



TimeOuts

It is essential to keep a sense of connection,
even when you need to get a break from your partner.
"Let there be spaces in your togetherness."

A TimeOut is a relational tool and is an essential skill for any intimate relationship. The purpose of a TimeOut is to remove pressure from the relationship. Use a TimeOut whenever you feel overwhelmed, pressed, chased, pursued, cornered, etc. Also use it whenever your partner appears to be overwhelmed, pressed, chased, pursued, cornered, etc. The goal is to stay in relaxed dialogical space, with open safe communication going on. Only the pursuee, the one feeling pressured, really knows when a TimeOut is necessary. Treat TimeOuts as a necessity. Do not request them. Announce and take them. A TimeOut must be non-negotiable. Steps 2,3,4,6,7 are mandatory. The other steps are nice.

1. (Optional and Ideal) The Time-Out-Requiring partner gives a warning that a TimeOut will be requested shortly. "I'm going to need a TimeOut in about 5 minutes."
2. **The TimeOut-Requiring partner gives a clear signal (hands making a T as in football, says, "TIMEOUT," etc.) indicating the need for a TimeOut – now!**
3. **Responding partner stops all talking, all action, and waits.** This is very important.
4. **The TimeOut-Requiring partner states a period of time for the TimeOut.** "I need 2 hours." "I need the rest of the night." This step signals that this TimeOut is taking place within the relationship and it is not an exit from the relationship.
5. (Optional – Ideal) TimeOut Requiring partner makes a note of what the responding partner was speaking of when the timeout was requested.
6. **Both partners separate and are silent until the timeout period is over.** Note: Since this must be not-negotiable, the responding partner is given a choice at this point. If you stop all talking and action, you will get a quiet time with your partner nearby. If you continue talking, you will get a quiet time with your partner out of the area – e.g. driving off for a while. Either way the Requiring partner gets a TimeOut – a time of quiet. When you become good at "silent" TimeOuts, you can try just not talking about subjects that are distressing to either.
7. **Ideally, the TimeOut-Requiring partner re-initiates contact. If either person needs more time, they announce this addition requirement when they return.**
8. (Optional and Ideal) The TimeOut-Requiring partner initiates dialogue about what caused them to request a timeout.
9. (Optional and Ideal) The TimeOut-Requiring partner initiates continued dialogue on the subject interrupted by the TimeOut and noted in step 5 above.

Typically one partner will need more timeouts. The goal for this partner is to learn to state their needs with kindness, and yet firmness. This may be quite difficult and is typically a growth-edge for them.

Typically the other partner will need fewer TimeOuts, themselves. Thus they will need to learn to put their eagerness on hold, and to easily give timeouts and space, on demand. This may be quite difficult, and is probably part of their growth edge.

Practice timeouts even when you do not really need them, until both you and your partner get that hang of them. Initially you will probably have to get out of each other's presences to make a TimeOut work – sleep separately, go to motel, go for a drive, etc. As you practice more, you will probably be able to stay closer during the TimeOut period.

Remember the goal is to reduce the pressure between you, so that eventually you don't need to use any TimeOuts.