Points to Remember About Ignoring

- Avoid eye contact and discussion while ignoring.
- Physically move away from your child but stay in the room if possible.
- Be subtle in the way you ignore.
- Be prepared for testing.
- Be consistent.
- Return your attention as soon as misbehavior stops.
- Combine distractions with ignoring.
- Choose specific child behaviors to ignore and make sure they are ones you can ignore.
- Limit the number of behaviors to systematically ignore.
- Give attention to your child’s positive behaviors.
**Learning Self-Control**

Many family members find that in stressful situations they cannot maintain their self-control. Others report they suffer from chronic anger, anxiety or depression, and they are easily set off by the slightest event. However, when parents allow themselves to become so overwhelmed that they overreact, the consequences can be unfortunate. Parents may say or do something they will regret. After they calm down, they may feel guilty and avoid dealing with the child for fear of repeating the episode. It is frightening and anxiety-provoking for a child to see a parent lose control. Also, the child learns to imitate these aggressive behaviors in other situations. These cycles of parental overreaction and avoidance make it difficult to deal with the child in a consistent manner. The best approach is to achieve a middle ground—not be so overwhelmed that you can’t respond or so upset that you overreact.

**Upsetting Thoughts**
- “That child is a monster. This is getting ridiculous. He’ll never change.”
- “I’m sick of being her maid. Things are going to change or else!”
- “He’s just like his father.”
- “I can’t handle it when she’s angry.”

**Calming Thoughts**
- “This child is testing to see if she can have her own way. My job is to stay calm and help her learn better ways to behave.”
- “I need to talk to Michael about his clothes lying around. If we discuss this calmly, we should reach a good solution.”
- “I can handle this. I am in control. She has just learned some powerful ways to get control. I will teach her more appropriate ways to behave.”

**Thought Control**

Researchers have demonstrated that there is a relationship between how we think and how we behave. For example, if you view the child in hostile terms (“He is misbehaving because he hates me — he likes to get me upset”), you are likely to become very angry. On the other hand, if your thoughts emphasize your ability to cope (“I’m going to have to help him learn to control himself”), this will help to bring about rational and effective responses. One of the first steps for improving the way you think about your child is to replace upsetting thoughts and negative self-statements with calming thoughts.
Putting it All Together

1. Identify and label your emotions when they first occur. Pay attention to how your body feels (for example, tenseness, fidgeting, anger, headaches).

2. Decide what events make you feel frustrated.

3. Choose the most effective way to control yourself, and do it.

Non-Constructive Thoughts

“John never helps. All I get is work, work, work. I fix the food, take care of the house, the kids, everything. Boy, would I like to throw this at him!”

“After working 10 hours, I’m tired and frustrated. When I get home, all I get are hassles. The kids interrupt and yell, and Joan criticizes me. This place is a mess. What does she do all day? I feel like screaming or walking out of here.”

Constructive Thoughts

“I’d better watch it and calm down before I do something I’ll regret. What I need is help. Maybe if I ask John in a nice way, he’ll give me some help. That’s the best way. Then maybe I can have a relaxing bath.”

“Take it easy now. Take a few breaths. What I really need is a few minutes of peace to relax and read the paper. Maybe if I ask Joan nicely to play with the kids while I read, then I could give her a break and play with the kids later. She needs a rest too. That’s the most helpful way. I can already feel myself relaxing.”

“I can handle this. I can stay in control. ‘She’s just testing the limits. My job is to stay calm and help her learn better ways.’”
Point to Remember about Stress and Anger

- Scan your body for tension, and breathe and relax or do the exercises.
- Notice any negative self-statements and replace them with soothing self-encouragement.
- Ask yourself if what is making you feel tense is really that important? Will it make a difference a week from now? A year? When you are 70?
- Visualize some marvelous past event or dream of the future.
- In the middle of conflict, breathe, cool off, get playful, or get away for a few minutes.
- Take a break (go for a walk, take a bath, read a magazine).
Points to Remember About Time Out

- Be polite.
- Be prepared for testing.
- Expect repeated learning trials.
- Ignore child while in Time Out.
- Support a partner’s use of Time Out.
- Follow through with completing Time Out.
- Use personal Time Out to relax and refuel energy.
- Use Time Out consistently for chosen misbehaviors.
- Monitor anger in order to avoid exploding suddenly; give warnings.
- Give 5-minute Time Outs with 2 minutes of quiet at the end.
- Carefully limit the number of behaviors for which Time Out is used and use consistently.
- Don’t threaten Time Out unless you’re prepared to follow through.
- Use nonviolent approaches such as loss of privileges as a back-up to Time Out.
- Hold children responsible for cleaning messes in Time Out.
- Don’t rely exclusively on Time Out—use other discipline techniques, such as, ignoring, logical consequences and problem-solving for less severe misbehaviors.
- Build up bank account with praise, love and support.
- Use Time Out for destructive behaviors and times when your child’s misbehavior cannot be ignored. Start by choosing just one behavior to work on. When that behavior is no longer a problem, choose another behavior to work on.
- Give immediate Time Out for hitting and destructive acts, however for noncompliance one warning may be given.
- Ignore inappropriate behaviors such as screaming, whining, teasing, arguing, swearing and tantrums while the child is in Time Out.
- Praise positive behavior as often as possible.
Responding to Child Dysregulation and Teaching Self-Regulation

Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D.

My child is upset, angry, defiant & beginning to dysregulate

**Parent Self-Talk**

“My child is upset because… and needs help to self-regulate and problem solve.”

“I can stay calm. This will help my child to stay calm.”

“I can ignore this behavior as long as he is not hurting someone or breaking something.”

“I can be supportive without giving too much attention to disruptive behavior.”

“If my child is responsive and cooperative to my coaching, then it’s a good time to coach. If my coaching makes her angrier, then she needs space and privacy to calm down.”

**Parent Response**

- Model deep breathing, patience and being sympathetic to child
- Help child use calm down thermometer and take deep breaths
- Redirect child to another activity
- Ignore child’s dysregulated behavior as long as behavior is not unsafe
- Label child’s emotion and coping strategy: “You look angry, but you are trying hard to stay calm with breathing and remembering your happy place.”
- Stay nearby and be supportive.
- Give attention and coaching to behaviors that encourage your child’s coping and emotion regulation.
Slow Down

When children are angry and dysregulated, parents may also feel angry and out-of-control and may respond by yelling, criticizing, or spanking. At these times, Time Out can provide time and space for the parent, as well as the child, to self-regulate. Here are some tips for parent self-regulation:

• STOP and challenge negative thoughts and use positive self-talk such as: “All children misbehave at times. My child is testing the limits of his independence to learn that our household rules are predictable and safe. This is normal for children this age and not the end of the world.”

• Do some deep breathing and repeat a calming word: “relax,” “be patient,” “take it easy.”

• Think of relaxing imagery or of fun times you have had with your child.

• Take a brief break by washing your face, having a cup of tea, putting on some music, or patting the dog. Make sure your child is safe and monitored.

• Focus on coping thoughts such as: “I can help my child best by staying in control.”

• Forgive yourself and be sure you are building in some “personal time” for relaxation.

• Ask for support from someone else.

• Reconnect with your child as soon as you are both calm.

Like your child you can get yourself into a “green” calm state and try again.
My child continues to dysregulate and becomes aggressive

Parent Self-Talk

“My child is out of control and too dysregulated to benefit from prompts to calm down or to discuss solutions to problems.”

“I need to give my child time away from attention to calm down so he doesn’t hurt someone.”

“I have taught my child how to use the Time Out or Tiny Turtle chair to calm down so I can do that now.”

“Time Out is a safe and respectful way for my child to learn to reflect and self-regulate.”

Parent Response

• I say, “Hitting is not allowed, you need to go to Time Out to calm down. “ (This place has a calm down thermometer to remind my child of what to do in Time Out to calm down.)

• I wait patiently nearby to let him re-regulate and make sure others don’t give this disruptive behavior attention.

• I give him privacy and don’t talk to him during this calm down time.

• When he is calm (3-5 minutes), I praise him for calming down.

• I support my child to re-enter an activity or routine.
**My Child Is Calm Now**

### Parent Self-Talk

“Now I can reconnect with my child and help her learn an alternative way to solve her problem.”

“She is learning she gets more attention for positive behavior than inappropriate behavior.”

“I can help her learn to express her frustration and anger in more appropriate ways.”

### Parent Response

- I praise my child for calming down
- I distract my child to a new learning opportunity.
- I do not force my child to apologize because insincere apologies do not teach empathy
- I engage her in something else so that we have positive Time In together and she feels loved.
- I start using social coaching as my child plays
- I also look for times when she is calm, patient, happy, or friendly.
- I use emotion coaching to help her understand these self-regulated feelings get my attention.
- If she starts to dysregulate again, I name her uncomfortable feelings, help her express these verbally, and prompt her to remember her coping strategies.
- During times when my child is calm, I use puppets, games, and stories to help her learn alternative solutions to common childhood problem situations.

### Bottom Line

My child learns that taking a Time Out feels like a safe and secure place to calm down; it is not punitive or harsh and isolating; my child understands that when he has calmed down, he can join in family or peer activities without blame and has a new opportunity to try again with another solution to his problem. He feels loved when this strategy has been used and has sometimes seen his parents or teachers use this same strategy when they are angry. My child gets far more Time In attention from me for positive behaviors than negative behaviors. He feels loved and secure when using Time Out because it gives him time to re-regulate and try again in a loving environment. Time Out provides me with a chance to take a deep breath and calm down so I can respond to my child in a calm, firm, consistent, nurturing or caring manner.
Points to Remember about Teaching Children to Manage Their Anger

• Notice when your child is starting to get frustrated and angry.
• Encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings.
• Cue your child by saying, “Tell yourself to STOP, calm down, and take three big breaths.”
• Encourage your child to use positive self-talk by saying, “Tell yourself, ‘I can calm down; I can handle this,’” or “Everyone makes mistakes; with practice I can do it.”
• Praise your child’s self-control and appropriate expression of feelings whenever you notice it.
• Model self-control and appropriate feeling talk.

Points to Remember about Teaching Children to Manage Their Anger

• Notice when your child is starting to get frustrated and angry.
• Encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings.
• Cue your child by saying, “Tell yourself to STOP, calm down, and take three big breaths.”
• Encourage your child to use positive self-talk by saying, “Tell yourself, ‘I can calm down; I can handle this,’” or “Everyone makes mistakes; with practice I can do it.”
• Praise your child’s self-control and appropriate expression of feelings whenever you notice it.
• Model self-control and appropriate feeling talk.
Points to Remember about Natural and Logical Consequences

- Make consequences age-appropriate and fair.
- Be sure you can live with consequences you set up.
- Make consequences immediate.
- Give child choice of consequence ahead of time.
- Make consequence natural and nonpunitive.
- Involve child whenever possible.
- Be friendly and positive.
- Use consequences that are short and to the point.
- Quickly offer new learning opportunities to be successful.

Remember once the consequence is completed to start over fresh with a clean slate.

Points to Remember about Natural and Logical Consequences

- Make consequences age-appropriate and fair.
- Be sure you can live with consequences you set up.
- Make consequences immediate.
- Give child choice of consequence ahead of time.
- Make consequence natural and nonpunitive.
- Involve child whenever possible.
- Be friendly and positive.
- Use consequences that are short and to the point.
- Quickly offer new learning opportunities to be successful.

Remember once the consequence is completed to start over fresh with a clean slate.