

Embracing The Dark Side

TIME-OUT PLAN

After reading through “*Time-Outs: They’re Not Just For Kids*” on this website, write out your answers to the following questions (use additional paper if necessary) as a way to begin thinking about and concretely using time-outs in your life. Use this plan as a tool to help you actually implement this important skill in your relationship and in your day-to-day living. If you currently have a partner and/or have children, talk with them about this plan as well.

- 1) What are the most important cues (i.e. stress signals such as problem situations/issues, negative thoughts/rehearsalself-talk, “trigger” words/phrases, emotions, physical reactions) that you want to attend to in order to make a decision about whether you are escalating to a potentially explosive outburst or a disrespectful emotional withdrawal and need to take a time-out?

Rank them below, i.e. Lower-level cues are triggers at the beginning of your escalation that predispose you to further escalation (e.g. feeling hungry, tired, or ill); these are the early signs of your escalation. Upper-level cues are the triggers you experience just before you make the choice to explode or begin a punishing withdrawal with someone.

• **LOWER-LEVEL CUES:**

• **MIDDLE-LEVEL CUES:**

• **UPPER-LEVEL CUES:**

2) How will you communicate to your partner or others your need for a time-out (you can use either a verbal or non-verbal method) when you are beginning to escalate and there is the potential for a punishing withdrawal or for abusive or explosive anger? Write out the words you will say or what you will do when you are taking a time-out (also remember to include a statement about how long you will be away before you re-connect with your partner and children):

- **with your partner**

- **with your children**

- **with others** (e.g. friends, boss, co-workers, extended family)

3) What will you do or say if the other person does not want you to leave or tries to stop you from leaving?

4) When you need a time-out, where will you go? Identify where you will go at that time and be sure to include any of the possible situations noted below. Also talk about how you will take care of your children (if you have any) when you or your partner decides to take a time-out.

- **AT YOUR HOME**

- **AT FRIENDS' OR RELATIVES' HOMES** (e.g. on holidays, at social gatherings)

- **AT OUTSIDE ACTIVITIES/EVENTS** (including public places like restaurants, stores, sporting events, and shopping malls)

- **AT WORK**

- **ON THE PHONE** (with your partner or others)

- **IN THE CAR** (with your partner, your children, or by yourself)

- **WHAT ARE SOME OTHER SITUATIONS WHERE YOU MAY NEED TO TAKE A TIME-OUT WITH YOUR PARTNER OR OTHERS?**

5) How long will your time-out period with your partner last (at a minimum)? Be sure to take enough time for yourself to effectively de-escalate.

6) At the end of this time, how will you re-enter the situation that you have left. Be specific about a plan to come back.

- How will you approach and reconnect with/talk to your partner at this point?
- What will you say and do if the other person doesn't want to talk at that time?

7) Where can you go if you need to take an extended time-out if things become especially volatile (e.g. overnight or for two or three days)?

- 8) During your time-out, what specific things will you commit to do to de-escalate and calm yourself?
- Be sure to clearly identify your “quiet space” (the place in your mind you will visualize immediately as you are first taking a time-out where you can feel “grounded,” calm, peaceful, and safe).

- 9) What people, activities, and thoughts do you need to work to avoid during your time-out period?
- i.e. specific people, activities, and thoughts that just might just escalate you even more

10) What excuses will you use (or have you used in the past) to avoid taking respectful time-outs?

11) What positive self-talk can you use in the future to promote your use of respectful time-outs (be specific)?

I commit myself to further developing and actively using my *Time-Out Plan* with my partner and others to intervene in my escalation and to decrease my potential for emotional withdrawal and/or disrespectful, punishing, explosive, and abusive anger in the future.

(Signature)

(Date)