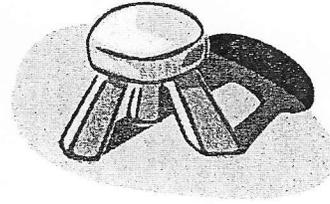


Revisiting TIME OUT



Time-out requires a child to be old enough and cooperative enough to follow instructions. The basic idea is:

- interrupt the misbehavior,
- allow a brief time to calm down,
- return with a fresh start

You can teach what went wrong and how to recover and re-enter a situation. Children can learn self control and how to recover from mistakes with dignity. It is important that they know what to do instead so they are less likely to repeat the misbehavior.

Stop. Don't _____
Because _____
Instead you can _____ or _____

Some parents have adopted a policy of time-out minutes equal child's age. However, five minutes can be too long for the five year old that calmed down and was ready to start over in two minutes. Remain flexible and assure the child that time-out will end when she has calmed down. Some children will need the adult to stay near by, but not talking until the child is calm. Other children will need the alone time to become more calm. Time-out will not work if the child is so distraught he can not gain self control. If the child is not calming down in five minutes, you may be missing some clues about the emotions the child is experiencing. Sometimes a situation might require time-in with an adult that will hold and cuddle until his emotional intensity is soothed.

Time-out can be over used and often misused. Time-out should not become a punishment. Time-out is not effective if the child experiences fear. This technique should not be used to shame or intimidate the child. The time-out should not end with the child forced to make false apologies or admit guilt. Sometimes a child will feel genuine remorse and benefit by learning how to apologize. Avoid the quick "sorry" to escape a situation.

If you are chasing your child and starting time-out again and again – it is not working. You need a different strategy. Tune into the child's feelings and practice words that describe emotions. Focus on accepting how the child is feeling and still set limits for behavior. It is essential that you remain calm. Your gentle firmness will help the child understand her own feelings better and she will trust you to set reasonable expectations for behavior.

Time-out can happen almost any place that is a safe place. Time-out can happen on a park bench, under a tree, sitting in front of a mirror at Fred Meyer. At home, time-out can happen on the bottom stair, on a kitchen rug, or on the couch. Some children like a special stool and will even give themselves a time-out once they learn it helps to calm down. They may even suggest that you take a time out on their stool if they observe you becoming upset. Take advantage of the opportunity and model a few deep breathes as you calm down.