the day, and share them with the child.
8. Reward good child behavior with a fun parent-child activity such as an outing or playing a game.
9. Parents must balance time-in with time-out to positively change a child's behavior.