

Time Out to Calm Down is One of Many Tools in the Incredible Years® Tool Kit

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Is Time Out used in the Incredible Years® Programs?

Yes, *Time Out to Calm Down* is a non-punitive discipline strategy used strategically and sparingly in IY programs for parents, teachers, and children to promote and build children's emotional self-regulation skills. This building tool is reserved for times when a child is too physically angry or emotionally dysregulated to be able to respond rationally to other evidence-based behavior management approaches.

Are there alternatives to Time Out to Calm Down?

In the Incredible Years® programs parent and teachers are taught a wide variety of relationship and behavior management tools. The training begins with a focus on relationship-building, child-directed play, social-emotional and persistence coaching, praise and encouragement, and incentives. These approaches build positive attachment and teach children replacement behaviors or "positive opposites" to inappropriate behaviors that adults want to reduce.

Next parents and teachers learn appropriate proactive behavior management tools such as clear rules, predictable routines, planned distraction, redirection, ignoring, logical and natural consequences, Time Out to Calm Down, and problem solving skills. Parents and teachers learn to choose strategies from this toolkit to set up environments that support children's social-emotional development and result in positive peer and adult relationships and optimal academic and language learning.

When is Time Out to Calm Down recommended? When children misbehave, parents and teachers may redirect, ignore, problem solve, set a limit, use a when/then, or give a brief consequence. For most misbehaviors, these tools work well. Time Out to Calm Down is reserved and used sparingly for targeted negative behaviors such as times when children are highly emotionally dysregulated and aggressive, destructive, or hurtful to others and are not able to cognitively process or respond rationally to other supportive management strategies or problem solving.

Won't children feel abandoned if parents and teachers use Time Out to Calm Down when children are upset? Time Out to Calm Down is not used in a vacuum! Children are taught about Time Out to Calm Down in a neutral context, when they are calm. They practice with puppets such as Tiny Turtle who teaches them how to go to Time Out, take rocket ship breaths to calm down, to go in their turtle shells, and think about their happy place. They learn about using a Calm Down thermometer to regulate their emotions from upset to calm. They are taught self-talk ("I can do it." "I can calm down."). They discuss with parents, teachers, and the puppets why Time Out to Calm Down is helpful. They learn what behaviors will result in their parents or teachers asking them to go to the Time Out space to calm down. They learn that parents and teachers also take Time Outs to calm down.



What does Time Out to Calm Down look like?

Parents and teachers are taught that they need to be calm, patient, and caring when giving a Time Out to Calm Down. Calm Down time is brief, 3-5 minutes, or until the child is calm. Time Out to Calm Down is given in the same room as the parent or teacher so that the child can be monitored and will know that an adult is near. Support materials are available for children to use to calm down during Time Out (Calm Down Thermometer, Tiny Turtle puppet, or other calming objects). During Time Out to Calm Down, parents or teachers do not give attention, but at the end of Time Out to Calm Down, they reconnect



with the child and the child is given a new opportunity to be successful. The focus is on the fact that the child calmed down and on ways for the child to positively re-engage in the environment. Children are not scolded or reminded about the reasons for the Time Out to Calm Down. When appropriate, parents and teachers may engage in positive problem solving with the child later when the child is calm and receptive.

Why do some people think Time Out to Calm Down is harmful? In some contexts, Time Out has been used in a punitive or isolating way. When the Time Out tool is misused, it can be harmful to children and to their relationships with adults. In some cases, misuse of this tool has led to school or agency policies against Time Out. It is always important that Time Out to Calm Down is used thoughtfully, caringly, with patience and as one small part of a positive, consistent, loving approach and a full toolkit with a strong relationship foundation.

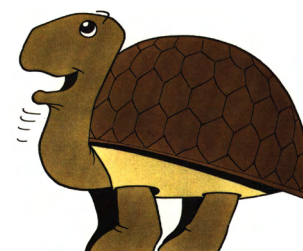
Is there any evidence that Time Out To Calm Down works? Four decades of research has shown that, when done effectively, Time Out to Calm Down produces positive child outcomes in terms of reducing misbehavior and increasing children's sense of security in their relationships as well as preventing child maltreatment. Many parents have told us that it helps them to stay calm themselves because they have a predictable blueprint to follow that helps them maintain their positive, respectful, and trusting relationship. When adults use this tool appropriately, they are modeling a nonviolent response to conflict that stops the conflict and frustration, and provides a cooling off period for both children and parents. It gives children a chance to reflect on what they have done, to consider better solutions, and fosters a sense of responsibility.

What do children say about Time Out to Calm Down? The children who have experienced Time Out to Calm down in the Incredible Years® programs often recognize that it is helpful. Some learn to take a Time Out to Calm Down on their own, without an adult prompting the Time Out. Below are quotes from discussions with children about Time Out to Calm Down:

Child to Wally Puppet after practicing Time Out to Calm Down: *"Wally, it's okay if you have to go to Time Out. People will still like you. You can just say 'teacher, I've calmed down now.'"*

Child about Time Out to Calm Down and breathing: *"It calms you down. You breathe and you let it all out."*

Child about Time Out to Calm Down as time for self-reflection: *"You think about 'oh what have I done. I've made a bad mistake, and I can't do it again the next day.' Then you're feeling a little bit happy."*



Child about what he learned from Tiny Turtle: *"You go in your shell when you are angry and you take 3 deep breaths.....you have to calm down when you are angry or sad."*