

Spot the warning signs, take a 'Time-Out'!

Warning signs

This leaflet can help you become more aware of when things are heating up and you're getting into a situation where you may be abusive towards your partner. The more you are aware of your 'warning signs', the more you will be able to stop yourself from being abusive.

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

Sore points

Sore points are typical situations in which you've been abusive 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, at a particular time of day, or when you've not eaten recently.

Make a note of your typical sore points

Physical 'warning signs'

Think about what is happening for you physically as you begin to build towards violence and abuse:

What do you feel in your body? 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, glare at her, 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 abusive or 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 abusive in the past when you have felt embarrassed or guilty, then it's important that you are able to recognise these emotional warning signs in the future. Anger and hurt and all these other feelings are unpleasant and can be difficult to manage, but they do not have to lead to violence. There will be times in your life when you have dealt with difficult feelings without being violent or abusive.

Make a note of your emotional warning signs

Mental warning signs

What are you thinking just before you are abusive? 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”, “She's so stupid”, “She never gets anything right”, “She never listens to me”, or “She's such a slag.”

Make a note of the negative self-talk / typical thoughts you have as you get closer to being abusive

Note also the things you don't think about, such as how she's feeling, trying to understand her, any of her good sides, or listening to what she says

Remember, it's never too late to make another choice. You can walk away. Right up to the very moment you are violent, you can choose to do otherwise.

Take a ‘Time-out’!

What is 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 her physically. A time-out gives you breathing space – one hour to reflect on your abusive behaviour, away from your partner.

Taking a time-out means that you notice your warning signs and decide to get away before things build up and you are violent. 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:

- Your partner is more likely to trust you if you stick to a standard format.
- For most men, one hour is a realistic length of time in which to calm down and review what was happening. If you start to shorten this time, you increase the risk of returning and being abusive.

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 hers. 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 ring up a friend who is supporting you in being non-abusive. 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. You may want to write some of these down if that helps you. What did you want to change about your partner? If you're going to be non-abusive, 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 abusive behaviour and about what you're going to do or say when you go back to discuss the issue with her.

Return home

Before you return, it's a good idea to ring your partner to let her know you've calmed down and will be back at the end of the hour. When you return, let her know you're back. If she wants to discuss the situation with you, do so in a non-abusive and non-blaming way. This is the occasion

for you to let her know what your thoughts about your behaviour have been during your time-out. If during the discussion you find yourself building up towards abuse again, tell her so and take another time-out.

If she doesn't want to talk when you return, propose a time when you could both be available. If she is not prepared to talk to you at all yet, leave her alone until she's ready to do so. If you try to force her to talk about things, you are being abusive.

Talk to 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 she has agreed to discuss it with you. Show her this information and give her time to read it.

She may not want to talk about it with you. If this is the case, leave this information with her, when she can read it at another time if she chooses to. A time-out is a tool for you, not for your partner – you don't need her support to use it. However, it's essential that you let her read this information if she so chooses.

Don't abuse the time-out

It's important that you don't abuse the time-out. Some ways of abusing the time-out process are:

- Using it against her 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 her that she needs 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 any way

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

Choose to stop!

Call the Respect Phonenumber on freephone* 0808 802 4040 to talk, Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

Email info@respectphonenumber.org.uk

Visit www.respectphonenumber.org.uk

*free from landlines and from mobiles using the O2, Orange, T Mobile, Three (3), Virgin, and Vodafone networks). Calls will not appear on BT landline phone bills.

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