

Thinking Time

Occasionally it might be necessary to withdraw a child from a situation to give them time to calm down and think about what they should be doing.

Thinking time is always very brief (under one minute) and the adult should always find a reason to praise the child shortly afterwards. Suitable places to withdraw the child to could be the bottom step of the stairs or a chair in the hallway or somewhere else where it is relatively quiet and uninteresting so they are not distracted from thinking about their behaviour.

Remember Thinking Time is NOT a punishment it is a short time away from contact with anyone or anything that is slightly rewarding or satisfying to the child. This time should be as boring as possible, so the child has time to think.

What to do:

- ❖ Decide what place you are going to use for Thinking Time.
- ❖ **Calmly**, remove your child from the situation to the Thinking Time place.
- ❖ Do not talk or look at your child and don't allow anyone else to do so.

- ❖ Ignore your child while they are doing Thinking Time.
- ❖ After a short period of time you can say to the child, "now you can get down." If they are still shouting, wait until they take a breath and say, "now you are quiet you"
- ❖ If your child chooses to stay in the Thinking Time place after you have said s/he can go, just ignore them.
- ❖ After Thinking Time help the child to put right the problem for which thinking time was used.
- ❖ **MOST IMPORTANTLY**, look for a reason to praise your child as soon as possible.

Long periods of thinking time are not effective - short and repeated sessions are!

Punishment v Management

Effects of punishment:-

- Can interrupt the behaviour
- Creates resentment and may lead to more conflict later
- Causes feelings of guilt in adult
- Creates an insecure relationship
- Children become overly anxious when they make a mistake or are criticised

- Children can feel rejected when they are punished and if your relationship is already fragile it can cause a lot of distress

Natural consequences:-

- Child makes links between what they do and what happens as a result
- E.g. If a child breaks their own toy and it doesn't work anymore they cannot play with it.
If a child continues to be silly at the park, after lots of reminders and encouragement it is quite natural to go home.
- There should not be a lot of discussion
- Avoid persuasion and justification

Getting Results

There are several things you can do to increase the likelihood of your child obeying an instruction:

- ❖ **Give a time warning before changing activities**, for example: "In a few minutes it will be time to tidy away". This gives the child time to finish off the game. "When the sand runs through the timer, it will be time to wash your hands for tea". "When the music finishes, it will be time to go upstairs and put on your pyjamas".
- ❖ **Gain their attention by using their name** before giving an instruction. This way they will know the instruction is meant for them and no-one else. "Maisie, you need to wash your hands". "Joshua, you need to clean your teeth".
- ❖ **State the instruction in a clear and confident way. Be specific**, for example:-
 - "Haroon, it's time to get your coat on now"
 - "Sam, you need to get down from the table"
 - "Samira, go and find your reading book"
- ❖ **As soon as the child begins to comply with the instruction, praise them**: "Well done John, you were listening to me, you're going to"
"I can see you're thinking about putting your shoes on".

- ❖ **If you want the child to do something, avoid using a question:** "Will you get your coat?" can be answered with a "Yes" or a "No" - you have given a choice! Likewise, "Do you want to read with me?" "Would you like to work over here?" "Could you get your blue jumper?"

- ❖ The use of your child's name, 'you need to' and a 'thank you' at the end, indicates to your child that you are serious in your instruction and you expect that they will conform - it is not a request, or an option! "Jonathan, you need to keep your hands on your knees, thank you".

- ❖ **Avoid arguments.** If your child refuses to comply, simply repeat the instruction, give some take-up time and then, if necessary follow it up with a physical prompt (e.g. guide your child towards the coat hook/toys to be picked up etc.). Do not allow yourself to be drawn into a discussion or negotiation. Avoid discussing the inappropriate behaviour - the more it is noticed and given attention, the more likely it is to be repeated.

- ❖ **Stay calm and praise the prompted behaviour,** rather than comment on the fuss: "Well done, you're getting your coat" rather than "For goodness sake stop crying"
"Good girl, I can see you're picking up the pencils"
rather than "Stop shouting at me!"

Homework Task

- ❖ Continue to use praise and tokens to encourage the behaviour you identified last week
- ❖ Choose a further behaviour which you want to increase and use praise and tokens to manage this
- ❖ Identify one behaviour you would like to decrease (but think about others as well)
- ❖ Think about how you would use planned ignoring and time out to do this
- ❖ Identify the 'Thinking Time' place you could use in your home
- ❖ When clear, practice using planned ignoring and if necessary Thinking Time out to manage this behaviour

When you collect your child from school, be at the school door eager and waiting to see them with a smile on your face. Look as though you are expecting *GOOD NEWS* and you will get it, from them and their teachers.