TIME-OUT

USING TIME-OUT FOR BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS

– Guidelines for Parents –

Time-out is a procedure to reduce unacceptable child behaviors. It involves placing your child in a dull place for a short period of time immediately following a behavior you do not approve of. The time-out place could be a step, a chair, sitting on the floor, a bedroom, or the base of a tree if you were outside. This should not be a scary or unsafe place like a bathroom, garage, or basement.

Time-out as a parenting technique has been effective in reducing problem behaviors such as tantrums, hitting, biting, failure to follow directions, bedtime problems, mealtime problems, and many others. In fact, parents report that the combination of time-in and time-out works much better than talking, reasoning, yelling, threatening, or spanking their children.

A. Preparations:

1. Purchase a small portable kitchen timer.
2. Select a place for time-out (such as a chair in the hallway, kitchen, or corner of a room). It needs to be a dull place where your child cannot view the TV or play with toys. It should NOT be a dark, scary, or dangerous place. The aim is to remove your child from time-in to a place where not much is happening NOT to make your child afraid.
3. There needs to be agreement between care providers in the home on which behaviors will result in time-out. Remember, consistency is very important.

B. Practice:

1. Before using time-out for discipline, practice using it with your child during a time your child is not in trouble.
2. Tell your child there are two rules when in time-out:
   RULE 1: The timer will start only when your child is quiet. Once child is quiet, if he/she begins to yell, cry, or say nasty words, the time stops and then starts all over when your child is quiet again. Ask your child what would happen if he/she cries or makes noises when in time-out. Your child should say something like -- "The timer will be reset." If your child does not say this, repeat the rule.
   RULE 2: If your child leaves time-out before the timer rings, you will (a) Lead him/her back to time-out without saying a single word and restart the timer when he/she is quiet or (b) Lead him/her to a bedroom that is safe (without talking to him/her) and close the door; then, when your child is quiet, restart the timer so that he/she can complete the time-out in the bedroom.
3. After explaining the rules and checking out your child’s understanding of the rules, go through the steps under section "C" of this handout. Tell your child you are only "pretending" this time.
4. Inform your child you will be using time-out instead of spanking, yelling, or threatening. Most kids are pleased to learn this.

C. Procedure:

Step 1: Following a behavior you do not like, say to your child, "You hit your sister, time-out." Say this calmly and only once. It is important not to lose your temper or to begin nagging your child with warnings. If your child does not go to time-out quickly, physically guide him/her to time-out. Guidance can range from walking alongside your child to leading him/her part way by the hand to carrying him/her to time-out.
Give your child about 5 seconds to respond to your instructions before saying time-out. However, you also need to catch your child being good within seconds after good behavior occurs. You can do this with either a pleasant touch or praise statement.

When carrying your child to time-out, hold him/her facing away from you so he/she does not confuse a hug with a trip to time-out and you don’t get hit/kicked.

**Remember once you say "time-out" to your son or daughter, do not speak with him/her again until he/she has completed the required quiet time in the time-out location you have designated.**

**Step 2:** When your child is sitting in time-out quietly, set the timer for a specific number of minutes. The rule of thumb is 1 to 3 minutes maximum. For younger children, start with 30 seconds and then build up to 3 minutes. For children five years of age and above, the most quiet time required is 3 minutes. If your child makes noises, talks, screams, or cries, reset the timer without saying a single word to your child. Do this each time he/she makes any noises. If your child leaves time-out before the quiet time is up:

a) Lead him/her back to time-out without saying a single word and restart the timer when he/she is quiet.
b) Lead him/her to a safe bedroom (without talking to him/her) and close the door. Then, when your child is quiet, restart the timer so that he/she can complete the time-out in the bedroom. Do this EACH time your child leave the original time-out location--like a chair or step.

**Remember, you decide when your child gets out of time-out, not your child**

**Step 3:** After your child has been quiet and in the designated time-out location for the required amount of time, the timer will ring. Go to the child and say "You have been quiet, you can get out now!" Do not make this statement from across the room.

**Step 4:** After finishing a time-out, your child should start with a "clean slate." It is not necessary to discuss, remind, or nag your child about what he/she did wrong. Within five minutes after time-out look for and physically praise good behavior--Catch Your Child Being Good.

If you had made a request that your child refused (like pick up your toys), place your child in time-out and then after the time-out is completed restate the instruction once again "You have been quiet, you can get out now. Please, put your toys away."

**D. Summary of the Rules:**

For Parents
* Decide about behaviors you will use time-out for ahead of time. Briefly inform your child of these behaviors.
* Avoid using warnings--warnings teach your child not to listen to you the first time.
* Don’t nag, scold, or talk to your child when he/she is in time-out. Remember, nobody can speak with your child until the time-out is over.
* Remain clam, even when your child is being testy.

For Children
* Go immediately to time-out when instructed to. Don’t argue.
* Remain quiet and stay in time-out until you are told to get down. You’ll spend less time that way.
* The timer is not to be touched by any child in the house. If you touch it, you will be placed in time-out.
* If you tease, laugh at, or talk with your brother/sister while they are in time-out, you will be placed on the chair and your brother/sister will get down.
TIME-OUT CHECKLIST

1. Is the time-out location away from distractions like the television, radio, and toys but not in a scary place?  
   Yes  No

2. Do you place your child in time-out within five (5) seconds after he or she does not mind you?  
   Yes  No

3. Do you briefly state the rule violation when placing your child in time-out?  
   Yes  No

4. Do you avoid showing anger like yelling, hitting, and spanking when placing your child in time-out?  
   Yes  No

5. Do you set the timer for the correct amount of quiet time -- 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 minutes?  
   Yes  No

6. Do you start the timer after your child is quiet?  
   Yes  No

7. Do you reset the timer when your child makes a noise or leaves time-out without permission?  
   Yes  No

8. Do you avoid talking to the child while he/she is in time-out?  
   Yes  No

9. Do you avoid eye contact with child while he/she is in time-out?  
   Yes  No

10. Do you go to the time-out location and state to your child, "You have been quiet. You may get out of time-out now"?  
    Yes  No

11. Do you allow your child to leave time-out when he/she has been quiet for the required period of quiet time?  
    Yes  No

12. Do you physically show approval to your child for good behavior within five (5) minutes after a time-out?  
    Yes  No

13. Do you avoid nagging your child about the behavior that resulted in a time-out after the time-out is over?  
    Yes  No

**** The correct answer to all the above questions is YES!!! ****