



Time Out

You might have heard about the idea of time out for dealing with challenging behaviour in children. But time out works for adults too. Seriously. Time out is all about recognising you're angry and removing yourself from the situation before anger becomes aggression and puts people at risk of harm. After all, if you're not there, you cannot hurt someone else.

The steps are easy to follow:

Step 1: Recognise you're angry

Everyone has their own pathway that led to violence and abuse becoming part of their relationship. If you're going to take control of your anger, you need to understand your individual patterns. What are your own personal warning signs that tell you you're about to lose control? They might be feelings (shaky, breathless, upset) or they might be behaviours (shouting, swearing, glaring).

My personal warning signs are:

Step 2: Referee

Declare a time-out. Practice how you'll actually say – "I need a time-out." Being able to stop and say "I have to go and calm down" in your own way is a really important skill. Try to ask for a time-out before you reach a point of anger where you don't feel in control. If you're telling someone to "Leave me the f– alone" you've waited too long. You need to be a calm and composed.

Step 3: Remove yourself from the situation

If you're not there, you can't kick off. Find a place that you can go that will help you calm down. Try and have a few options – what will you do if you can't go to the first place? (Have some backups for different places and times of day). The current lockdown situation might make this step more challenging than usual – especially if you've got lots of family members all under one roof – but it's still worth thinking about.

Step 4: Relax – first extinguish the fire

- If you go and punch something or swear or shout, you might continue to feel wound up
- Burn the fire out with something physical but **not violent** – push-ups, press-ups, a run, use a doodle pad

Step 4 (part 2): Relax and distract (min 20 minutes / max 1 hour)

- Do something that you know will help you chill out and calm down – maybe meditation, listening to music, sitting in the garden with a brew, etc. Try to take your mind off whatever made you angry. If you need to, call or text a family member or friend that you know you can trust to calm you down.
- If you start obsessing about what made you angry, purposefully try and distract your brain from it again for at least 20 minutes.

Step 5: Ring and return

- After you're completely calm down, think about whatever it was that made you angry in the first place.
- Are you still angry? (Remember, **anger** is fine – **violence/aggression** are not.)
- Can you do anything to resolve the problem? If you can't resolve it, can you let it go? Can you move on without hanging on to it?
- See if the other person is ready for you to come back to discuss what happened – then go back and discuss things calmly. If it kicks off again, go back to step 1! If you can't discuss things calmly, you might need to wait and talk about them another day.

Take a look at our body mapping and calm breathing tools for more about learning how to stop your emotions getting the better of you during emotionally-charged situations.

If you need support, please get in touch with My CWA. We don't want to patronise you or lecture you. We aren't the police. We just want to help. Our helpline is open 24/7 so you can call us at any time – 0300 123 5101.