



Time Out

A Technique for Easing Communication, Easing the Nervous System, Gaining Awareness, & Caring for Relationships

When you're "triggered," "activated," feeling an upset brewing, or If you feel anger building, it's time to take a pause and slow things down.

When you're emotions rise up to boiling, and the thinking part of your brain shuts down because your body is flooding with hormones to help you fight or flee, biologically, you are not able to reason, until you calm down.

You can avoid boiling over or creating a communication disaster by taking a Time Out

A Time out will help you think more clearly and access your relational abilities, empathy & compassion - as your heart rate goes down and stress hormones subside.

This way, you can allow the rational & relational part of your brain to reflect on the situation and prepare to respond in alignment with what really matters to you rather than be taken over by reactivity in fight or flight mode, or in a cycle of "freezing up," unable to express.

Taking a time-out is not a sign of weakness.

It is a magnificent act of strength, self-control, and compassion for all.

How to use the Time Out Plan

For the Time Out to be most effective, It's important to follow *all* the steps because they each serve an important purpose.

How to do a Time Out - 10 Steps

1. Take time now to discuss the Time Out plan with your partner, before the time comes for you to use it. This can help prepare both of you, and can reassure them that you care for the relationship and want to be responsible for your part in it. They may choose to adopt this strategy too.
2. Plan a head where you will go during your time out. Consider a location that is safe and calming where you can go during your time out. (not a bar or friend's house)
3. Take time now to reflect on what tends to "trigger" you and what you notice as signs that you are starting to become upset or angry. Write down a list of the sensations and things you notice about yourself as you become angry. Get to know that list and decide that as soon as you notice these signs, you are going to take a Time Out.

In the Future:

4. As soon as you notice the first sign of your upset or anger, tell your partner you are going to take a time-out. Becoming adept at noticing & understanding your body sensations can really help with this. Somatic, Breath, & Meditation Practices are very helpful for both catching upsets sooner and having the ability to calm & self regulate.
5. When you call a time-out, focus on your own emotions and communicate simply, letting your partner know that you're feeling upset and you are going to take a Time Out. Do not get caught up in blame toward your partner. Say something like "I'm starting to feel upset and overwhelmed. I'm going to take a "time-out" rather than "You drive me crazy. I'm outta here!" or "How dare you? I can't do this anymore!"
6. Tell your partner where you are going. Even though you decided this ahead of time, it's reassuring for them and they are less likely to feel abandoned or worried about you.
7. Tell your partner how long you're going to be gone. Choose a reasonable amount of time to calm down, think, and reflect. Make sure to show up when you say you are going to show up. Again, it's reassuring for them and they are less likely to feel abandoned or worried about you. Take at least an hour to let the hormones wear off. It's good to do some gentle movement like walking for the first while. Resourcing techniques like breathing, grounding, and somatic practices also help. Once your heart rate is settled and you feel a little more calm, It's time to reflect on how you can respond in the best way possible. (To become highly skilled at

reflecting on a situation, (See the LoveAlive 14 Step Reflection Sheet). Also, resist the urge to purposefully make your partner wait extra long as some form of punishment and If you find yourself thinking about staying away for days, you are most likely avoiding the situation. Avoidance or distancing can be very damaging for relationships.

8. Let your partner know that you care about them and want to have a meaningful conversation where you can both hear one another's point of view. This reassures your partner that they matter to you and you value their feelings and perspectives. It lets your partner know that you care about working through the issue with them in a healthy way and won't just avoid it. Make sure to follow through on this commitment.
9. When you leave, leave respectfully. The energy you leave with them will impact their process while you're gone and will set the tone for your return. Do your best to leave with respect and go quietly with self control.
10. Be dependable and return when you said you would, or call if you think you need more time to cool off. Then commit to this new time frame. Following through and showing up when you said you would builds trust, and a sense of security that is very important to building and maintaining trust in a relationship.

What to Avoid during your Time Out:

Avoid:

Driving

- Driving can be dangerous when your all worked up on adrenaline and cortisol.

Avoid:

Bars, Drinking, Drugs, & the Internet

- They don't help you think clearly and often make matters worse.

Avoid:

Violent Expressions - this just builds the anger into a rage.

Avoid:

Calling your friends and relatives. This is just a distraction from actually calming down and thinking and they often take sides or give damaging advice which only complicates the process of truly getting clear.

What to Do During your Time Out:

Do Things that help, like:

- Exercise helps you burn off the excess energy so you can think.
- Re-Sourcing Practices like Calming Breathing & Qi Gong can help you become more calm, clear, & connected.
- Use the LoveAlive 14 Step Reflective Process
- Think about what you appreciate about your partner.
- Think about your partner with compassion. Apply compassion to create greater understanding toward your partner. Think about their situation, what they might be going through and try to see their perspective.
- Consider the outcome you most want to create and aim for that. How can you help to create understanding between the two of you and nurture your intimate relationship?
- Sometimes writing is useful to clarify your thoughts, have a thorough reflective process and remember what you want to say. (14 step Reflection Process)
- If you feel a desire to process with someone, call someone who can be neutral, compassionate to both people, and confidential, like a counsellor or mentor. Don't vent to a personal friend or relative - this can cause more issues.

Variation / Addition

Have a conversation to create an understanding regarding when the dynamic gets too intense and you need to take a break. Implement a signal that you can each use.

Signal: Putting up your hand and say: “yellow light”

Which means: I need to pause and take a 15 minute breather and I'll be back to continue the conversation after this opportunity to ground and calm a bit.

This can also give you an opportunity to determine whether you need a longer time out to find the clarity you need.