

## A New Twist on Parenting With Time-Out

Mothering Magazine came out with a thoughtful article about a mom's new approach to the classic "time out."

Time-out used to be a tool for teaching, but our generation has made it about punishment, once again. Let's face it, time-out is our new spanking. We come by this honestly. Our discipline models of the past were about making children pay for their misbehavior by making them feel miserable, guilty and ashamed. Somehow we thought our children would behave better by making them feel worse.

In the article, this mom of 2 young children decided to create a "Time In" rather than a time out. Her 2 and 4 year olds began to squabble over the 4 year old's couch cushion castle creation and the 2 year old did what all 2 year olds seem to do -- he wrecked it.

Instead of separating the boys, or putting the 2 year old on the naughty chair for his 2 minutes on the microwave timer, mom grabs a kushie ball and announces "Time In." The boys are intrigued and mom explains that whoever is holding the ball can speak about what happened and their feelings.

Oh, I know, you're thinking, "This is great! I love it already." It appeals to your intentional ways.

But WAIT! I was excited about it too and I even got so seduced by the idea that I tried it with my own two kids. We had just gotten back from a trip, and we were all tired from being in the van for 4 hours together. I was catching up on mail and unpacking bags when the tiff broke out. Fresh from my read of the article, I announced "Time In!"

WOW. Both kids stopped and sat down with me and I passed around the wooden orange (that was the closest object I could find to a talking stick).

Both kids talked about their feelings and what went wrong and came up with a solution. They had a wonderful time. I had a great time too.

That night, I was in bed and thinking it all over again with a big grin on my face. Then it hit me.

What *was* I thinking? Of course they loved it! I had literally stopped in my tracks and sat down and gazed into their sparkling eyes and listened with all my heart to their sweet little thoughts and big ideas. Since when did that ever happen the last time my son bopped my daughter in the nose with his dinosaur? Uh. Never.

It's like running a red light and the police stopping you and paying you \$50 for breaking the law! Would I run more red lights? You betcha!!

Yes, yes, I taught them to talk out their problems. But what else had I taught them? I taught them that they can make a ruckus and get mom's full blown attention for 20 minutes.

I literally paid each of them a lot of time and energy for misbehaving!

But you know, it really got me thinking about the concept of "Time In." Rather than using it as some sort of lovely and gratifying consequence for misbehavior, I can use it as a reward for *good* behavior. I really loved giving them the time to talk with me and it was wonderful to look into their little faces and listen intently to them tell me their thoughts. I realized I don't do it often enough in such an "intentional" way.

So, yes! I love "Time In!" Maybe you'll find it as a ritual to begin or end your day or somewhere in the middle when all is going smoothly as a lovely way to say, "hey, you guys are behaving so cooperatively today, let's have a Time In!"