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[www.gabardi.com](http://www.gabardi.com)

Psychotherapy~Mediation~Divorce Consultation

*Practical, Compassionate Guidance toward Well-Being, Resilience, and Healthy Relationships*

## **TIME OUT FOR COUPLES: PAUSE AND DE-ESCALATE**

### **Why Time Out?**

Conflicts that turn into ugly fights damage the trust, affection and goodwill in your relationship.

When emotions run high, it is not likely the situation will be handled respectfully, rationally, compassionately and/or productively.

You will not get what you desire or deserve (to be understood and heard) under these conditions.

### **The Commitment...**

#### **1. Discuss and Commit to using Time-Out when Both of You are Calm**

- Both must agree to these steps
- Practice these steps when you are calm and NOT in a fight

#### **2. General Commitments**

- Either person can initiate a Time Out
- If Time Out is called, both parties stop, without debate
- Time out will not be used in manipulative or controlling ways to shut down conversation
- The intent of the Time Out is to calm one's self down and protect the relationship and my loved one from further harm or damage.

### **The Procedure...**

#### **1. Calling Time Out**

- The person requesting Time Out requests time to calm down so they can be better at listening and responding.
- The other person respects this and STOPS the discussion
- This is Hard! Remind yourself you will have your chance to discuss again soon and with a better chance of success!
- The person initiating Time Out MUST reschedule the discussion for a time 1 to 48 hours from the time out

#### **2. Between the Time Out and Next Scheduled Discussion**

- Calm yourself down \*\* *See the Manage Emotions Handout*
- What Apologies about your contribution to the conflict might you offer?

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- Consider ways to be a better listener and acknowledge your partner
- Consider safe and effective ways to express your own feelings and point of view calmly and respectfully.
- Consider the “Grains of Truth” in your partner’s point of view.
- Ask yourself what you need to do differently in the next conversation to make a better contribution.

### 3. Resuming the Discussion

- Begin with apologies for your own behavior.
- Summarize your understanding of your partner’s point of view and feelings.
- Focus on understanding your partner and communicating calmly and clearly.
- When both of you feel understood, consider problem solving.

### Rules for Leaving or Having Alone Time during Time Out...

Agree in advance where you each can go and for how long

Consider a reasonable time apart to be at least 30 minutes and no longer than 2 hours

Let the other person know where you are going and for how long

State clearly and calmly the purpose of time apart is to calm down and gain perspective

### Avoid These Pitfalls...

Not stopping when time out is called

Preventing someone from leaving or taking a break

Slamming Doors and/or breaking things

Getting in the “last word”

Name calling, cursing, threatening

Leaving as a manipulative tactic to abandon or distress the other

*Need more help? Contact Dr. Gabardi at [www.gabardi.com](http://www.gabardi.com) or 503-629-0272*

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