



TIME-OUT

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTATION FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Time-out is one of the many discipline methods used today, but it is often over used. When used appropriately, time-out can help children to think about their feelings and actions, to calm down and to develop self-control. However, if time-out is used inappropriately, it can be ineffective and a humiliating experience for the child.

As a child care professional, you should use this technical assistance piece to help you review your discipline policy and how you use time-out in your daily program.

Time-out should only be used to stop aggressive behavior, for serious violations of the rules and to allow angry or upset children to calm down. Use time-outs only as a last resort to help the child to calm down and to gain self-control.

BEFORE USING TIME-OUT TRY THESE ALTERNATIVES:

- Give gentle reminders of the rules.
- Redirect the child to another activity.
- Give the child hugs and reassuring words when he is upset.
- Help the child to use his words to express and cope with his feelings.
- Ask the child to discuss his feelings and problems with you.
- Identify with the feelings that the child is expressing, but let him know that his behavior is unacceptable.
- Model the way you would like the child to behave.
- Ask the child to think about a better way to cope with a situation.
- Suggest different ways the child can cope with a situation.
- Listen to the child's point of view and try to help him to come up with a solution to his problem.
- Help the children to work out their differences.

**REMEMBER
USE TIME-OUT ONLY AS A LAST RESORT!**

WHAT A TIME-OUT SHOULD BE

When used correctly, time-out can be a positive learning experience in which the child has a chance to calm down, think about his feelings and actions and learn how to better handle a similar situation in the future.

- An opportunity for the child and caregiver to calm down.
Time-out is a calming device that allows both the child and caregiver to calm down and think about their feelings, actions, reactions, and solutions.
- A place where children and caregivers go to feel better again.
Time-out is a technique that gives children an opportunity to get away from an upsetting or discouraging situation, to calm down and to feel better.
- A time for the child to learn how to change disruptive or aggressive behaviors into constructive behaviors.
Time-out gives children an opportunity to calm down, to think about their actions and to come up with a better way to handle a similar situation in the future.
- Available to a child for as little or as much time as he or she decides.

Children should have control over when they are ready to leave the time-out area, because only the child knows when he feels better and is ready to talk about his actions.

AVOID USING TIME-OUT FOR CHILDREN UNDER 3 YEARS OF AGE

Scenario: A 3-year-old girl is working on putting together a popular puzzle at the day care. A 2½-year-old boy wants to play with the same puzzle. Instead of asking if he can help her put the puzzle together, he shouts at the girl for playing with his favorite puzzle and pushes the puzzle off the table.

It is beyond the understanding of most children under 3 years of age understanding to share. They only understand that they want to play with a toy. For this reason, it is important to have more than one of a popular toy at your child care to prevent conflicts.

It is inappropriate to discipline children under 3 years of age for behavior that is beyond their control and understanding. Young children need constant supervision. They should be kindly and firmly removed from what they cannot do and be redirected to an activity they can do. When you are preparing your child care home or center's environment, keep in mind that children below the age of 3 do not understand the value of an object, such as a stereo system. Young children only know that they want to play with the object. If you do not want a young child to play with an object, keep it out of reach.

If children under 3 years of age are upset and need time to calm down, an adult should go with the child to a quiet place and help them calm down. The adult can help the child calm down by doing a relaxing activity with him such as, hugging him, reading a book, listening to peaceful music, or sitting with him as he cuddles with a stuffed animal until he feels better.

REVIEW YOUR DISCIPLINE POLICY

Are you using time-out inappropriately? Consider revising your discipline policy if you answer yes to any of these questions below:

Am I using time-out as a punishment?

Time-out should be used to help children learn how to gain control of his or her own behavior. It should not be used as a punishment.

Am I overusing time-out?

Use time-out sparingly. Always try positive alternative methods of discipline before you implement a time-out.

Am I using time-out as a retreat for me and not for the child?

When you use a time-out, use it because the child needs to calm down and regain his self-control not because you are angry.

Am I using time-out for every infraction of the rules?

If time-out is your only discipline tool, it is time to reevaluate your discipline policy to include positive methods of discipline.

Am I using time-out as a threat?

Time-out should never be used as a threat or punishment. Time-out should only be used to help a child to calm down and think about their feelings and actions.

Am I forgetting to discuss the reason for the time-out with the children?

Adults should always discuss with a child why he has been disciplined and help the child learn how he can better handle a similar situation in the future.

Am I trying alternatives before I use a time-out?

Use time-out only as a last resort! Always try alternatives to time-out first, such as redirection.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT A TIME-OUT

Let the child know why he is being directed to time-out.

Ask or direct the child to go to an area that is away from the other children.

Explain to the child that this time is to be used to calm down and think.

Tell the child that after he has calmed down to call you over when he is ready to talk.

Ask the child to tell you what a better way of handling the situation would be.

If the child has trouble coming up with a solution, help by asking questions or by offering suggestions

When the child comes up with an appropriate solution, either by himself or with your help, let him rejoin play.