

## Time-Out!

1. Agree to the terms of your time-outs BEFORE there is conflict. The person who calls a time-out is responsible for re-establishing contact. Agree to a maximum time - 24 hours for instance - before you will at least call to say you are still not available to speak.

2. When your partner calls a time-out resist the temptation to say more - stop talking and honor the time out. Your partner needs to stop before things get out of hand. You both should step away and engage in self-nurturing. Plan ahead what you will do during a time-out to care for and soothe yourself. When you call a time-out do so calmly and without explanation. Simply say "I am taking a time-out."

3. Use the time-out to reflect on your feelings and your part. This is not a time to take your partner's inventory and call your friends to tell them how messed up your partner is. Nor is this a time to use alcohol or drugs to numb the pain. Get in touch with your feelings by writing them down, crying them out, etc. Of course your partner made mistakes but so did you in all likelihood. Focus on the one thing you can change in this life: you. And do something nice for yourself!

4. Once you have re-established contact, agree to a time when you will resume addressing the issue(s) which catapulted you into conflict. Do NOT take time-outs simply to stop a conversation you don't wish to engage in. Follow up and follow through. You, your partner and your relationship deserve the respect of having closure so work toward that common goal.

**Note: It IS the responsibility of the person who calls the time out to:**

- 1. announce they are off their time out and**
- 2. make the first effort to resume the topic which was put on hold.**

**The reason this is crucial is that it makes it clear to both the person who called the time out and the person who honored the time out that time outs are NOT being used to control or avoid conversations.**