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HOW TO IMPLEMENT TIMEOUT THE RIGHT WAY

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One of the most common punishment procedures parents use is timeout. Although timeout can be a very simple procedure to implement, it does contain parameters that are not common knowledge.

For instance, did you know research has proven timeout periods exceeding 15 minutes are not likely to be effective? How about a highly reinforcing time-in makes timeout more effective? Let's take a look at what you should consider when implementing a timeout procedure. First, think about whether you want to do an exclusionary or non-exclusionary timeout procedure. If you decide to implement an exclusionary timeout such as sending a child to a timeout room or removing them from a group, just remember this is a procedure that does not win the majority vote. It can be viewed as discriminatory and you run the risk of not being able to see certain behaviors that may be high risk or self-destructive. Non-exclusionary procedures are more widely accepted. For instance, contingent upon a maladaptive behavior, a child is asked to sit away from the group and watches. Reinforcement is withheld during the timeout interval. This is known as contingent observation. A timeout ribbon may be useful as well. While the child has the ribbon on, reinforcement is available. When it is taken off, the child loses all forms of social interaction and reinforcement. In addition, it is important to be clear as to what will place a child in time-out and what is expected of them to get out of time-out. Avoid using vague language such as "good behavior" or "bad behavior". Instead, use specific terms such as "keep your hands to yourself" or "punching". Finally, in order for timeout to be effective, it needs to be done consistently and immediately after the problem behavior occurs.



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