



Cool Downs & Time Outs

We first heard the term time-outs from Dr. Anne Ganley who works in a veteran's medical center in Tacoma, Washington. Some people call them cool downs, but the name isn't as important as the practice. A time-out or cool-down is simply a tool to use to prevent you from doing or saying abusive things that you know you'll regret later.

TOM

"I would reach a point where no matter what I learned in the groups or what the court order said, I just didn't care. I was going to do something and nothing could stop me. A cool-down is like preventive medicine. Before you ever get to that place where you don't care any more, you leave. The situation won't change because you left it for awhile, but how you deal with it may change totally."

STEPS TO TAKE

- 1) Talk to your partner about cool-downs right away. Let him/her know that sometimes when you're together, it may be necessary for you to take a time-out or cool-down in order to relax. Let him/her know that when you come back, that you will agree on a time either later that day or the next day to discuss the issue again. She/he might want to do the same thing.
- 2) Take a time-out or cool-down every time you think your anger is starting to climb by recognizing your physical and emotional cues and leave the situation (place or person).
- 3) Do not swear, raise your voice, threaten or use any intimidating behavior.
- 4) Go somewhere and try to relax and think positively about yourself. Remind yourself of what your goals are in the program. It may help to walk, jog or do deep breathing to get some tension out. Do not drive, drink alcohol or take drugs.
- 5) When you come back, decide with your partner on a good time for discussion of the issue. Maybe it is a good idea to talk it over with a third party present, someone you both trust. Sometimes after a time-out, you may both decide that the issue wasn't worth discussion in the first place, and you may mutually decide to just drop it. If you decide to discuss the issue and you recognize the cues occurring again - TAKE A TIME-OUT!



REMEMBER THESE FOUR POINTS ABOUT RESPECTFUL COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

- 1) You have the right to say what you want to say, but you cannot do it in an abusive way, using intimidating or harsh language.
- 2) In order for communication to be effective, both parties must listen to what the other person is saying and not try to merely convince the other of your position.
- 3) Good communication requires negotiation and compromise. If somebody has to win the argument, then somebody else has to lose it.
- 4) No single issue is as important as your overall goal of remaining non-violent and non-abusive in your relationship.