

THE TWO-MINUTE TIMEOUT IN PARENTING YOUR CHILD

By Dr. Kevin Downing Ph.D. MFT

What will you do when your child crosses the line... when they do what they are not supposed to do?

If you're like most of us parents, you don't always have an answer. It's tempting to get frustrated and angry and then demonstrate for your child the very behaviors we would not want them to display!

The two-minute timeout is a great little tool that can greatly improve your parenting – and deepen the relationship you have with your child.

- ❖ Pick a quiet place and sit down with your child. Explain to them that you have some good news and some bad days.
 - **The bad news is** - if they do one of the following behaviors (infractions) they will have a consequence. The infractions may include:
 - Direct defiance e.g. “No, I won’t”.
 - Sassing back
 - "Forgetting" (real or pretend)
 - Whining and complaining
 - Provoking a brother or sister
 - Etc.... (feel free to address what is most important to you)
 - **The good news is** – the consequence is only two minutes (And two questions followed by a hug).
 - Designate a place for your child to sit quietly for two minutes. (It doesn't need to be the same place each time.)
 - Keep your child in your peripheral vision. You don't need to sit and stare at them, but don't leave the room either.
 - When the timeout is up go to your child and ask them the following questions:
 - A) "Why were you in time out?"**
If your child says "because you're a bad mood" or some other blaming statement – simply tell them that's the wrong answer and they have another two-minute time out. Don't debate or educate.
We want our child to take **ownership** of their actions. (What a rare character quality to find in the world today!)
 - B) "Will I see this (behavior) anymore today – or tonight?"**
We are looking for a “no” answer here - a reassurance that they will act differently in the near future.
 - Follow it up with a hug. (A lot of teenagers don't give hugs. So, enjoy it if you get one!)
- ❖ What if my child won't go into timeout?
 - Yes – children have meltdowns and can be uncooperative.

Turning Point Counseling

Visit us at TurningPointCounseling.org ♦ Or call us at (800) 998-6329



- With meltdowns I recommend that you simply say to your child "your time out will begin when you're quiet." (You might exit the room during their meltdown. Use your judgement.) When they do get a hold of themselves say "your two minutes will begin now."
- If your child has a hard time cooperating with the two-minute time outs – they may benefit from rehearsing some "practice" timeouts.
Start early in the day - When you have lots of time and they are not escalated. Tell your child where to sit for their "practice" time out. Practice often throughout the day. Repetition will help to make it a habit. Listen carefully about what is going on with them. Is the root of their acting out a lack of self-control or is there a problem they need to talk about? Listen to them and use your intuition.
- ❖ When there is a consistent ongoing problem with your child – be **PRE-EMPTIVE**. Talk about the problem ahead of time – and rehearse the solution. (E.g. the problem might be getting out of bed in the morning and sleeping through the alarm clock. Talk about the problem and rehearse the solution at three o'clock in the afternoon! Have some fun with it – it's kind of silly role playing getting up at 3pm. You might switch roles and they have to deal with you not getting out of bed! Stay relaxed – let time be your friend. Give yourself time to work it through with your child.)
- ❖ Do you still have problems? Make you sure you discuss your situation with your therapist, family counselor or pediatrician.
- ❖ Remember without parental authority it's not parenting – it's a free for all. Someone needs to be directing traffic and it's you the parent. This is one of the most important aspects of the parenting process. (This is different from being an 'authoritarian' – which is harsh rules without love and relationship connection.)
- ❖ Know that healthy parenting is a balance of **BONDING and BOUNDARIES**. (Rules without relationship leads to rebellion. Relationship without boundaries is chaos and leads to dis-respect.) Balance your two-minute time outs with...**play, hugging and holding, listening, cheerleading and reading**.
- ❖ **BIG PICTURE** - What will you do when your child or loved one goes side-ways?
Answer: Be **HONEST, KIND** and **CONSISTANT**.
“Through patients a king can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.” Hebrew Proverb

Last thought – I've often said, “Having a child is just an excuse to live a second childhood.” Play often with your child. Play is a place where your child gets to experience unlimited power and creativity. Play is the place where you enter your child's world – have some fun!

Turning Point Counseling

Visit us at TurningPointCounseling.org ♦ Or call us at (800) 998-6329

