

From the Terry Real's
"The New Rules for Marriage:
What You Need to Know to Make Love Work"

A GUIDE TO RELATIONSHIP "TIME OUTS"

WHY WE NEED "TIME OUTS"

When you and your partner are in conflict and the interaction becomes destructively contentious it may be time for a "time out".

If either one of you starts to lose emotional control, or if the discussion has clearly become counterproductive, a "time out" is an opportunity for both of you to reset.

SPEAK FROM "I"

Before you and your partner begin the practice of taking "time outs" make sure that you both understand the purpose and ground rules of using them.

If you believe that the intensity of a conflict is counterproductive, and that a "time out" would be helpful, communicate your need for a break to keep yourself from behaving in a way that you will regret.

SIGNAL

By discussing the purpose and methods of taking "time outs" with your partner before a conflict arises, both of you will understand and appreciate how "time outs" will function to support your relationship.

As part of this contracting process select a word, hand signal, or gesture that will communicate your need for a "time out", even when you can't trust yourself to speak without losing control.

EXPLAIN & PROMISE

Walking out is not a "time out". When you take a "time out" it is critical that you:

- 1 - Explain why you need the break based on your own reactions or behavior, not your partner's.
- 2 - Promise that you will return and clearly communicate when you will be back.
- 3 - Commit to returning to the topic when you are both calm

WALK AWAY

Taking a "time out" is not a request or negotiation.

Once you express or signal your intention to take a "time out" don't continue the interaction. Leave the room, shut the door, if necessary, leave the house.

CHECK IN

20 minutes | 1 hour | 2 hours | 1/2 Day
Full Day | Overnight

Once the agreed upon time interval has passed check in with your partner by text, phone, or face-to-face to see if you are ready to reconnect.

If after your initial agreed upon time interval you aren't ready to be calm together communicate how much longer you need and check in again then.

REMEMBER

WHY

The purpose of a "time out" is to calm down and keep yourself from saying something hurtful to your partner or destructive to your relationship.

You are not withdrawing to punish your partner.

DON'T RE-ENGAGE THE ISSUE

When you and your partner reconnect after a "time out" don't hold a grudge or immediately continue discussing the topic that created the conflict, and don't try to "process" the interaction. Take a twenty-four hour break from the issue and the conflict that you had, but agree to when you will continue the discussion and honor that agreement.

Focus on reconnecting with your partner with a hug, a kind gesture, or kind words.

KNOW WHEN TO ASK FOR HELP

If a particular topic regularly requires that you and your partner take a "time out", or if you frequently find yourselves in interactions that require the use of "time outs" to avoid escalating the level of conflict between you, find help.

A trusted spiritual guide, mental health professional, good couples counselor, or trained relationship coach can work with you as a couple to help you find a more effective way to engage and connect.

To Learn More Visit www.SavvyStrategies.com

For more free relationship tools:
www.savvystrategies.com/freerelationhiptools

©2020 by Savvy Strategies Relational Life Therapy - created with Canva