



Using Safe Timeout to Prevent Conflict Escalation

Disagreement is normal in relationships. What matters is how conflict is managed before it escalates into harm. A safe timeout allows couples to pause, regulate, and return to difficult conversations respectfully.

Disagreement vs Arguing

Disagreement means difference can be discussed safely.

Arguing happens when emotions overwhelm and harm becomes more likely.

Timeout is used before arguing takes over.

Our Timeout Agreement (Complete Together When Calm)

| | |
|---|-------|
| Timeout signal we will use: | _____ |
| How long timeout will last: | _____ |
| How we will return to the conversation: | _____ |

Calling a Timeout Safely

Use clear, respectful language such as:

- “I’m getting overwhelmed and need a timeout.”
- “I care about this, but I need a pause.”

Avoid walking away without explanation.

During the Timeout

Timeout is for calming, not rehearsing arguments. Try breathing, walking, grounding, or writing feelings safely.

Returning Matters

Always return to the conversation. Pausing protects the relationship only when reconnection occurs.

Who Matters – counselling and supervision

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