

Time Out

Use This:

To introduce a skill to reduce the occurrence of unwanted behaviour through time away from rewards and attention.



Goals

- The parent will understand how to use time out as a means of dealing with moderately disruptive behaviours (throwing tantrums, hitting, being mean or disrespectful)
- The parent will implement a time out programme at home or adapt an existing one

Materials

- **Fear Thermometer** and **Fear Ladder** (2 unrated copies for anxiety/trauma), **Feelings Thermometer** (for depression) (pp. 318, 320, 342)
- **Time out** parent handout (p. 413)
- **Checklist of Strategies** (if necessary) (p. 391)
- **Weekly questionnaires** and **Monitoring sheet** (see pages 277-293)
- **Therapist Note Taking Sheet** (p. 276)

⚡ If time is tight: Teach the parent how to stop moderately bad behaviour by quickly placing the child in a boring place and removing all rewards and attention from the child's behaviour for a set period of time.

Main steps

<input type="checkbox"/> Set an Agenda	Remember to start by setting an agenda together and reviewing any practice assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Obtain Weekly Ratings	If the main focus is traumatic stress or anxiety, use the 0 to 10 scale of the Fear Thermometer to obtain Fear Ladder ratings from both the child and his or her parent. If the main focus is depressed mood, use the Feelings Thermometer to take a rating. Review Weekly questionnaires and Monitoring sheet in detail, in particular, examples of rewards and how it worked/didn't work.

<input type="checkbox"/> Introduce Time Out	<p>Review with the parent that time out is a method of mild discipline that involves a brief interruption of pleasant activities for the child. Time out may not be suitable for older teenagers, instead, positive reinforcement such as praise and rewards may be sufficient.</p> <p>Review the parent's views of time out and previous experiences. Some parents are actively opposed to time out or have had a negative prior experience of it. Decide together if time out is something the parent wants to try or whether they prefer to focus on the praise, effective instructions etc. Only do this module if the parent thinks it will be of value.</p> <p>Describe time out. The child is quickly removed from the situation in which his or her misbehaviour occurs and placed in a quiet, boring place. Children do not like being in time out because they lose attention, temporary freedom, and more importantly, the power to upset and manipulate their parents. Thus, putting a child in time out when a particularly undesirable behaviour occurs will decrease the chance that the same behaviour will occur again in the future.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Benefits	<p>Inform parent of the short- and long-term benefits that can result from employing time out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problem behaviour will occur less often • The parent will have a chance to "cool off" • It is milder and safer than other types of discipline sometimes used by families (e.g., screaming, spanking) • Children will learn to consider the consequences of their actions because the consequences are predictable
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss When to Use Time Out	<p>Refer to page 1 of the <i>Time Out</i> handout. Explain that time out should be used for stopping moderate misbehaviour (i.e., rude, aggressive, destructive, or nasty acts; behaviour that might be dangerous to self or others even if it wasn't intended to be).</p> <p>Advise the parent that <i>time out is not the preferred technique for dealing with passive or mild misbehaviour</i> (e.g., sulking, whining). Examples of behaviours appropriate for time out appear on the handout.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Pick Behaviours	<p>Move to page 2 of the <i>Time Out</i> handout. Instruct the parent to select 1 to 3 target behaviours for time out. Explain that other behaviours can be added once the family has had the chance to practise time out for a while. When starting out, try to pick behaviours that occur at least once a day, that are easily defined, and that can be observed at home. The parent should write these on the handout.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/> Emphasise Use of Positive Skills	Point out that time out will work best in the context of frequent use of attention, praise, and rewards. Time out only teaches a child what not to do; it does not teach a child what to do. Thus, the parent must also use incentives like attention, praise, and rewards to teach the child positive behaviours to do instead. These behaviours should be the opposite of the time out behaviours (e.g., being kind instead of being mean to a sibling). The parent should write examples on the handout.
<input type="checkbox"/> Pick a Location	Work together to select a place for time out, and write it on the handout. The location should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dull (i.e., no other people available, away from toys, games, TV, books, pets, windows). • Not be scary or humiliating (e.g., a dark room or facing the corner). • Centrally located (the child should be able to get to the time out place within 10 seconds). • Out of the way so that other family members are not tempted to talk to or interact with the child in time out.
<input type="checkbox"/> Review the Steps	Move to page 3 of the <i>Time Out</i> handout. Review the specific steps, using one of the behaviours you picked on page 2 of the handout. Don't forget to point out that if the child has not followed through on an instruction, it must be repeated after the time out is over.
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Immediate Time Outs	Point out to the parent that some behaviours will be serious enough that they do not require a warning (e.g., aggressive or dangerous behaviour). These can also include violations of house rules (e.g., use of foul language, if there is a known rule in the house against it). Ask the parent to list some behaviours that would warrant a time out without warning for his or her child.
<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Follow-Up	Inform the parent that in all but the rarest cases, the incident should be dropped once the child has served a time out. The parent should resist the temptation to scold or humiliate the child. When the time out is completed, the child should be told that he or she may go play. If the child remains annoyed after the time out, the parent should be encouraged to ignore this behaviour. The child has a right to these feelings as long as the misbehaviour does not continue.

<input type="checkbox"/> Review Common Problems	<p>Review with the parent the common problems associated with implementing time out, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arguing: Arguing can be ignored. If it escalates to shouting and yelling, the parent can reset the timer. • Refusing to go to or leaving time out: When the child refuses to go to time out or leaves, the parent can guide him or her gently to the time out area. Another option is for the child to lose a privilege or toy until the time out is performed (e.g., video games). If this loss of privilege does not work, the parent can take away all privileges available to the child. • Being out of the house: The parent should plan with you how to implement time out if the child misbehaves in a public place, such as a grocery store. Encourage the parent to bring the timer and to look for an appropriate time out place upon arrival, if behaviour problems are expected. Examples include the family car or a nearby park bench.
<input type="checkbox"/> Encourage Frequent and Calm Use	<p>Advise the parent not to wait for problems to become extreme before issuing a time out. If the parent uses time out only when he or she is angry and frustrated, time out is probably being used too infrequently or is not occurring immediately after the target behaviour. In such cases, mistakes can happen, like the parent shouting or choosing an excessively long time out period due to his or her feelings of anger.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVITY <i>Practising Time Out</i>	<p>Engage in a role-play with the parent in which you play his or her child (adapt for telephone delivery). In your role, begin to engage in one of the target behaviours that the parent has agreed to address with his or her child at home. When you begin displaying the target behaviour, the parent should then put you (as the child) into time out. Provide praise and supportive feedback when the role-play is over.</p> <p>It is often helpful to the parent if you role-play again, this time exhibiting some of the challenging behaviours (i.e., refusing to go, arguing, leaving time out) discussed earlier. This added challenge gives the parent an opportunity to practise using time out under more realistic conditions.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss Introducing Time Out	<p>If the child is not available today to speak with you, discuss with the parent how he or she will explain time out to the child. The parent should choose a time when everyone is relaxed and not upset. Both parents should be present for this discussion with the child if possible; this will help the child understand that both parents have the same expectations for the child's behaviour. The parents should tell the child that they love him or her, and that they want to help the child remember good ways to behave (using whatever language fits best for the child). As part of this, the parents want to help the child remember not to do [identify target behaviours], because these behaviours are causing some problems for the family. The parent should not ask for the child's agreement with this statement or argue with the child about this. The parents should note that the child will be required to have a time out (spend a certain amount of time in the time out place) when these behaviours happen.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVITY Practise Introducing Time Out	<p>If the child is not available today, role-play a discussion with the parent in which you act as the "child" while he or she explains to you the behaviours that will be targeted with time out, how the time out procedure will work, and what this new strategy will mean for the family.</p> <p>As the parent explains time out during the role-play, try to ask the parent questions that you imagine his or her child might ask. This activity should help the parent learn how to talk to the child about time out, and it will also help you size up the parent's level of understanding of this strategy. This is a good time to review any misperceptions or misunderstandings, and to work with the parent on the most effective way to explain time out to the child.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> PRACTICE ASSIGNMENT <i>Time Out at Home</i>	<p>The parent should be instructed to begin introducing time out in his or her home, focusing for now on one or two behaviours. Using the <i>Monitoring sheet</i>, the parent should record every instance in which time out was used, the child's behaviour that prompted time out, and how well the parent felt he or she was able to implement the time out procedure. The parent should also record the length of each time out.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Send the materials for the next session	<p>Tell the parent/s you will send a written summary and the materials for the next session. Remind them that they <u>do not</u> need to be completed for next session as you will go through them together in the session. Tell the parent/s you will also send the <i>Weekly questionnaires, Monitoring sheet</i> and <i>Checklist of Strategies</i> (if necessary) which need to be completed for the next session.</p>
	<p>Confirm date and time of the next call.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/> Summarising	Ask if they would like you to summarise the session, if they want to summarise or if you should do it together.
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Leave ‘Em Laughing

End the session on a positive note with the parent by perhaps talking about things that are unrelated to his or her child, or discussing an area of interest you have in common with the parent. Also, the parent might be feeling overwhelmed by the challenging tasks he or she is undertaking; it can sometimes be helpful to leave a few minutes at the end of the session for the parent to share concerns or the challenges he or she has faced with the child since the previous session. The end of each session should be used to praise the parent’s efforts and to convey support and encouragement.

Share with Child (if possible)

At the end of the session, if the child is available, it can be helpful to brief him or her on the materials covered.

<input type="checkbox"/> Review Concepts	Explain to the child that there will be some changes in the way the parent will handle the child’s behaviour when the child engages in certain behaviours (inform the child of specific behaviours that you and the parent have agreed to target in the coming week). Explain that these changes are meant to be helpful for everyone. You can tell the child that for the time being, the parent will respond to these behaviours by having the child go quickly to a quiet place for a set amount of time (indicate the duration that has been chosen). You and the parent should emphasise to the child that he or she is still loved by the parent, but that some of the child’s behaviour has been causing problems, and the parent will be changing how he or she has been responding to that behaviour. Use questions to make sure the child understands how time out will work at home, and invite the child to ask the parent any questions he or she might have.
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<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVITY <i>Practise Time Out with Child</i>	Ask the child and parent to engage in a role-play involving time out. Prior to beginning this exercise, you and the parent should agree upon the behaviour to be used (you may refer to the handout for examples). Part of the treatment room or area should also be designated in advance as the time out area. After explaining how time out will work to the child, ask the child to perform the behaviour (in a “pretend” or “make-believe” manner), with the understanding that the parent will then direct the child to time out. For this practice, the time out should last only about a minute, so as to demonstrate the point of how time out works. Pay close attention to the way in which the parent directs the child to time out, making sure that he or she uses fewer than 10 words in 10 seconds, labels the child’s misbehaviour, and issues clear instructions for the child to go to time out. If the
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child exhibits oppositional behaviours in response to the instruction to go to time out (i.e., talking back, arguing, refusing to go), note how the parent handles these behaviours. Note the parent's response to the child when time out has ended.

After the role-play has been concluded, thank the child and excuse him or her from the room. Ask for the parent's thoughts about his or her performance. Give lots of praise for any success! Provide the parent with specific feedback about his or her ability to use time out. Make specific suggestions with respect to how the parent can improve his or her time out skills, and provide support and reassurance.

Helpful Tips

- Some parents might say "Oh – I've tried time out, and it doesn't work." You should acknowledge that time out takes a lot of patience and effort, but assure the parent that much of the success of time out is in the fine tuning. There are dozens of different ways to do time out, and that what you are going to practise today is a procedure that really does work. If it is not successful right away, encourage the parent not to give up. Troubleshooting can often reveal simple changes that will improve the success of using time out.
- If a parent is new to time out, prepare him or her for the possibility that time out will be challenging at first. For example, the child might throw temper tantrums, which can be distressing to the parent. Let the parent know that during such tantrums, he or she may feel like giving in to the child so that the tantrum will stop. Advise the parent that giving in to the child in such situations might stop the tantrum, but it will increase the chances of the time out behaviour happening again in the future. Reassure the parent that a high rate of negative behaviour in response to the time out procedures initially can mean that the child is really concerned and hence the technique is actually working as planned.
- Advise the parent that using time out inconsistently greatly weakens the effectiveness of this strategy and makes it much more difficult to implement in the future.
- If the child is unavailable for the session, the parent will need to be prepared to explain time out to the child and answer questions before using it at home.

How's Your Style?

- Did you praise often?
- Did you review often, by asking questions?
- Did you simplify the steps as needed?
- Did your pace match that of the child or family?
- Did you stay on track?