

A Time-Out Strategy that Works!

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1. Be aware when things get so heated that nothing good is going to come out of your mouth.

The words you communicate to the other person goes something like this, *"I love you and this is important to me too. I don't want to hurt us. I need some time to calm down and think things through. Let's meet back here in 2 hours."*

2. Find an activity that works off the angry energy.

For example, go for a walk, ride a bike, clean the house, write a journal entry, color, bake something, yoga, taking deep breaths, pray, put on some music and dance (yes, even if you don't FEEL like it.) Come up with your own list by thinking of things that calm you.

3. Think. Think through what you were arguing about.

*Is it important or did you just have a bad day and were in a bad mood?

*Is there something you need to take personal responsibility for?

*How was your tone?

*What did you contribute to the situation? Even if it's "all their fault" there is usually something I could have done different that I should probably take responsibility for.

*What am I feeling?

*If I feel not heard or misunderstood, can I say whatever I'm trying to say differently, using different words?

*What is their perception, their side, and their message?

*Am I fighting just to be right or am I working to lovingly resolve since we are on the same team here?

*Am I able to hear their heart based on what I believe that is good about the other person or am I making assumptions?

3. Come back together at the previously agreed upon time.

Take turns conveying your thoughts and realizations from the time-out, listening to *understand* the other (rather than listening to *respond*), and reflect on what you heard the other say. Give each other adequate time to communicate thoughts and for understanding to truly take place before rushing into the other perspective. Yes, communication also takes time.

4. If it starts getting heated again, do another time-out.

It's okay. Communication is challenging because we all speak and understand from different perspectives and sometimes in different languages.

5. Remember, if you are married, you chose to be on the same team.

You are ultimately fighting on the same side. Validating the other person's feelings does not mean you agree with whatever they feel or the choices they have made. Sometimes you're simply not going to agree and that's okay. It just means you acknowledge, empathize and value them over the need to be right. By the way, people get to feel however they feel. No one has the right to tell someone else they don't feel or can't feel a certain way. :)

