

Taking a Time Out

Taking a time out is different than leaving a crisis. In a crisis situation, you don't have the time or luxury of a time out. You need to just leave the situation as quickly as possible to avoid a bad and potentially harmful situation. A time out is a deliberate and planned action that you and your partner have agreed upon. It helps both people move away from an argument, from angry feelings that are welling up inside you, so that you can both calm down and return to the issue at a time when it can be discussed rationally and without the escalation of anger.

1. When you and your partner are in a good place – calm and relaxed, wanting to help each other out – sit down and work on a time out plan that you will both agree upon.
2. Agree that you will both honor the plan you have agreed upon even if at the time you don't want to.
3. Agree upon the cue that will automatically put the agreement into place (ex. "I really need to take a time out right now").
4. Have an agreed upon length of time for the time out (ex. 30 minutes or one hour) and honor that time limit.
5. Have an agreed upon place where you will be (ex. at a mutually acceptable relative's or friend's house). This cannot be a bar or any other place that will raise suspicions or discomfort in the other person.
6. Agree that if you need more than the time allotted you will call and inform your partner that you will remain at the agreed upon place for an additional amount of specified time or that you are spending the night because the situation is too volatile.
7. Agree that you will come back and the two of you will discuss what happened, how well it went, and what changes in the agreement might be needed. Finally, come back to the issue that precipitated the time out and resolve it calmly.

Remember, you are trying to build trust and avoid any kind of violence whatsoever – be trust worthy, follow the agreement even if your partner does not. If you are not allowed to follow the agreement, leave the situation – it has become a crisis!