

Mountains to Conquer

Column by Bob Coombs, MA
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This Column is written especially for men!

Time Out, Part 2

In an Anger Management Support Group that I was co-leading a man reported that he chose not to hurt his wife when angry at her. Instead he took his rifle out to the field and shot 20 of his sheep. Of the two options he thought of, the consequences were far less by shooting the sheep. It should be noted however, that some people who kill another human being have first killed animals.

When this man's case went to Court, the Judge did not excuse him for making a better choice. Instead, the man had some jail time and then a full series of individual counseling sessions along with the Group therapy, where he had sessions with other men who had also shown violent behavior towards their spouses.

I would like to reinforce the concept at this time that there are *consequences for violent behavior* in most democratic societies. Even in ancient cultures there were often rules against violence in some form. Fortunately in the 21st century in my country women and children are considered persons and not just property as they were all too often in the 18th century and before.

In this issue of the Polly's Place Newsletter I will share the tool of "Time Out" for Anger Management.

Tool # 2. "Time Out"!

This technique has several benefits which can bring a tense situation to a peaceful resolution rather than a painful situation where the outcome is often in the "Fight or Flight" reaction that accompanies the reaction of losing control.

One of the dangers in family conflict is that one or both spouses are terrified of abandonment. In the past they may have seen one of their parents leave the home and stay away for a long period of time. In some cases the parent did not come home. In other cases the man's or woman's spouse left in anger and did not come back for a long time or never. These past experiences of abandonment often bring intense fear of additional abandonment as well as loss of hope for a happy relationship.

Here are some simple steps to bring a positive resolution to the argument and to avoid the fear of additional abandonment:

First: A "time out" must be set up in advance. A husband and wife or parents and children must set rules or guidelines on how the time out is to be carried out. In some cases the family members will need the help of a counselor to help them set up the plan to follow.

Second: The “time out “ should have a specific time which allows both parties to cool down and overcome the strong feelings or anger that they feel when the situation got out of control. I recommend either 30 minutes or one hour. At the end of the set time the individuals should come together and attempt to talk things over in a calm and logical manner. If this does not happen they should repeat the “Time Out” for another short period of time, never longer than one hour.

Third: Both parties who set up the time out agreement must be committed to building their relationship. They must be willing to stay in a specific area where the other person knows where they are, and that they are safe.

Fourth: It is better if the person who leaves the house walks to a specific location where they can think and cool down. Often the person who is left at home feels the extreme feeling of abandonment if their spouse drives away from them.

Fifth: Driving vehicles can be dangerous when very angry. A former brother-in-law of mine died from crashing his motorcycle after fleeing the house after arguing with his wife. Many innocent persons have been hit and injured or even kicked by vehicle driven by a person who is angry or feeling hopeless after a family argument.

Sixth: The “Time Out” works only if a person is willing to take some of the responsibility for the problem. An apology for the angry behavior or for triggering the anger in the other person is a must. Ending with a discussion of how to resolve the triggering problem and then hugs and affection brings a soothing balm to the hurt.

Next Issue:

My next column will address the area of our thinking styles. Often a man will think thoughts that are dangerous. All too often a man is caught in a situation where his mind plays tricks on him. This leads to suspicion, jealousy, stalking behavior and often violence. This can be avoided.

Your feedback is welcome. Write to:

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