

Time-Out Protocol

A Method to help Maintain Safety

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Take a Time-out

Accepting our limitations as humans and being considerate of those we love is essential if we want to maintain relationships. Remember, these suggestions apply to both the unfaithful and the betrayed spouse.

When anger or emotional flooding become destructive, time-outs are essential for protecting your relationship. Agreeing to utilize time-outs instead of having destructive interactions will communicate that you care for your mate and the relationship.

Read through the following guidelines for taking a time-out when communication becomes too explosive because anger or emotional flooding reaches a destructive level.

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 they are angry, so postponing the discussion until both parties have moved back into the rational mind is necessary if you're to have any kind of productive conversation.

How **** VERY IMPORTANT ****

To utilize time-outs, you must first develop your time-out procedure. This has to be developed when you're both calm. Failure to prepare beforehand is a guarantee for disaster. Here are the points to consider while developing your plan:

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

It is best to have both a verbal and nonverbal (hand signal) way of communicating the need to take a time-out. Use the phrase, "I'm taking a time-out. I'll be back in 30 minutes." This makes it official. If you do not use the phrase "time-out," your mate won't know that a previously arranged agreement is being called into action. The person who takes the time-out is the one who leaves the room.

Saying "time-out" is a statement, *not* a question. It is a "*no matter what*" agreement. If your partner says "time-out," you must let him or her leave the room without further questions, statements, comments, shaming, or blaming. The agreement you made with your mate is that you would stop talking and let him or her leave the room. If you cannot reasonably follow your agreement, then *you are out of your own control* and probably need professional help. No amount of saying, "If he didn't do that, then I wouldn't follow him or call him," will justify that you broke your agreement. If one person calls for a proper time-out and the other partner does not respect it, then that partner is out of control. You can't blame your way by saying, "It's okay that I broke my agreement because (fill in the blank)."

Another way to signal the need for a time out is for both of you to wear a

pulse watch with the alarm set at 100 beats per minute. If the alarm goes off, then the time-out is triggered and there's no argument as to the validity of the need for the time-out.

2. Both parties have to agree to disengage after a time-out is called

There is to be no following the partner who called the time-out. Admittedly this is difficult. For some, the only way they self-soothe is by withdrawing and processing the information in order to discuss the topic. Others need to keep talking to get resolution to reduce their stress. When this happens you're at cross purposes, but recognize that it's still necessary to use time-outs if you want to protect your marriage.

3. The conversation ends when the time-out is called.

Don't try to get in the last word. You'll have an opportunity later to complete your discussion.

4. When calling a time-out, the following needs to be communicated:

- That you agree to follow the time-out protocol.
- That you agree to begin again in 30 minutes.

5. What to do during the 30 minutes:

- Try to find something else to focus on, such as reading a book or reading your Bible.
- Do not think about what you're going to say when you come back together.
- Don't 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.

6. Upon returning to the discussion:

- Begin by stating three things you appreciate about your mate.
- Each presents his or her solution to the problem, and the other person listens without interrupting.
- Both people focus on what aspects of the solution will work (rather than focusing on what won't work).
- Together, choose parts of both solutions that will make both parties satisfied.

- Use “I” statements. Be flexible and look to compromise. Listen to see if you can understand how your mate is feeling and communicate your understanding.
- *Don't*:
 - Focus on “all or none” solutions.
 - Be rigid by only being open to your solution (e.g., “my way or the highway”).
 - Criticize the other person for his or her idea.