

How to Take a Proper “Time Out”

Tool’s Objective: To reduce out of control, heated fights that go nowhere

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Description

A time out can be signaled by either partner, when a fight has gotten out of control. This is the “circuit breaker” to ending unproductive fights. We use time outs to mitigate and ultimately end, unproductive fights.

Key Signals to Look For:

- Heart racing
- Repeating yourself
- Feeling flushed, speaking fast, or raising your voice
- Circling fighting
- Name calling, slamming doors, or harsh criticisms

Step 1: Create a Contract

You agree in advance to this. Your right to leave is sacrosanct. Nothing takes more precedent than ending repetitive, non-helpful fights in your relationship.

Step 2: Time-Out Specifics

- The interaction comes to an immediate stop.
- Always taken from an “I” position. For example, “Dear partner, for whatever reason, right or wrong, I am about to lose it. If I keep this up, I will regret what I will say or do. I am taking a break. I will check back in with you responsibly.”
- When taken from the “I” position, no one can argue with it.
- It is a very bad idea that you say, “you need a time out.”

Step 3: Timing

- Default: 20 minutes is when you need to check in.
- It doesn’t mean you need to get physically back together.
- Some need: 1-2 hours, ½ day, and a whole day.

Step 4: Take a 24-hour moratorium on what triggered the fight

- When you move back into contact, do not discuss the topic that set you off. You can talk about the conflict once it has been over 24 hours.