

## Timeout Tips During Conflicts

Sometimes during conversations about tough topics or seeking solutions, conflicts can rise. During that time there is a lot of information and feelings to process and manage. Below are tips for when needing to pause the conversation and then be able return to plan goals or resolutions. These are skills for managing emotions, not for avoidance of the conversation.

These tips are not to replace safety. When in crisis, your safety is top priority.

- (1) **IDENTIFY:** Identify you need to step away to process or calm down.
- (2) **COMMUNICATE:** Let the other person know
- (3) **TIME:** Set a time limit
- (4) **SKILLS:** Regulate v. Avoidance
- (5) **PUNCTUAL:** Be on time

### Identify: Check in with yourself

- Are my thoughts getting cloudy?
- Am I bringing up past topics or issues that were not part of the original topic?
- What is happening in my body?
  - Holding breath?
  - Gritting teeth?
  - Escalating in volume?
  - Being stoic and silent?

### Communicate: A moment to pause

- If you are needing to step away from the conversation, let the other person know in a way that isn't a punishment. Be concise, clear, specific.
- Slamming doors or the silent treatment further escalates the situation. Stating you need to step away isn't communication that's aggressive but rather assertive.
- *For example*, "I am overwhelmed and need to step away to think about what we have talked about." Or "I can tell I am getting angry and want to calm myself so that my communication is healthy and not hurtful."

### Time

- When choosing to step away, be specific about when you want to return to the conversation. Saying “we will talk about this later” doesn’t let the person know if you mean that day or that year. Be specific. For example, two hours or after dinner before bed. Set a clear time frame. Confusion can escalate emotions. Setting a clear time allows everyone to decrease in confusion.
- *For example*, “I am overwhelmed and need to step away to think about what we have talked about. I will be back in two hours, 6pm, ready for us to work on this together” Or “I can tell I am getting angry and want to calm myself so that my communication is healthy and not hurtful. I will be back after lunch by 2pm so we can come back together to talk.”

### Skills

- During your time away from the conversation, it is important not only to calm judgmental or intense thoughts, but also to calm the body. There are multiple skills to help with this. It is important to remember safety. Some people use driving to de-escalate, but this isn’t healthy if it involves speeding or erratic driving.
- Some ideas are:
  - Meditation and/or focus phrases
  - Going for a walk and focusing on nature, breath, and senses.
  - Journaling goals
  - Stretching and deep breathing
  - 30 minute healthy distraction and then prepare goals and communication  
Visualization of calm place
  - Playing an instrument or creative outlet
  - Spiritual practices

### Punctual

- Remember to be on time. When late, the other person’s worries or anger may escalate due to a let down agreement.
- Use tools to help with punctuality.
  - Set an alarm. Allow for snooze alarms if you need more than one reminder
  - Put up Post-It Notes.
  - Consider commute time if driving or walking.