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Enjoy!

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Basic Parenting 101:

THE MANUAL YOUR CHILD
SHOULD HAVE BEEN BORN WITH

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How-2 Parenting Series

This book is available to therapists from CEUforTherapists.com at wholesale pricing.

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

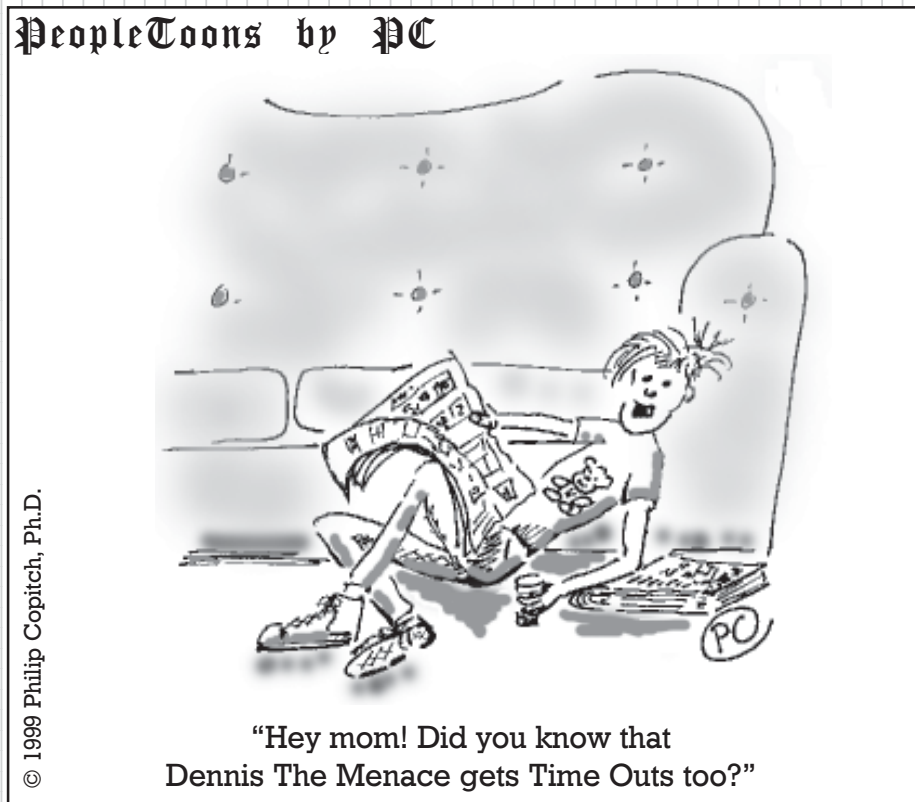
1. You will study a solid overview of Therapeutic Time Out Procedures.
2. You will read real life examples of how children emotionally grow when Therapeutic Time Out Procedures are used correctly.
3. You will study ways to teach a complicated subject to parents who are coming to you for help with their children.
4. You will experience the power of story as a cognitive-behavioral therapeutic tool.
5. You will learn ways to demystify psychotherapy for your patients.

Tell me, I forget.

Show me, I remember.

Involve me, I understand.

Time Out is not punishment



INTRODUCTION

I am a Cognitive Behavioral Family Therapist. I usually do not tell my patients this because it would not make any sense to them. I tend to introduce myself with, “Hi, I’m Dr. Phil. I solve problems. How’s your world?”

Usually, within the first few minutes, a new patient will say something like, “I’ve tried everything!” or “I’ve read all the books.” or “My last therapist told me...”

Many therapists tell me that they find this type of early confrontation worrisome because they now have to deal with the teachings of others (good or bad). For me, I love this starting point.

I start by advocating, “I would think that you have lots of skills. My goal is to help you use your skills better and to add a few new ones— if we find that you need some support in one or two areas.”

At this point the new patient tends to relax a little and tells me one or two worries.

When I work with parents I often find that the most well meaning of them are missing basic parenting and coping skills. In this course we are going to look at how to teach basic learning theory in a way so that a loving parent can pick it up and use it. And I do mean use it. I find that the parents I work with are eager to try new ways of dealing with old problems; as long as I don’t try to stuff the new stuff down their throats. A major part of my therapy is teaching, but not in the high school or college way. I teach through stories. I tell vivid stories about solving problems. I let my patients walk out of each session with new eyes; with new skills embedded in a story form. In a safe story form. I want them to be able to get their minds around the new concept without feeling like they are wading through science or psycho-babble. I teach in the way we humans have probably passed down important information since the beginning of the extended family.

As you continue, you will find stories and information intertwined. With families I often have a set agenda to cover in a session. I estimate that about fifty percent of the time this preconceived session occurs. I tend to start it with something like, “I would like to talk with you about how your son Bobby learns. You know, the nuts and bolts of how his mind picks up information and stores it away so he can argue with you about it later. Is that OK with you?”

The other half the time, my plan goes right out the window when the patient walks in and says something like, “My first husband showed up drunk to pick up Bobby...” In this situation I deal with the parent’s most pressing concerns.

Other times, I can segue into a psychotherapeutic teaching mode (Cognitive Psychotherapy). “It sounds like you dealt with that pretty well, as we discussed last session, we were going to talk

At a PTA meeting:

“Dr. Phil I can’t give my fifteen year old a Time Out, even though he needs one more than my two younger children.

“Why not?” Dr. Phil responded, “I give myself Time Outs, I just call it ‘going for a walk.’ With teens, you can define it as, “*Please go to your room until you are calm and able to talk to me calmly.*”



Quick Reference Guide

Punishment: The presentation of an adverse stimulus following an undesired response that decreases the likelihood of the undesired response.

Discipline: Learned choices, self control.

Kids *do* better when they *feel* better. We don't motivate kids to do better by making them feel worse through punitive Time Outs.

Jane Nelson
Lynn Lott
Stephen Glenn

about how Bobby learns, is this a good time for us to do that?"

You may have noticed, I ask for permission before I move on. I find that most people feel safer and are much more receptive to my stories if I ask permission to control the conversation for a few minutes.

TIME OUT IS GETTING A BAD REPUTATION

The powerful parenting tool 'Time Out' has suffered from serious bad press over the last 20 years. Comedians joke about needing a time out and TV commercials use Time Out as proof that TV dads are lovable but rather dumb.

I work with teachers and parents who tell me regularly that, "Time Out does not work!" They explain that it use to work, but not with the internet savvy kids of today. I wholeheartedly disagree.

Time out is a wonderful technique for helping young and old alike. I teach Time Out procedures to business executives to assist them in emotionally heated corporate negotiations, as well as to preschool teachers to use with whiny children and overstressed parents.

The problem with Time Out procedure is that it is not being taught correctly. In this CEU course I will show you how to teach parents to use Time Outs to help their children grow up emotionally happy and self-assured.

So, if it is OK with you, let's talk about how children learn.

TIME OUT IS NOT PUNISHMENT

IT IS A STOP GAP MEASURE

As parents it is our responsibility to help our children develop into responsible and caring adults. There are lots of obstacles in the way. Our children are influenced by many people and circumstances. I am sure there are more influences outside of our control than ones we can manufacture to assist our children.

The family management skill of **Time Out** was developed to empower our children to make age appropriate choices, while at the same time allowing caring parents to be people. Many parents feel that they become jailers to their children. They feel that their children choose to disobey because their children dislike them. This makes for a rough relationship for both parents and children.

Probably, the most important single skill we can nurture in our children is the skill of making *informed decisions*. This is not a simple task. Most adults find that they tend to react to their world verses interact with their world. When one interacts with their environment they take in information, control their initial emotional reaction and

then evaluate their options. This process is often a rare commodity, even in adults. It is much more common for people to react to the situation, to get caught up in the moment, to view only the immediate, the short term.

When I was at the gift shop of a large amusement park, I witnessed families overpaying for all sorts of “must have it now” stuff. I imagine that these same parents are more price conscious at their local department store. But, with all the excitement, the bells and whistles, I saw \$57 sweat shirts and \$28 tee shirts flying off the shelves. I’m not saying this is bad, I’m just observing this phenomenon. Most local department stores could not sell a \$28 cartoon tee shirt.

It is important that we teach our children to make informed decisions. To take the time to think of *what* they really want and *why* they want it. And, to take into account the consequences of their choices, the consequences of their behaviors. Unfortunately, many well meaning professionals are teaching Time Out procedures as a form of punishment. “If you do not sit in your seat and focus on your math sheet, you will have to go to the Time Out area.”

I was asked by a school principal to observe a few classes and suggest some topics for the school’s in-service program. The principal was happy overall with his school but he was concerned that over the last few years the students were getting more violent. He told me, “Five years ago, when I took over, the biggest problem was foul words exchanged on the playground. This very month I have sent four children home for fighting. Not pushing matches mind you, down and dirty drag out fights.” The principal went on to explain that Time Outs were not working any longer. “Even the younger children do not respect the teachers. I heard one first grader scream at his teacher, ‘I don’t have to do a !@#\$\$% Time Out, you can’t make me!’”

Earlier, we discussed the definition of punishment. For something to be a punisher it must decrease the likelihood of the undesirable behavior in the future. At the school mentioned above, the principal was frustrated that Time Outs were not decreasing the likelihood of an undesired behavior. This is true, a little nothing Time Out cannot decrease the likelihood of an undesired behavior. Time Out is not punishment. Time Out is a procedure to help a child regain self control. When the basketball team calls for a Time Out to devise its last second play, the Time Out does nothing for the score. It simply allows the team to get its composure back, to build a plan, to develop options. When a child earns a Time Out, the Time Out itself solves nothing. It is simply a way for the child (and parent) to build a plan and develop options. If need be, the parent or teacher can assist the child, once all is calm— to look at choices. Time Out does not control a child’s behavior; the child must do that. Please note, at the point that the child earned a Time Out, his

Peace comes not from the absence of conflict in life but from the ability to cope with it.

behaviors were working for him or he would not have been acting that way. Maybe in the long run the behavior was dysfunctional, but not at the time he was doing it. Kids act out because it works for them. It gets a need met. This need does not have to be understandable to us, but we must understand that the child is getting a need met.

PUNISHMENT VERSUS DISCIPLINE

The concept of punishment versus discipline tends to be confusing for many parents. I recommend you go over it a few times during multiple sessions. Most parents find it difficult to let go of 'punishment' as their #1 parenting tool. The following basic concept must be understood by the parent before they can commit to using Time Out procedures consistently with their children.

Adversity has the effect of eliciting talents, which, in prosperous circumstances, would have lain dormant.

Horace

Punishment is the presentation of an adverse stimulus, following an undesired response, that decreases the likelihood of that undesired response. **Discipline** is learned choices, self control. With punishment we force our demands on our child, but when we teach our children to be disciplined we teach them how to make choices and let them build character.

Over the years I have seen many children in my practice who understood right from wrong, but chose wrong to prove to themselves that they could. These children tended to be from families that used punishment as their main parenting tool. As these children developed into adolescence, disobeying parental authority was their measure of their own budding adulthood.

Ruby is a good example of how punishment can backfire. Ruby was 16 years old when I first met her. She had run away from her family but had no specific reason for doing so. Ruby told me, "They don't understand me. My dad just tells me what to think. He is so mean." Mr. and Mrs. Stein were at a loss. "Ruby was a good girl. She never gave us any trouble," Mrs. Stein said. "Then she started to argue about everything. It was as if she wanted us to punish her. She went out of her way to cause problems."

As Ruby got older she had a need to voice her opinions. When this happened, her parents tried to talk calmly and logically about the case at hand. For Ruby this was belittling. She was a cauldron of feelings. She wanted to change her parents' thoughts. She didn't want to discuss, she wanted to be right. When things got out of hand, Ruby would be sent to her room. "It used to make me so mad! They would just dismiss me like I was a servant. I would go to my room fuming. I would think of all sorts of hideous things that should happen to my parents. I even prayed to God to smite them for their insensitivity." (As you can tell, Ruby was a dramatic child.)

When Mr. and Mrs. Stein sent Ruby to her room, their goal was

to teach her to calm down and talk to them in a civil tone. But, instead, the reason for the punishment was lost on Ruby. All she learned was to hate her parents for punishing her. Then she felt guilty for her hateful feelings. In the long run, Ruby ran away from home because she was angry at herself for having mean thoughts about her parents. Punishment misdirected the issue. What Ruby needed was to share her feelings without her emotions alienating her parents. Mom and dad wanted Ruby to learn how to argue sociably. An important life lesson for Ruby to learn.

As parents, we want our children to be disciplined, to possess self control. By using Time Outs with a child we help that child develop personal monitoring skills, internal checks and balances that will serve the child for a lifetime.

Time Out is not just for children. On a regular basis I find a “long walk” or “sitting on the porch” to be good for my decision making skills. Most adults find that *ponder time* is important in keeping perspective. I have also used Time Outs to help negotiate business deals.

To illustrate this I get to tell a story. I was once asked by a company to help them finalize a deal that they were desperately trying to broker. Acme Company wanted to buy what Beta Company had to offer. The problem was that Beta Company wanted about forty percent more for its product than the going rate. Usually, this is not a problem. Acme would just find a different company to buy from. But, life being what it is, challenging, there were problems. There was a nationwide courier strike. So, even though Acme could find the product at a much better price they had no idea when the product would be delivered. Also, Acme had let Beta know that they really needed the product by next Thursday or they were going to default on a big contract with a retailer. This was a problem. Acme was up the creek and on the way to a waterfall and Beta knew it. Beta liked the idea of selling at such a high profit. My job was to get the deal closed within forty-eight hours, and cost was not the primary motivation. The middle managers at Acme did not want the upper managers at Acme to know that their actions cost the company an additional 40%. The concern was not the money, the concern was saving face.

The table was set. Their negotiator was a well dressed, well educated attorney. I point out the dress because I think her outfit cost as much as my mortgage. I was escorted to the Beta corporate conference room. The table was adorned with piles of papers and French bottled water. I surmised that my fellow negotiator was planning to sit at the far side of the table. So I sat at her spot and started to thumb through her notes.

When their negotiator entered the room, flagged by a staff of four, she was outwardly unhappy with my invasion of her space. She used her eyes and nose to direct one of her teammates to gather

They are able because they think they are able.

Virgil

Moderation in temper is always a virtue; but moderation in principle is always a vice.

Thomas Paine



Quick Reference Guide

Self work: Internal dialog one uses to question one's own thoughts.

her belongings. She sat across from me. Her staff sat behind her against the fabric covered wall. (No kid was ever allowed into this room, that was for sure.)

Following the pleasantries we got down to business. She talked about product and price. I asked questions about protocol and Diet Coke. (All they had was fancy water.) After about ten minutes, I relocated to the chair next to her. She was not at all comfortable with my lack of corporate manners or sophistication. Over the next two and one half hours, whenever the topic did not go my way, I politely excused myself to the bathroom. I went eleven times in two and one half hours. Each time taking at least five minutes.

At the end of our meeting, Mrs. Fancy Attorney said, "I'm glad that we agree. We will sell lot number 123456 at the fair market price as stated in our July sales sheet. I will draw up the documents and have them delivered by 9 AM." I thanked her for her assistance and wished her and her staff well. The July sales sheet was the price sheet before the 40% increase.

As I was walking out, one of her staff members escorted me to the lobby. In the elevator he handed me a small scrap of paper with a telephone number on it. He softly said, "Mrs. *Fancy Attorney* is concerned about your prostate. This is the number for her father-in-law. He is the best urologist in the state."

So, what happened? I gave myself a Time Out every time I got off track. When my behavior was not correct I earned a Time Out. I have to be in control of my behavior or no one will be. So, when the conversation turned to money, I earned a Time Out. If the conversation turned to limited options, I earned a Time Out. Boy, I was a bad little negotiator. I earned a lot of Time Outs. Oh, I also used the teaching process of shaping and shaped Beta's negotiator away from certain topics. I only talked about appropriate topics such as "fair market" and "working well together." The negotiation was never heated. In fact, the only way she could win my presence in the room, was to talk about us working well together. My leaving was a mild punisher. My return a soft reward. My presence was down right frustrating for her. I personally, my body, became a negative reinforcement. The Beta team wanted to remove this adverse stimulus, lovable old me, and the only way they could was to close the deal fairly. What they thought was a prostate problem was my way of not getting caught up in the emotions of the moment.

Time Out is your child's way to help himself not get caught up in the emotion of the moment. It builds self discipline. It gives your child choices. [I later found out that the Beta team had planned to camp out at their offices. They laid in provisions for four days, expecting to finalize the deal late Sunday night. The way I found out was that Beta hired me to teach a seminar called "Negotiating The Close." Mrs. Fancy Attorney turned out to be a wonderful person to work for, but to this day she has never asked me if I went to see her father-in-law. I hope she doesn't read this book!]

THE GOAL OF TIME OUT

The goal of Time Out is to assist your child in becoming cognitive of her behaviors. Our children should be taught that there are positive and negative consequences for their behaviors; and that they, as individuals, must be in control of their behaviors. Thus, they are responsible for their positive behaviors and should be proud of such. But, they are also responsible for their negative behaviors and accept the consequences for them.

Throughout the Time Out procedure, a child is always treated in a respectful manner. She is taught that she is responsible for her behaviors — all of her behaviors.

Our children need support to learn that there are many possible behaviors that they can exhibit and that if they choose a negative behavior there is an appropriate negative consequence. If they choose a positive behavior then there is a positive consequence.

DEFINING “TIME”

Many people use Time Out and a timer. I find this to be dysfunctional. A teacher may say, “Go to the Time Out area for ten minutes and think about your behavior.” This is fine, but it is a punishment of ten minutes in duration. It is not a Time Out. A Time Out is not timed. A Time Out is experienced. My children get as much time as is needed for them to get themselves under control. It may only take twenty seconds. So I see no reason for my child to have to sit for twenty-one seconds. It may take fourteen minutes, so a ten minute Time Out would not be enough for my child’s needs. When I go for my walk to calm myself down, I walk until I am no longer in need of walking. The time it takes for me to walk is not relevant, it is the *self work* that takes place that counts. By **self work** I mean the internal dialog that I use to deal with the world outside of my thoughts. It is during self work that we make life decisions, ponder our needs, and prospects. It is with self work that we develop and define our self-discipline and the rule book that we use to govern our own behaviors. This personal rule book is never completed. We update it regularly and check our behaviors against the ideals we have developed for ourselves. During a Time Out your child starts to develop his self worth, his identity, his personal rule book.

At this point, most parents ask the basic question, “Well, when does my child get off a Time Out?” This will be discussed in a few minutes in the section entitled, “Ending a Time Out.”

ROUTINE COUNTS IN TIME OUT PROCEDURE

Using Time Out is both easy and tricky. The easy part is the

We judge ourselves by what we feel capable of doing, others judge us by what we have already done.

Longfellow

basic ritual of the Time Out procedure. The tricky part is our desire to do more, e.g. to teach our children lessons, to fix stuff. This is not the time. Remember, time is out. The game is put on hold. The parent team has to wait until the kid team is back on the field. It makes no sense for the parent team to play if the kid team is not playing (paying attention).

The Time Out procedure is very, very, very ritualistic. The process is the same old boring process time, after time, after time. I cannot emphasize this enough. You as a parent have to say the same words with the same tone with the same facial expression every time. Why? Good question. It is because of the learning process we discussed in Course B6C1 called, reinforcement. Your child will try to get you to back down, change your mind, or just down right quit as parent. Anything you do aside from the routine, no matter how unrewarding it may seem to you, your child will interpret as a reward. A reward for them not being under their own control. Thus, you shoot yourself in the proverbial foot. If your child wins you by controlling your behavior you are reinforcing his out of control behavior.

Routine counts. Next you will learn the ten second routine you will need to memorize. Relax, in no time you won't even think about it, you will recite it as the old family saying that it is.

HOW TO START A TIME OUT

I usually teach the following in two parts. First, I explain the process of Time Out to the parents. Second, usually next session, I practice Time Outs with the whole family. We spend the session role playing Time Outs. I set clear limits with the family that we really need to learn what Time Outs look like. Then I explain that I will need them to act out and fight doing a Time Out. Most parents expect that their children will trash the room, but in over 20 years I have never had a child become uncontrollable during the role playing (most become shy).

What tends to happen is that the child picks up the concept pretty quickly and starts to explain 'correct procedure' to their parents. On a regularly basis, parents have a hard time learning the procedure and their little kids help them through it.

When your child breaks a rule he earns a Time-Out. (Please note the word "earn." You didn't give it to him. It is not a gift. He earned a Time Out by his behavior. You are assisting him to make cognitive choices.)

The ideal procedure is:

Parent: "Wendy, I asked you not to run in the house (define the infraction); "Please tell me when you're

The future is that time when you wish you'd done what you aren't doing now.

starting your time.”

Please note: When told to take a Time Out the child has no choice. The child must go to the Time Out chair (area, couch, bench, tree, etc.) and state, in a reasonable voice, “Starting.”

To this, you respond in a rewarding tone, “Thank You.”

Once the child is told to take a Time Out, there is no discussion. Once a Time Out is given, the child has no choice but to comply.

“Please tell me when you’re starting your time,” is the only response your child should hear. It is said in a calm, relaxed, matter-of-fact tone.

I know at this point most of you are saying, “What? Must comply! Oh sure, my kid isn’t going to comply, he is going to ... !” For the moment just stick with me. For our example we have some unknown, perfectly behaved child that is falsely accused of an infraction. Relax, I’ll show you how to deal with a real kid. But first we must learn what the ideal Time Out looks like.

For example, if the child screams ... “Starting!” You, as a loving and caring parent respond...

Parent: “Please tell me when you’re starting your time.”

Child: “How much time do I have?!!!!”

Parent: “Please tell me when you’re starting your time.”

Child: “@###**&&#`//?!!!”

Parent: “Please tell me when you’re starting your time.”

Child: “I hate you and your MOTHER!!! Blank-e-ty blank blank growl growl hiss!”

Parent: “Please tell me when you’re starting your time.”

“Please tell me when you’re starting your time,” is always stated in a calm supportive voice. Always. You do not want your child to be reinforced for his antics. So I mean it, ALWAYS!

Child: *calmly*, “Starting.”

Parent: “Thank you.”

It is easy to be critical. The real test is to develop constructive alternatives.

Imagination is more important than knowledge.
Albert Einstein

We should always thank our child for making the appropriate choice. This is very important and rewarding to our children. We need to say it and mean it. By saying “thank you” we are acknowledging that our child made a choice that we wanted them to make. Out of all the things they could choose to do, they chose to let you parent. When I thank a child for letting me parent I am truly honored with their choice of me. (Unfortunately, I have known many teenagers who have disowned their parents. I cherish the role of parent that my children allow me to have.) In the classroom the teacher’s thanks is very important. The child is letting you be their teacher.

Remember, without a meaningful relationship you have no way to influence.

DOING A TIME OUT

On the surface a Time Out is very simple. Your child is responsible to sit calmly and think about the how’s and why’s that led up to the Time Out. He knows that for the Time Out to end he will have to explain what led up to the Time Out.

The child’s age and temperament determines what *calmly* looks like. You know your child. Is he calming himself down? Is he open to talking about his choices?

ENDING A TIME OUT

When your child has sat calmly and shows you through his behavior that he is ready to talk, your child should hear:

Pride is at the bottom of all mistakes

Ruskin

Parent: “[child’s name] why are you doing a Time Out?”

Your child must explain, at his level of ability, what his misbehavior was. Following a reasonable explanation your child should hear:

Parent: “Thank you, your time is up.”

If your child doesn’t remember why she is sitting:

Parent: “I will tell you why you had to sit, but you will have to do your Time Out over...”

If a child doesn't recall why they were doing the Time Out they did not do their self work. They are calmly informed and asked:

Parent: "Please tell me when you're starting your time."

Our children must learn that they are responsible for their behaviors. Expecting our children to remember why they are doing a Time Out helps them focus on their responsibilities for their behaviors in the family or in the classroom.

ADVOCATING FOR GOOD CHOICES

I spend a lot of time, sometimes months, working with parents on how to advocate. For many parents, this concept of teaching towards good choices does not come naturally.

For many parents this process brings up powerful emotions concerning their own parents. Often, parents need to deal with these issues as they learn to parent more effectively.

The end of the Time Out procedure is the crucial moment when you get to help your child develop new thoughts and practice making informed decisions.

When you ask your child, "...why are you doing a Time Out?" you are opening up a dialog for your child to experience these new thoughts. Remember, the goal is not to tell your child what he did to get you to give him a Time Out. We want our child to share his thoughts on what his choices are, now that he is calmer and open to looking at choices. Our goal must be looking towards the future. What else could be done in the same type of situation. But, with a better outcome.

The way we support our child's choice development is to allow her to tell you her thoughts and explain how she made those choices. Our role is to advocate for her, and to present a warm and safe relationship for her to practice her choice development.

Lester was a happy go lucky child of seven. He tended not to think before he acted. This caused Lester to spend many hours sitting in the office of his school. His mother told me:

Lester is a sweet little boy. He is almost always happy. But, it seems he is constantly getting into trouble for small stuff. He was sent to the office just this morning for wandering around his class and touching stuff. Mrs. Moscovitz, his teacher, seemed almost apologetic for having to send him to the office.

Lester's mother learned about Time Out and implemented its

Laugh at yourself before anyone else can.

Elsa Maxwell



Quick Reference Guide

Secondary Gain: When your child gets a reinforcement that is not your intention. Often it is the power of controlling the adult.

use with her three children. The following week she told me this story:

I was picking up Lester at school and having a friendly chat with his teacher. I was so happy to hear that he had a good day when, he walked up to the teacher's desk and took a big bite out of her apple. He put the apple down and walked away. I was shocked. I gave him a Time Out right there. It was wonderful, after his Time Out we talked...

Mom: Lester, why are you doing a Time Out?

Lester: Because I ate Mrs. M.'s apple.

Mom: What does that mean for you.

Lester: I just wanted a bite. But it wasn't mine. I shouldn't put my germs on her apple.

Mom: How could you do it differently?

Lester: I could have waited until no one was looking?

Mom: You could have waited until no one was around. How else could you have done it differently?

Lester: I could have asked Mrs. M. if I could have a bite of her apple.

Mom: You could have asked Mrs. M. How else could you do it differently?

Lester: I could have bought it off of her for money.

Mom: Yes, you could have paid for the apple. If you asked to pay for the apple then what would happen?

Lester: Mrs. M. would want lots of money. I wouldn't get the apple.

Mom: That could happen. If you asked Mrs. M. for a bite of apple, then what might happen?

Lester: She might say yes or no.

Mom: If you waited for no one to be around then what might happen?

- Lester: I would go to jail for being a bad guy. With bars and everything!
- Mom: So, what do you think would work for you?
- Lester: I could say, "Mrs. M. can I have the apple ... my germs are all right for me."

What Lester's mom did was advocate for her son. She set limits and then helped him look at the consequences of his behavior. She used the question, **"What could you do differently?"** and then followed up with an **If/Then** statement. In this way she helped Lester look at his options. She held her opinion to herself concerning the appropriateness of her son's choices. She allowed (respected) her son to figure out the right and wrong or the usefulness, for him, of his options. This three minute conversation brings parent and child closer and allows the child to comfortably talk about how he sees the world. I have seen thousands of families use Differently/If/Then conversations to replace parental lectures that the child only turns a deaf ear to. It is very common for a child to turn to his parent and ask, "How would you ... ?" Then listen carefully as the parent outlines their thought process through the use of Differently/If/Then internal conversations.

In the Course B6C4, we will look more closely at how we help children use their internal dialog to solve their personal conflicts.

HOW CHILDREN TEST THE TIME OUT PROCESS

It is very important that the therapist discuss with the parent the parental role of consistency and follow through. Parents need to understand that if they give mixed messages they indirectly encouraging misbehavior, prolonging the parent child conflict. It is important that parents understand that they are involved with their child's testing the "procedure" of Time Out.

The heading of this section is actually a misnomer. Your children are not testing the "procedure" of Time Out, they are testing you. That's right, **you**. They are testing your honesty and your word. They are testing your character. And, as I have pointed out many times, no one likes to have their character tested.

So, first things first. Do you mean it when you say, "Please tell me when you're starting your time." Are you sure in your soul, that you are willing to presently confront your child so your child, in the long run, can develop discipline? Are you willing to help your child learn discipline? Or do you need to punish your child for his "bad" behavior?

This is important. If you need to punish your child, to person-

When rejecting the ideas of another, make sure you reject only the idea and not the person.

Patience is a necessary ingredient of genius.

Disraeli

ally let off steam, your child will easily escalate the Time Out into an argument. A screaming match where you both lose.

If your child believes that he has to take the Time Out **he** earned, then he will. Moments later, you and he are discussing his options and you both are feeling wonderful about your close relationship.

But, if he doesn't believe in you, he will test this disbelief by acting out. He will do things that have worked in the past to escalate the situation. He may yell, scream, throw stuff, knock over stuff — whatever it takes to get you to lose your self control. Then, once you have lost your composure, the focus will be on your anger and your hurt feelings and off his responsibility for his behavior.

So, be forewarned. Your child knows all your hot buttons. This is her job. She stays up late at night organizing her data base on you. She has your number. You're in the cross hairs of her attack and you have no place to run.

However, there is reason for hope. If you say what you mean and mean what you say, your child will quickly learn that you will not back down or allow distractions.

I find I say to myself on a regular basis, "This kid is worth it, keep your cool." While I say outwardly, "Please tell me when you're starting your time."

To follow, I will share with you some tricks of the trade.

This next section deals with 'thinking on your feet.' Parents need to be reassured that they can deal with the conflict calmly. You need to assure the parent that as long as they do not get upset, the problem can not escalate. On a regular basis, children would rather escalate the problem to a screaming, anger, crying mess versus deal with their parent directly. Therapists need to help parents to understand that as long as they do not add fuel to the situation, the child will not be able to escalate the conflict to a screaming match. Parents need your support to understand that by dealing with the parent/child conflict they are helping their children to mature. Limit setting is clearly a sign of parental love.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD REFUSES TO START A TIME OUT

Rule number one. Relax, take it in stride. Understand that what your child's behavior is really saying is, "I don't trust you." As painful as it is you need to know it. Now you do. Wonderful. Teach your child that you are an honest person who cares for them. Say, "Please tell me when you're starting your time," and really mean the word please. Let your child *feel* that you want them to let you parent them.

Remember that parenting is a long process and *the process counts*.

TRICK #1: TAG TEAM

If at all possible get help from another adult. It is amazing how often parents tell me that, “When his mother walked into the living room, our son went over to start his Time Out, as if he wasn’t all worked up.” What tends to happen is that the second parent (adult) changes the believability factor in the room. It is hard for the child to disbelieve you when another adult in the room is believing you.

Other times the other adult simply says, “Please tell me when you’re starting your time.” and the child smirks in your direction and goes off and does a great Time Out. Let the disrespect go for the moment. When the Time Out is over and feelings are calm is the best time to discuss your child’s disrespect. (“Bobby, earlier today my feelings were hurt when you ...”)

TRICK #2: FOR EVERY MINUTE ...

At first, it is common for children who are angry to prolong starting their earned Time Out. Most often this looks like *I don’t care* behavior on the part of the child. Mrs. Montgomery said it this way, “Jonathan plopped himself on the floor and screamed “You can’t make me do a Time Out!”

Jonathan is correct. You cannot make him do a Time Out. He has to allow you to parent. He has to choose to take a Time Out.

If you think about it, Jonathan is setting up a challenge, The *make me* challenge. A game a parent cannot win. And, if you as a parent back down, Jonathan also loses by not feeling that you care about him. So, no one wins, everyone loses. This is not a game that is worth playing.

In this situation, Mrs. Montgomery needs to make Jonathan *feel* responsible for the down side of his behavior, not starting a Time Out. The up side of the above scenario is that Jonathan feels power over his mother. This feeling of power, secondary gain, is a positive reinforcer. A reinforcer that Jonathan can give to himself instantaneously. This makes the reinforcer very powerful. I have seen children play the above family dynamics out for years, until the parents could not deal with the degree of conflict and sought professional help.

Mr. Robinson said:

My son will cut his nose off to spite his face. When he gets a Time Out, he explodes and trashes his room. He gets himself so worked up that he cries himself to sleep. After his nap he is calm and we talk about the problem. But honestly, he never does a Time Out. Marge (mom) and I are afraid to give him a Time Out.

This is a great example of **secondary gain**. By definition, secondary gain is when your child gets a reinforcement that is not your intention.

Four year old Salvador had a great way to get secondary gain. Whenever he was told to do something he did not like, which was often, he would start scratching at his face. His face was covered with scratches in different degrees of healing when I first met him. His parents were frazzled. They were afraid to say “no” to anything little Salvador wanted, fearful that he would injure himself. One would think that the pain of scratching one’s own face would be a punisher, and I would have to agree. But, the secondary gain of controlling one’s parents is a very powerful reward. Powerful enough for Salvador to offset the pain of scratching his own face.

The three families above added one little twist to their family’s Time Out procedure and the negative behaviors went away in short order.

When your child is in the *I don’t care* mode, you need to make him responsible for his poor choices (lack of caring). This is accomplished by calmly stating, “You need to make better choices, for every minute it takes you to start your Time Out it will cost you four minutes of room restrictions.” Then you simply take care of keeping track of time.

If your child believes your word, she will run to the Time Out area and say “starting.” If she does not believe your word she will need to test you. At the end of the Time Out, whenever that might be, as part of the discussion, you remind your child that she earned *X* amount of room restrictions. (Four times the number of minutes it took her to start her Time Out.) It usually takes only two or three testing situations for a child to stop showing a behavior that is no longer working for her.

The number four is my suggestion. With younger children I may use two minutes, with older children as much as ten. I find four times works well, it is encouraging without the child feeling that you are throwing your weight around. Avoid going over ten minutes for every minute. Remember, you will have to enforce the room restriction. So, make it easy on yourself. Do not set yourself up to feel cruel or overbearing. Also, do not allow yourself to become overly punitive. Your goal is for your child to focus on their own behavior, not on the punitiveness of your behavior. This is a tough situation which must be experienced and practiced by parents. It is part of the *art* of parenting.

The little four year old above, who scratched his face, was very indignant when his parents implemented this technique. He said, “That’s not fair, you have to play by the rules!” He stopped scratching his face within two hours and only four Time Outs. The very next day he had to relearn this change with his daycare provider and again on Sunday with Grandma at Grandma’s house. Without

the secondary gain, the scratching became just a punisher. And as you recall, we all dislike punishers.

TRICK #3 TEASING OTHERS WHO ARE ON TIME

It is common for a second child to tease another child who has earned a Time Out. The child on the Time Out is stuck. If he reacts he is probably going to have to restart his Time Out. The “captive audience/victim,” is sometimes too irresistible a situation for other children to resist.

If this is an every now and then problem, I advise that you deal with it by giving the second child a Time Out for teasing. Then talk about picking on the underdog and ask how he would feel. If it is an ongoing problem you need to reward the first child for trying to deal with someone picking on him. What I advise you to say is, “Billy, you should not be talking to someone on a Time Out. If Sally’s Time Out is so important to you, you can do it for her.” Then let Billy finish Sally’s Time Out. This switch-a-roo does let Sally off, so to speak, for her Time Out, but it stops the malicious teasing dead in its tracks.

This problem does not come up much, but if it does you need to nip it in the bud.

OOPS! WHAT TO DO IF YOU MAKE A MISTAKE

Sorry, but it is true, you are going to make mistakes. When you make mistakes with your children it is also a blessing in disguise. If you take responsibility for the mistake, honestly apologize and forgive yourself, you are teaching your child a valuable lesson. The lesson of taking personal responsibility.

This is a Dr. Phil confession, it happened a long time ago and I still feel a little guilty about it. So please, do not tell anyone that I did this. Once, after bedtime, I put a child on a Time Out. He was up running around, bothering the other children. He had a hard time starting his Time Out. It was just too exciting to be up when everyone else was in bed. His Time Out went on and on. I finished up some stuff in the kitchen then watched the news. Yep, you guessed it. I forgot about him as he sat in the overstuffed chair no more than ten feet from me. At a little after 2 AM he came into my room, woke me up and asked, “How long do I have to do this Time Out for anyway?”

When you make a mistake show your children how to deal with making mistakes.

WHO’S RESPONSIBLE?

There is an old joke which goes like this: hundreds of people

are sitting around a casino praying to God for a particular card. One person wants an eight, another wants a queen. St. Peter looks to God and says, "I have a headache, I can't keep track of these requests, what do you want to do?"

God decrees in a booming voice, "Bust everybody!"

This joke is often given as the reason you don't get the card you ask for. It is also the way to deal with a crowd of confusion. If you walk into the living room and six kids are all pointing fingers and yelling their version of what happened, "Bust everybody!"

If the class is out of control, "Bust everybody!"

If three kids are sliding down the stairs on their bellies and two more are waiting upstairs, "Bust everybody!"

Then sort out the pieces in a few, calmer moments. I find asking the question following the Time Out, "Do you folks need my help to solve this problem or can you solve it yourselves?" tends to solve half of the excited conflicts kids get into.

So, all things being equal, "Bust everybody!"

BUT WE ARE NOT ALWAYS AT HOME!

I was once at Sears buying shoes for my boys, then two and five. As is the rule with shoe shopping, it is frustrating and thankless for the parent. My boys were having a blast. Shoes are way too much fun for little kids. Finally, the antics had gone too far. As they trotted through the clothes rack I gave their feet a Time Out. To my surprise, three little children walked out from between the clothes and sat down calmly on the small bench in the shoe department. None of the three children were mine. A woman came over and crossed her arms. "Thank you mister," she said turning to her children, "One more minute of this foolishness and we were going home without new shoes!" Wow, I busted a stranger's kids ... and it worked! Then I went looking for the correct little feet to bust. I found my boys in the women's shoe department dancing around in patent leather, fluorescent yellow and pink high heels.

So I, "Busted everybody!"

When you are away from home your Time Out procedure goes with you (thankfully). If you're at the park, designate a tree or a particular bench. If you're at a friend's house, designate an area or a chair.

Many parents find that by designating a Time Out area they are actually giving 1/2 a Time Out. Designating an area when you first get to the park, reminds the children of their personal responsibilities in controlling their behavior.

When in a car, have your children put their hands under their thighs as a symbol of a Time Out. This procedure of sitting on their hands is very effective and keeps us away from the, "Do you want me to turn this car around?" statement that your kid doesn't believe

anyway.

This last little bit is an added bonus that helps children get their needs met in a complicated and busy world.

“I WANT TO TALK CODE”

Often children will act out to get attention. Sometimes it is just kid stuff other times it is “child needs adult” stuff. Your children need to know how to get your attention, or the attention of other adults. This is where we need to give our children an opening line that gets an adult’s attention, even if the adult doesn’t know it is a code.

The code sentence is, “If you have a minute can we talk?” What this does for your child is to open a helpful conversation with an adult. Almost any adult.

If a teacher is very busy, “If you have a minute can we talk?” lets her know your child has a need. When a police officer is approached with, “If you have a minute can we talk?” the officer is able to shine attention on your child. If your child says to you, “If you have a minute can we talk?” you know your child needs a child parent talk.

“If you have a minute can we talk?” lets adults see your child as respectful. Most adults will bend over backwards to help a respectful child. Even busy adults, will work out a time to help your polite child.

Time Outs are a very effective way for you to teach your child self discipline. When you punish your children, you are trying to control their behavior. This leads to resentment and anger on their part. Through Time Outs children learn to control their own behavior. They take on the responsibility for their own choices. The results may not be immediate, but they are long lasting.

POSTTEST

When you’re ready, take the posttest to obtain your CEU certificate. Your test consists of 5 multiple choice or true/false questions per Continuing Education Unit (3 CEU = 15 questions).



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