



Incredible Years Teacher Group Leaders' Guide on Time Out to Calm Down

**DEVELOPED BY NEW ZEALAND INCREDIBLE YEARS®
TEACHER MENTORS**

**IN CONSULTATION WITH
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INTRODUCTION

“The evidence-based and appropriate use of time out is brief, infrequent, thoughtful, and delivered calmly in an effort to help a child self-regulate followed by a new learning opportunity and positive connection. Time out is taught as a way for children to learn to calm down and re-regulate in the midst of strong emotions and to give children time to reflect on a better solution to the problem situation. Time out can only be used when the adult-child relationship foundation has been well established with positive “time in” methods” – Incredible Years time out works because of quality time In”. - Carolyn Webster-Stratton

“Time out” can be contentious because people can associate it with punitive approaches that have been used in the past. The name “Time Out to Calm Down” is preferred as it positively describes the process to help children regulate their emotions.

When correctly implemented “Time Out to Calm Down”:

- Reduces child conduct problems
- Increases prosocial behaviour
- Decreases trauma symptoms
- Promotes positive attachment relationships

“Time Out to Calm Down” is a process aimed to help children/students learn to calm down based on their developmental readiness. Understanding and effectively implementing “Time Out to Calm Down” is essential for delivering the Incredible Years Teacher programme with fidelity.

Please note that in 2021 guidance was developed for the Incredible Years® Teacher group leaders when using vignettes that contain physical redirect.

KEY HANDOUTS TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF “TIME OUT TO CALM DOWN”

- [How I am Incredible](#)
- [Discipline hierarchy](#)
- [Responding to dysregulation and teaching children to self-regulate](#)
- [Guidance for Incredible Years Teacher group leaders when showing vignettes that contain physical redirect](#)

KEY READINGS

Here are several recommended readings covering key points on delivering “Time Out to Calm Down” effectively. We would recommend teachers read these as pre-study before the topic is introduced:

- [Time out works because of the quality of time-in](#)
- [Weighing in on the time out controversy – an empirical perspective](#)
- [Role of time out in a comprehensive approach for addressing challenging behaviours](#)
- [Time out is one of many tools in the Incredible Years® tool kit](#)
- [Trauma-informed Incredible Years® approaches](#)
- [Roach, A.C et. al. Using Time-out for Child Conduct Problems in the Context of Trauma and Adversity - A Non-randomised Controlled Trial. JAMA Network Open. 2022;5\(9\):e2229726. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.29726](#)
- [Timeout in the context of trauma, attachment, adversity, mental health](#)

- View Mark Dadds video presentation [*“Parent Child Discipline Strategies in the 21st Century: What is the truth about time out?”*](#)
- Webster-Stratton, C. (2019). *The Incredible Years: A Trouble Shooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3-8 years, 3rd Edition, Chapter 9*. Incredible Years Inc., Seattle.

WHAT	How	KEY IDEAS
Emotional literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GL to talk with teachers about the feelings that their children/students can name in themselves and others. What about their target child? Generate reflection using the editable “How I am Incredible” editable worksheet • GL discusses the importance of extending feelings vocabulary. Many children will recognise sad, happy, angry and scared. Encourage teachers to introduce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Calm ○ Patient ○ Relaxed <p><i>Disc 7 - S44 Patience muscles</i></p>	<p>A child learns to recognise their emotions before they regulate them.</p> <p>First in self then in others.</p>
Emotional regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Responding to child/student dysregulation” handout • GL ask teacher to share what emotional regulation techniques they use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For themselves ○ For their children • Introduce techniques with visuals (cue cards for techniques), e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rocket breathing ○ Smell the flower ○ Belly breathing ○ Happy place ○ Imaginary turtle shell • Could introduce vignettes from IYAT/IB if you have access to them. <p><i>Disc 6 - Can show s37 Happy place</i></p>	<p>A dysregulated adult cannot calm a dysregulated child, but a calm adult can calm a dysregulated child.</p> <p>Teachers need to model calmness for a child to calm.</p> <p>Principle: First calm yourself.</p>
Emotional regulation part 2: Relaxation/Calm down thermometer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group leader models using the relaxation thermometer to group. • Teacher’s practice using the script and thermometer in pairs. <p><i>Disc 7 - S43 Coaching self-Regulation</i></p>	<p>Key Idea:</p> <p>This highlights the importance of introducing emotional regulation techniques before introducing “Time Out to Calm Down”.</p>
Discipline Hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientate teachers to where “Time Out to Calm Down” fits in the discipline hierarchy. • Discipline hierarchy 	<p>Key Ideas:</p> <p>“Time Out to Calm Down” is at the highest level of the discipline hierarchy. When using “Time Out to Calm Down” it needs to be</p>

		<p>included in the behaviour plan alongside all of the other methods for building a child's appropriate self-regulation skills.</p> <p>The use of "Time Out to Calm Down" should only be considered when built upon a foundation of a positive relationship and when all preventative strategies are in place. It is considered an extended and structured form of "ignore". Therefore, like the ignore strategy, "Time Out to Calm Down" is not over until a positive connection with the child has been re-established.</p>
Teachers discuss their names for "Time Out"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate the names that the group uses. 	<p>Key idea:</p> <p>We have different names for "Time Out to Calm Down".</p>
<p>Show S31-33</p> <p>Disc 6</p>	<p><i>S31 Explaining "Time Out to Calm Down" group.</i></p> <p><i>S32 Jeremiah practicing</i></p> <p><i>S33 Wally practicing</i></p>	<p>These three vignettes explain the IYT version of "Time Out to Calm Down". Shows IYT philosophy and methods of time out.</p> <p>Emphasise the need for children to practice the steps and practice when they are calm.</p> <p>Emphasise the use of puppets and role play to help children understand "Time Out to Calm Down".</p> <p>Emphasise the importance of enriched "time in" for each individual child, again reference "How I am incredible" worksheet.</p> <p>Developmental readiness is key if introducing "Time Out to Calm Down".</p>
Teachers discuss the space they use within the class or centre or might use for Calming down based on what they have just learned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In pairs, teachers discuss their spaces within the learning environment. 	<p>Key Idea:</p> <p>It is a designated area within the classroom or Early Childhood Centre space. It needs to be carefully considered so it is a safe environment where a child has privacy to calm down but still within adult view.</p>

<p>Show scripts for “Time Out to Calm Down”</p>	<p>Calm down areas scenarios</p> <p>Walk through - no resistance young child.</p> <p>Walk through - resistance young child. If a child is happy to take your hand you can walk with them but as soon as there is any resistance technique must not be used in NZ.</p> <p>If child’s behaviour is unsafe and could cause harm, one adult removes other children for a game and one adult ensures the dysregulated child is safe.</p> <p>Importance of how to end time out. Don’t need to force apology. Child needs to be welcomed back. Teachers establish a positive connection quickly.</p>	<p>Key idea:</p> <p>“Time Out to Calm Down” should be predictable and follow pre-planned steps and scripts. It is this predictability that supports children to calm themselves.</p> <p>When introducing “Time Out to Calm Down”, expect that it is a system that will be tested. Encourage teachers to have scenarios and plans in place for reactions that may occur.</p>
<p>Consideration for NZ context and physical restraint guidelines</p>	<p>Please note that in 2021, guidance was developed for the Incredible Years Teacher group leaders when using vignettes that contain physical redirect. These guidelines can be viewed here: “Guidance for Incredible Years Teacher Group Leaders when showing vignettes that contain physical redirect.”</p> <p><i>Decreasing Inappropriate Behaviour Part 2 (Workshop 5 -DVD 6)</i></p> <p><i>Vignette 2</i></p> <p>Child is not resisting physical redirect.</p> <p>Additional question to facilitate discussion: Given that we recommend using the “Time Out to Calm Down” strategy for aggression only in NZ, what other strategies from the IY pyramid can be useful here?</p> <p><i>Vignette 4</i></p> <p>Child is not resisting physical redirect.</p> <p>Additional question to facilitate discussion: As we recommend using the “Time Out to Calm Down” strategy for aggression only, what other strategies from the IY pyramid can be useful for “bad” language?</p> <p><i>Vignette S-34</i></p> <p>Child is willingly being lead across the room and when the child is no longer willing to walk with the teacher, physical redirect is ceased.</p> <p>Additional question to facilitate discussion: What is it about this interaction that makes this acceptable within the NZ context?</p>	<p>Key point:</p> <p>If there is any physical resistance, “Time Out to Calm Down” is discontinued as a strategy unless the child is in imminent danger (Duty of Care).</p>

	<p>Vignette S-36 Child is not resisting physical redirect.</p> <p>Additional questions to facilitate discussion: At which point did the teacher risk moving outside what is acceptable in the NZ context? How do you keep calm in situations like this?</p> <p>Vignette S-38 Child is not resisting physical redirect.</p> <p>Additional questions to facilitate discussion: While the teacher does not continue with physical redirects when Emani resists, what else could you do in this type of situation? What helps you keep calm in situations like this?</p> <p>Vignette S-39 When the child resists physical redirect, it is dropped.</p> <p>Additional questions to facilitate discussion: What do you notice that is in line with the NZ legislation regarding the use of physical restraint?</p> <p>When do you think it is appropriate to try physical redirect, when would you move to a different strategy?</p>	
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Further Information and support on “Time Out to Calm Down for IYT Group Leaders” consider the following:

- Reviewing related footage at peer coaching
- Attending IYT group leader or peer coach consult days
- Attending IYT group leader fidelity workshops that are focused on time out