**How to Use Time Out Effectively**

**Time Out Area:** The time-out area should be in a location that the child can be easily monitored while in time-out. A chair in the corner of the dining room, or in the family room is an excellent spot. It is best to use a kitchen timer in plain view to keep your child informed of how much time he/she has left to serve.

**Amount of Time Spent in Time Out:** Generally, it tends to work if you use short periods of time-out, 10 to 15 minutes, with younger children …rather than to have long periods, such as an hour or more. You will find that your child will quickly begin to use their imagination to turn a boring activity into something interesting and even entertaining. I suggest that children from 2 – 5 years old should receive a 2 to 5 minute time-out; whereas a 6 year old child should probably receive about a 5- 10 minute time-out and a 10 year old child would receive a 10 – 20 minute time-out. If you have children of different ages here are some suggestions: 6-8 years of age, 5 minutes; 8-10 years of age, 10 minutes; 10-14 years of age, 10 to 20 minutes. Some parents have reported using a double the time-out period for such offenses as hitting, temper tantrums, etc. Some parents have used time-outs for disrespect (facial expressions, body language or even sarcasm. (Note: IF you have an ADHD child he/she may benefit from shorter times than those suggested above).

**Specifying Target Behaviors:**  It is vital that your child be informed of the behaviors that are targeted for reduction. You might even make a list of offenses and post them in a well seen area. They should be very concretely defined: for example, hitting means striking someone else’s with the hand or an object, or coming home late from school – specify a time whenever possible, and what to do if that time is not possible (Bad weather, missed the Bus etc.)

**Procedures for Time Out**

* When you place your child into time-out, you should only say, “you are in Time-out for….” and state the particular offense. There should be no further discussion.
* Always use a kitchen timer with a bell. Set the timer and tell your child he must stay in time-out until the bell rings.
* While in time-out, your child should not be permitted to talk, and should not be able to talk to other children in any way. Do not allow any noises in any way, such as mumbling or grumbling. Do not allow them to play with electronic devices. Any violations of time-out should result in automatic resetting the Kitchen Timer for the original time-out period.
* It is important that the entire household be acquainted with the regulations for time-out, so that they will not interfere with the child in time-out in any way. So it is not a good idea if one child begins watching TV in plain view of the time-out child.

**Strategies for Handling Refusal or Resistance**

* Never forget that history and research has shown that time-out works! There are a number of ways to handle refusal. This is trial and error until you find the right mix for your particular child/situation
* Once you have told the child they must go to the time-out bench, you will count to three ….. and if they are not on the Bench the time-out will be doubled.
* In some cases you may need to use a response cost. Select an activity or object you can take away (negative consequence). Tell the child that until they do the time-out, they will not have it returned. For instance, tell them that they may not watch TV or play a video game until they do the time-out.

**Alternatives to Time Out**

Children 10 or older may be “too big” for time-out ---- it may make them feel like they are being treated like a “baby.” Here are some other negative consequences that have been successful in reducing inappropriate behavior.

Point out that each time he displays the inappropriate behavior, he will have to write an apology… and how they will repay the offense. For instance, every time you talk back you will have to write, ” I apologize for talking back and showing disrespect .” The first time this happens tell your child to sit at the table and write the apology… then read it out loud to the entire family (if possible). The next time it happens they can re-read the apology… but now they lose their XBOX, PlayStation, Cell Phone for 12 hours…The time is repeated each time the behavior occurs.

Also the removal of privileges or use of objects (games, toys etc that you can control) tends to work effectively. Make a list of privileges or objects (TV, ride bike, stay up late, go outside and play, etc.). Tell the child that each time the undesirable behavior occurs, one item will be crossed of the list for that day. Each day the procedure starts over.

**Advantages of Time Out**

* It does not imprint the child with spanking, slapping or other abusive tactics as an appropriate way to respond to problems.
* It eliminates a lot of yelling and screaming –which is upsetting to the parents and everybody in the family.
* It aligns the child with cause and effect and is a positive tool in helping the child understand limitations and making them feel they belong to the family that has “values”.
* It helps the child to accept his/her own responsibility for their actions and in identifying undesirable behavior. They learn that you are NOT punishing them that they are punishing themselves. “You placed yourself in Time-Out… I did not do anything!”
* You will find your children more readily learns to discriminate which behaviors are acceptable and which are unacceptable.
* Your child will learn more self-control.
* Always keep a written record of time-outs. By doing his you can tell if the Time-Outs are reducing the targeted behavior.

**Guidelines for Parental Discipline**

* Parents should never disagree about discipline in front of the children.
* Never give an order, request, or command without being able to enforce it at the time.
* Be consistent, use time-outs in the same manner as much as possible.
* Talk to your child and explain them what the time-out penalties are and stay to them.
* Make it as clear as possible what the child is to expect if he or she performs the undesirable behavior.
* Make it very clear what the undesirable behavior is. It is not enough to say, “Your room is messy.” Specified in terms of exactly what must be done for the room to be considered “neat”! “Here is the checklist of what your room should look life for me to consider it neat and in order.”
* Once you have stated your position and the child attacks that position, do not keep defending yourself. Just restate what you want done and stick to it.
* Remember that your behavior serves as a model for your children’s behavior.
* If one parent is disciplining a child and the other parent enters the room, the other should not step in on the argument in progress.
* Always reward desirable behavior as much as possible: verbal praise, pat on the back, a snack, toy, food, etc.
* Both parents should have equal share in setting up and enforcing the responsibility of discipline as much as possible.

**The “3 Fs” of Positive Parenting**

**Discipline should be:**

* 1. **Firm:** Consequences should be clearly stated and then adhered to when the inappropriate behavior occurs.
	2. **Fair**: The punishment should fit the crime. Also in the case of recurring behavior, consequences should be stated in advance so the child knows what to expect. Harsh punishment is not necessary. Using a simple Time Out can be effective when it is used consistently every time the behavior occurs. Also, use of reward for a period of time like part of a day or a whole day when no Time Outs or maybe only one Time Out is received.
	3. **Friendly:** Use a friendly but firm communication style when letting a child know they have behaved inappropriately and let them know they will receive the “agreed upon” consequence. Encourage them to try to remember what they should do instead to avoid future consequences. Work at “catching them being good” and praise them for appropriate behavior

Gordon A. Pilet, Ph.D., Interventions Enterprises Inc.,