

# Respect

Phoneline

Take a 'Time-Out'!

## "The most basic alternative to being violent"

The time-out technique is a tool to help you manage your behaviour where you would otherwise be violent. We wrote this guide to help you understand when you're getting close to that point, so you take a time-out instead.

## Spot the warning signs

The more you become aware of your 'warning signs', the more you will be able to stop yourself from being violent.

### Sore points

The warning signs are usually triggered by what we call 'sore points'. These are typical situations when you became violent in the past.

Examples might include: conflicts over parenting, money, relatives, friends, sex, or who is right about something that happened in the past. You may be particularly touchy when tired, or when you're hungry. Make a note of your typical sore points.

### Warning signs

When you notice the following 'warning signs' in yourself, do something about it: take a time-out.

### Physical warning signs

Think about what happens in your body before you become violent. For example, tension in your stomach / shoulders / neck / jaw; heat, changes in breathing and heart rate.

Think about what you begin to do. For example, point a finger, close your fist, flail your arms, pace up and down the room, raise your

voice or shout, interrupt, go quiet, issue orders. Make a note of your physical warning signs.

### **Emotional warning signs**

You may be aware of different feelings that come just before you become violent. For example, feeling resentful, angry, trapped, confused, persecuted, got at, challenged, guilty, embarrassed, upset, hurt.

These are your emotional warning signs. If you know that you have been violent in the past when, for example, you have felt embarrassed or guilty, then it's important that you are able to recognise these emotional warning signs in the future.

Unpleasant feelings can be difficult to manage, but they do not have to lead to violence. Try to remember when you have dealt with difficult feelings without being violent. Make a note of your emotional warning signs.

### **Mental warning signs**

What are you thinking just before you are violent? Often you will be winding yourself up, thinking negative things about your partner or trying to justify yourself. This is negative self-talk. It can include phrases like "She's doing this deliberately to wind me up", "He's so stupid", "She never gets anything right", "He never listens to me".

Make a note of the negative self-talk, the typical thoughts you have as you get closer to being violent. Note also the things you don't think about, such as how your partner is feeling, trying to understand them, any of their good sides, or listening to what they say.

Remember, it's never too late to make another choice. Right up to the very moment before you are violent, you can choose to walk away and not be violent.

### **Take a 'Time-out'!**

A time-out is the most basic alternative to being violent. If you're not near your partner, you can't hurt them physically. A time-out gives

you breathing space: one hour to reflect on your violent behaviour, away from your partner.

Taking a time-out means that you notice your warning signs and decide to walk away before things build up and you are violent. You are taking control of your reaction and your behaviour. As soon as you recognise any of these signs in yourself, don't wait until you get worse. Tell your partner "I need to take a time-out" and leave. You should calmly leave your home or wherever you may be for exactly one hour – not 50 minutes, nor 3 hours.

There are two important reasons why you need to stick to the hour:

1. Your partner is more likely to trust you if you stick to a standard format;
2. One hour is a realistic length of time to calm down and review what was happening. If you start to shorten this time, you increase the risk of returning and being violent.

During that period, do the following:

### **Calm yourself down**

Don't drink alcohol or take drugs. Don't drive. During this first part of the hour (about 20 minutes), calm yourself down. Think of how you can control your own behaviour, rather than controlling your partner's.

You might want to do something physical, such as going for a walk or a jog, which may reduce the physical build-up of tension. You might want to do something else such as pray, meditate, or call a friend who supports you in being non-violent.

Whatever you decide to do, make sure it's something that helps you to calm down.

### **Examine your behaviour**

During the second part of the hour (about 40 minutes) think about your behaviour and any negative thoughts you were having about your partner.

What did you want to change about your partner? If you're going to be non-violent, you will need to be able to return to the situation and be different, rather than try to make your partner different.

Think about alternatives to your violent behaviour and about what you're going to do or say when you go back.

## **Return home**

Before you return, it's a good idea to call your partner to say that you've calmed down and will be back at the end of the hour.

When you return, let them know you're back. If they want to discuss the situation with you, do so in a non-violent and non-blaming way. This is the occasion for you to make your thoughts about your behaviour during your time-out, known to your partner. If during the discussion you find yourself building up towards abuse again, say so and take another time-out.

If your partner doesn't want to talk when you return, propose a time when you could both be available. If they are not prepared to talk to you at all yet, leave them alone until ready to do so. If you try to force a discussion, you are being violent.

## **Telling your partner about time-outs**

It's very important to talk about time-outs with your partner well ahead of when you will need to use one. Do this at a time when you're calm, and they have agreed to discuss it with you. Show them this information and give them time to read it. They may not want to talk about it with you. If this is the case, leave this information with them, when they can read it at another time, if they choose to.

A time-out is a tool for you, not for your partner – you don't need their support to use it. However, it's essential that you let them read this information, if they so choose.

## **Don't abuse the time-out**

It's important that you don't abuse the time-out.

Some ways of abusing the time-out are:

- Using it against your partner by storming out in the middle of an argument and pretending you are taking a time-out
- Using it as an excuse to go to the pub or to stay out late
- Telling them that they need to take a time-out
- Returning from a time-out without having calmed down / still wanting to argue
- Using it to control your partner in other ways

If you abuse the time-out or don't use it properly and respectfully, it will become another form of abuse.

Get help for your abusive  
behaviour towards your partner

**0808 8024040**

info@respectphoneline.org.uk  
www.respectphoneline.org.uk

Mon-Fri  
9am-5pm

**Respect** Free to call from landlines, mobile phones and BT payphones  
The Respect Phonenumber is operated by Respect. Charity number 114163

**Help Line**  
STANDARD