

Anger Management The Time-Out Process

Who? Time outs are helpful to use in relationships that you want to maintain. You would not use this procedure with strangers or with others with whom you have not already discussed the process.

When? Either partner can call a time out if a discussion/argument is starting to feel out of control. Most people cannot think clearly when angry, so postponing the discussion until both people are calmer is helpful.

**** VERY IMPORTANT:** Discuss the use of this procedure at a calm time.

Key points to discuss:

1. Choose a mutually agreed-upon signal for the use of time out.

Note: It is best to have both a verbal and nonverbal (hand signal) way of communicating the need to take a time out

2. Both agree that the partner will not follow the person who is taking the time out.
3. When someone calls a time out, end the discussion immediately. Trying to get in the last word is not helpful.
4. When you choose to take a time out, you need to tell the other person
 - a. What you are going to do
 - b. Where you are going (e.g., next room, for a drive, to a friend's house)
 - c. When you will return (certain number of minutes/hours)

Example: "I'm going to Wal-Mart to cool off, and I'll be back in an hour."

While taking the time out:

It is not helpful to obsess about how angry you feel at the other person during this time. Rather, it's a time to cool down so the discussion later can be more productive. Thinking about options for how to solve the problem can be helpful. You can consider what to do to improve the situation and make things work for both partners.

Upon returning to discuss:

1. The person who initiated the time out approaches his/her partner in a kind, gentle manner.
2. Each person presents his/her solution to the problem, and the other person listens without interrupting.
3. Both people focus on what aspects of the solution will work (rather than focusing on what won't work).
4. Together, choose parts of both solutions that will satisfy both parties.

Pointers for the discussion:

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| Do | Be flexible. Listen carefully. Be open to compromise. Use <i>I</i> statements. |
| Don't | Focus on "all-or-none" solutions. Be rigid in only being open to your solution (e.g., "my way or the highway"). Criticize the other person for his/her ideas. |

Local Treatment Options for Veterans Dealing with Anger-Management Issues

1. Anger-Management Class
2. Couples or Family Therapy
3. Psychiatric Medications

Adapted from presentation by Dan Jones, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist