

# How To Take A Relational Time-Out In 6 Steps

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## 1. Recognize you're emotionally flooded (one, or all of the following may occur)

- You notice *physical* signs such as increased heart rate (over 100 bpm), changes in voice tone, heat, skin flushed
- You *shut down* and become unresponsive as a strategy to avoid conflict
- You *raise your voice* or begin to *communicate your anger non-verbally* by driving recklessly, slamming doors, or engaging in other threatening behavior

## 2. Communicate to your partner that you need to take a time-out

Tell her/him, "I'm flooded (or I'm not in a good place to have this conversation) right now, and I need to take a time out."

## 3. Tell your partner how long you need for a time-out and where you will be

Add additional time to your estimate to give yourself plenty of space to process what's happening for you and to get grounded and centered again.

## 4. Take more time, if needed

If you realize while taking a time-out that you need more time, let your partner know as soon as possible.

## 5. Be accountable about your commitment

Return at the time you stated.

## 6. Re-engage about the hot-button topic

When you return, either ask your partner if she/he would like to re-engage about the issue or schedule a mutually agreeable time in the future to talk about it. Consider asking for a "re-do."\*

## Time-Out Dos & Don'ts:

DO take ownership of your need for a time-out rather than rely on your partner.

DO re-engage about the hot-button topic after a time-out.

DON'T use time-outs as a way to avoid or delay talking about a topic that's difficult or painful for you.

DON'T say, "You're upset and I think you need a time-out." Take ownership of your emotions and your need for a timeout.

DON'T refuse to accept your partner's request for a time-out by physically following them, continuing to talk to them after they've requested a time-out, or refusing to let them leave.

## Time-Out 911:

If your partner refuses to let you leave when you ask for a time-out, you are – in essence – being held hostage.

If you feel that you are in danger and that your partner has become irrational and/or dangerous, call 911.

\* covered in separate *handout*