Parent Child Journey
An Individualized Approach to Raising Your Challenging Child

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Eighth Mile: Ignoring and Time-Out

Log (ignore), lightning (time-out), or rock (pause)? Ignoring or time-out should be used for behaviors that cause physical injury, emotional harm, property damage, or social disruption. You should ignore if your child's behavior is relatively insignificant or inconsequential; that is, "a log" that you can float right over. Use time-out if the behavior is significant, serious and unignorable, "lightning" that requires action to avoid serious harm. Pausing should be used for everything else: "rocks" that you can't float over but you can easily avoid if you just stop and let the current adjust your path.

Why use ignoring or time-out?

1. Create physical and emotional distance
2. Avoid unintentionally reinforcing negative or undesirable behavior
3. Protect persons and property
4. Get off the negative

Now for some controversial suggestions. In my view, ignoring and time-out should *not* be used to:

1. Punish.
2. Make a child feel remorse or say, "I'm sorry."
3. Teach.

Logs

When to ignore: Some undesirable behaviors do not require a time-out or any response at all. In fact, parent attention could result in a power struggle or make these behaviors even worse. You should consider ignoring behaviors that are:

1. Relatively **harmless** and of no significant consequence.
2. Easily **convertible** from unignorable to ignorable without requiring a time-out. (See "converting lightning to logs" below.)
3. Probably, if ignored, **self-limiting** and not likely to become repetitive. If you did react and give attention, these behaviors would be more likely to continue or recur.
4. Potentially **maturational**; that is, relatively appropriate for your child's developmental age and no big deal. Sometimes, kids just need time to grow up.

"Ignorable logs" include:
1. **Minor injury** to any person; such as nonrepetitive bumping, swiping, or pushing.
2. **Minor damage** to property; such as breaking a cheap toy or crayon or making an age-appropriate mess.
3. **Unkind talk**; such as verbal jabbing, whining, complaining, or demanding.
4. **Minor disruption** to normal family or social functioning; such as interrupting, inappropriate comments or gestures, cheating, arriving late, or leaving early from the dinner table.

How to ignore: When ignoring (or using time-out), be careful to use excellent technique. In a few words, this means, be immediate, nonverbal, and nonemotional.

Converting lightning to logs: Whenever possible, parents should seize the opportunity to convert potentially unignorable behaviors into ignorable ones.
1. Removal
2. Distraction or redirection
3. De-escalation
4. Retreat

Lightning

When to use time-out? Time-out should be used for behaviors that are *serious, very harmful,* and *unignorable.* This includes behaviors that cause:

1. **Severe injury** to any person; such as, hitting, biting, kicking or throwing dangerous objects.
2. **Serious damage** to valuable property; such as, destructive acts that would require expensive repair or replacement.
3. **Lasting emotional harm**; such as, verbal assaults. These behaviors should not be tolerated in homes any more than they would be tolerated in schools. This includes persistent, recurrent and relentless bullying or teasing of siblings. Moreover, parents should not allow themselves to be abused by their own children.
4. **Significant disruption** to normal family or social functioning; such as might occur at the dinner table or in the classroom.

How to do time-out

1. Immediate, nonemotional, nonverbal
2. Counting-out for gathering storms
3. Safety first
4. Getting your child into time-out:
    a. Point or tell
    b. March
    c. Carry
    d. Deposit
5. During time-out
    a. Prevent escape
    b. Anticipate an extinction burst
6. Ending time-out
    a. How long?
    b. Prolonged lightning storms
    c. Clean slate

Where to do time-out

1. The child's bed room
2. Other rooms or places
3. The "roomless" time-out
4. The "Big Bear Hug"
5. The "reverse time-out"
6. The car and public places
7. School and time-out?
8. For older children and adolescents (instead of time-out):
   a. Restricted use or loss of Internet access, cell phone, or other electronics
   b. Restricted use or loss of car keys
   c. Social restrictions; including curfews, banned places, or approved escort
   d. Monitoring; including, GPS cellphone tracking, drug testing
   e. Grounding (but not too long): for hours to days, not weeks

Why time-out and ignoring don't always work

1. Overuse
2. Poor technique
3. Not enough proactive problem solving
4. Not enough "time-in"
5. Allows escape from negative environment
6. Parent, family, and other care-provider factors

Log, lightning, or rock? Resolving uncertainty and disagreements

- rock (pause) always beats lightning (time-out) and log (ignore)
- log (ignore) always beats lightning (time-out)
- lightning (time-out) always loses

Homework for the Eighth Mile

Now that you understand *why* different reactive strategies are used for different behaviors, you can decide *when* to use each one. Take out your problem behavior inventory from the First Mile. Look down the list.

1. Consider your progress with proactive strategies used so far. Update your number rating for problem severity: 0 = not all, 1 = little, 2 = medium, 3 = big. Have you made progress? Are there some behaviors that you can take off the list? Any that you need to add?
2. Now, go down the list and write "log," "lightning," or "rock" next to each problem behavior. If you prefer, write "ignore," "time-out," or "pause" to indicate which reactive strategy makes the most sense.
3. For ignoring and time-out, review technique and use as indicated.