

TIME OUT

When you find yourself in a situation where you know that your anger will only increase, you need a way to stop long enough to let things cool down. The strategy that works well in controlling anger is called "Time Out". Time Outs help to build trust. Every time you return from a Time Out you are confirming your commitment to the relationship.

The idea of a Time Out must be understood and agreed to beforehand by both people. Then, when either person becomes aware that anger has begun to interfere with the discussion, he or she calls a Time Out. It is important to call a Time Out early, before both of you get really hot. The simplest way to do it is to make a "T" sign with your hands, just like the referees do. Once the "T" sign is made, all communication should stop. Both people, by prior agreement, are obligated to stop talking. There should be no last words, no parting shots.

The "T" sign is a signal to separate for a while. Whoever calls the Time Out should leave the room or the house for a predetermined length of time (usually one hour). It is very important to return when the time is up so that the other person doesn't feel abandoned or rejected. It is also important for the other person to wait so both of you can try to discuss the matter again with cooler heads.

While you are gone during a Time Out do something physically challenging or relaxing. The idea is to work off some of the angry tension so you can return feeling less stressed. Do not rehearse the faults and failings of the other person - that will only make you more angry. Do not rehearse what you are going to say. And absolutely do not use drugs or alcohol during a Time Out separation.

When you return, check in with the other person. Find out whether both of you are ready to return to a cooler discussion of the conflict. If so, do so. If not, then set a specific time when both of you will be willing to try again.

Taking a Time Out does not mean that the matter is settled and that everything is OK. It simply means that the anger is under control.

TIME OUT CONTRACT

When I realize that my (or my partners) anger is rising, I will give a "T" signal for a Time Out and leave at once. I will not hit or kick anything, and I will not 'slam' the door.

I will call in no later than one hour. I will take a walk, go to a meeting, use up my anger energy, in some constructive way and will not use drugs or alcohol while I am away. I will try not to focus on resentments.

If my partner gives a "T" signal and leaves, I will return the sign and let my partner go without hassle, no matter what is going on. I will not drink or use drugs while my partner is away and I will avoid focusing on resentments.

Signed : _____ Date : _____

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