

How to Take a Parent Time-Out with Small Children Underfoot

One of the very best parenting tools is the Parent Time-Out. When parents are feeling upset, angry, or frustrated over a parenting issue, or over their children's behaviour, it can help to diffuse the situation if the parent removes themselves to get calm and centered, rather than force the isolation of their child into a Child Time-Out. After the parent is calm, they are in a much better frame of mind to deal with the issue at hand and they've avoided saying and doing things they might regret later. Sometimes, with young children, this is easier said than done!

Many parents object to the parent time out because they complain that their toddlers and preschool children just follow them around the house, screaming, whining and crying. How True!

Here are some tips to Mentally Time-Out when you can't physically time yourself out:

- Throw a CD on the stereo and dance hard!
- Use an IPOD or MP3 player filled with your favorite songs to distract you.
- Have earplugs everywhere. In the car, kitchen, purse, and bathroom. They take the edge off a child's screaming that can damage your ears.
- Lock yourself in the bathroom. Tell the children that you love them, and Mommy/Daddy is feeling angry, and needs to take a time-out for herself or himself. Turn on the fan or shower so you can't hear the children, and breathe slowly. Visualize yourself in a calm place.
- Do the Hokey-Pokey, and shake it out! Smile and make a funny noise and you will all be laughing.
- Phone a friend to have a brief conversation. Tell her how you feel. Call from the closet or a bathroom if you have to.
- Distract yourself with a magazine.
- Drop everything, dress your children and yourself for the weather, and put them in the stroller. Go for a brief walk outside. Exercise, fresh air, peace and quiet! Children will be distracted by the sights and sounds and you can think out your anger in peace.
- Put a children's DVD or Mom's movie on the player. It will either distract you or your child, and will give both of you time to calm down.
- If you are in the car, pull over to a parking lot or some other safe place. Get out of the car, leave the children in there, and walk around the car 20 times. Cry, deep breathe, vent or stomp. Get back in the car when you have calmed down.
- Imagine a soundproof, gentle, clear shell around yourself to protect you from screaming children.
- Sit on the porch, find a closet, basement, or somewhere you can be alone. Make sure the children are in a safe place.
- Tell your child that you both need a group hug. It can be very hard to hug someone that you feel angry with, but the touch is soothing and helps to heal the anger. It works well for some people.
- Use "Self-Talk" Say over and over to yourself, "My child is not trying to bug me right now. She is only coping with her strong feelings in the only way she knows how. "But me first."

- Remember the phrase: “Get myself calm, Get my child calm, and then solve the problem.”

What skills do you use to calm down in situations other than parenting? Use some of those strategies if you can. Just as the oxygen masks in airplanes are meant to be used on adults first, so they can be in a position to help the children, you must take care of your needs first when you are angry. The bonus gift is that you are truly modeling for your child, how to take a calming time-out when situations become overwhelming. Modeling by example, instead of forcing them in time-out, is the best way for children to learn self-calming tools.

FOR YOUR CHILDREN’S SAKE, TAKE A BREAK!

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