

Defiance & Daily Battles - Five to Twelve Years Old

About the Author

Simon Beal is a Clinical Psychologist and specialises in child and adolescent psychology and has a strong interest in children's behavioural issues and helping parents to manage their children's challenging behaviours. Simon started his career in the Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), but has now worked in the private sector for close to fifteen years. Simon now has three private practices across Adelaide, South Australia, where he receives referrals from General Practitioners, Paediatricians, Psychiatrists, School Counsellors, Teachers, Families SA, and the Federal Magistrates Court and Family Court of Australia. Simon is registered with Families SA to provide support to children and families in foster care, and Simon is also registered with the Independent Schools Board of South Australia as a behavioural consultant. Simon has the title of expert witness in both the Federal Magistrates Court and Family Court of Australia, where he has been regularly called to give evidence in relation to children's issues. Simon is also a parent of two teenagers, so understands all too well the everyday challenges that parents face. As a result of this experience, Simon believes strongly that parents need practical and sensible advice and strategies to manage their child's challenging behaviour. Simon strongly believes that the modern-day parenting approach is letting parents down in this very challenging and stressful area of parenting.

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Before reading this manual, please ensure you have read the Parenting Manual – Introduction & Rationale.

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INTRODUCTION

When it comes to challenging behaviour, children in this age group can often present the biggest of challenges for parents. Still too young to reason with, but much bigger than toddlers, their behaviour can be much more troublesome. What was the standard 'two year old tantrums' often keep going, and the bigger the child gets the bigger the challenging behaviour. And parents start to get sick of hearing, and hoping, that "they'll grow out of it"! And if you had a toddler that was a real handful (read nightmare!), then look out. The defiance, argumentativeness, the disrespect, and the aggressiveness and violence can reach a whole new level. Just as parents of younger children need strategies to manage this behaviour, so too do parents at this age. Just because the child is older and at school, it does not mean they are better equipped to manage their behaviour, and despite what parents are often told, they are still too young for reasoning and negotiating.

This belief that parents should be able to reason with a child at this age needs to be discussed in more detail, as it is common place in modern-day parenting for parents to be told that they should be reasoning and negotiating with their children, rather than the old-fashioned 'do as you're told' (Please refer to the Introduction & Rationale for more details on this issue). Yes there are times when you can reason with your child, and everything goes well, however if you have a strong-willed, self-centred child who gets their heart set on

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something, then reasoning with them very likely won't work. However, worse than simply not working, it results in a battle, as the child sees reasoning as a sign that there is still a chance they will get their own way. So the battle begins! And this can over something as simple as which socks to wear to school that day. It must also be remembered that the more emotional the child becomes, the less able they are to reason (It should also be remembered that this very much applies to adults as well - so how can we expect children to be able to manage it.) It also needs to be remembered that the advice given to parents about 'needing to reason and negotiate' with your child has been blown out of all proportions (see Introduction & Rationale) – children simply need to do as they are told!

For children in this age group of five to twelve, there is also another vital point that needs to be addressed. It is essential for parents to be in control of their child's behaviour as the child approaches teenage years. In other words, as the child approaches teenage years, the child needs to respect that parents are 'the boss' and children need to respect the rules and boundaries that apply. This point cannot be emphasized enough – if parents don't have this respect from their children when they reach teenage years, things can get very unpleasant. It is no coincidence (in my opinion) that with over the recent decades, with the demise of parental discipline and the lack of respect of a parent's authority, there has also been a general lack of respect for authority allowed to develop.

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Despite what parents have been told about children needing to be free to express their emotions and make their own choices etc., it is vital to any child's wellbeing that they understand the parent is in charge and in control. (As discussed in the Introduction & Rationale). Essential in conveying this vital message is the parent's ability to remain in control, not only of the situation, but also their emotions. If a parent loses control of their emotions, such as getting angry and even furious at the child, this sends the message to the child that the parent isn't in control – this then tends to inflame the situation, and it often results in the child escalating their behaviour as well. Afterwards, parents will typically feel bad about 'yelling and screaming' at the child, however it is not typically the parent's fault. Parents get pushed to 'snapping point' due to their child's continual inappropriate behaviour, and with the modern approach to parenting, parents aren't given adequate strategies to deal with the behaviour, hence the parent's level of frustration increases until the parent can't stand it anymore. What the parent needs, and is sadly lacking in modern day parenting, are strategies that allow the parent to remain in control of the situation and in control of their child's behaviour.

As discussed in the Introduction and Rationale, there needs to be simple rules and consequences, and it is the consequences that make the children follow the rules. For the consequences to be effective, they must be of consequence to the child, and importantly, the parent needs to be able to follow through

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with the consequence. It is also important to remember that children do not need to be given a choice with everything - often they just need to do as they're told. Another vital aspect of gaining this respect from your child is for the parent to have strategies that allow the parent to not get engaged in the battle, remembering that children with strong personalities tend to 'thrive off the battle'.

THE STRATEGIES

The Rule

It is best to have simple rules, because the more complex the rule, the more the parent is likely to open the door to a battle with a child who thinks it's their right to argue and outwit the parent. With this in mind, the only rule that is required is "Children Need to Do as They're Told". This rule applies to all children, no matter what their age, no matter whether they have an underlying condition, and no matter what difficulties they have experienced – they still need to do as they're told. A very simple way of remembering this, and reminding children of this, is to use the NIKE advertisement that was popular a few years ago – most parents will remember it well.

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And when children ask why – the answer is “because I told you so!” Don’t be tricked into thinking that the parent needs to be giving reasons and explanations for every daily task that needs doing - this is simply wrong, and it is more bad advice that parents have been given - please refer to the Introduction & Rationale for a more detailed discussion on the belief that parents need to give their children choices and explanations.

As already discussed, whenever there are rules, you will need consequences that make the rule effective. It is the consequence of breaking the rule that makes a person follow the rule. Therefore parents need appropriate consequences for children at this age.

The Consequences

There are several factors that will contribute to making consequences effective. This is very important, and why many parents have struggled with using consequences in the past – not every consequence is an effective consequence.

Firstly, for a consequence to be effective, it must be of consequence to the child, and every child is different.

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However, parents are usually quite good at judging what a child will hate, and this is what is required – the child has to really dislike the consequence. In deciding what an appropriate consequence is for a child of this age, the parent has a few more options than a parent of younger children, because children in this age bracket have a better concept of time, and it's not as vital for the consequence to be immediate. However, having said this, it is generally much more effective to have consequences that the parent can 'follow through on' the same day. This is very important, as it tends to make the consequence much more effective. A good example of this in practice is the consequence of 'taking something away'. Parents often comment on how ineffective this type of consequence is for their child. There are a number of issues with this type consequence. Firstly, once something has been taken away, the parent has lost it as a possible consequence for any further misbehaviour that day. Secondly, it also tends to happen that once the child has lost the 'item', simply adding time to the amount of time it has been taken away quickly loses its effect. It's also much harder for the parent to follow through with the consequence – for example, if the parent has banned the x-box for a week, and it comes to the weekend, and the child has been relatively well behaved, sticking with the consequence is hard work – the child is often bored which will almost surely result in more misbehaviour, and saying no opens the door to another battle, hence parents will often 'give in'. However, giving in only makes the consequence much less effective, because the child quickly

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discovers that the parent rarely follows through. Hence it is very important to wherever possible have consequences that occur the same day. This also allows everyone to have a fresh start the next day, which is more pleasant than needing to follow through on consequences.

When deciding what to use for a consequence, it is also vital that whatever is decided on can be used every time. The reason for this is due to the important principle of Intermittent Reinforcement, discussed in the Introduction & Rationale. It is no good having a consequence that can only be followed through with sometimes. This point is also mentioned above, in the situation where once something is taken away, the parent no longer has it to use as a consequence. It is vital that the parent can have a consequence to use every time the child misbehaves.

In the manual for younger children aged 2 to 5 years, it discusses the limited number of consequences parents have due to younger children not having a good grasp of 'time'. However, once a child turns five, they understand time much better, and this provides more opportunities to parents for consequences.

For children aged 5 to 12 years, it's also important for parents to have a range of consequences, which can then be used depending on the child's behaviour. An important distinction needs to be made between different types of behaviour, as this dictates what type of consequence the parent will need to

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use. This is due to the problem of a child's behaviour tending to escalate when they are not getting their own way, or something isn't going right. It's important to remember that as a child becomes more emotional, they become much less rational, and it's this simple fact that results in many standard consequences being ineffective. For example, if a child is misbehaving, the parent may try taking away the x-box for a day. This often results in the child becoming more argumentative and angry, and so the parent will extend the consequence to a longer period. This only makes the child even angrier, and very quickly they become completely irrational. At this point in time, the parent could ban the x-box for a year and it won't be effective at dealing with the situation. For this reason, whenever a child's behaviour is escalating, the parent needs a consequence that will also act as a 'circuit-breaker' – to put an end to the situation and the battle. However, it must be pointed out that the consequence cannot just be a 'circuit breaker' – it must also be of consequence to the child, as it is the consequence that will stop the behaviour in the future. A simple 'circuit breaker' may diffuse the situation at the time, but it won't stop the future battles. This is best understood by using a common example – that of 'Time-Out' in the child's bedroom. This is often recommended as a consequence for children of this age, however for most children it's simply not a consequence. Their bedroom is where all their 'stuff' is, and an older child is far less bothered anyway by being sent to their room (compared to a three year old who hates Time-Out). Yes, it

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may work as a circuit breaker, if the child does as they're told and actually goes to their room, however it's not of consequence to the child, so it won't stop the behaviour. Remarkably though, this is by far the most common consequence recommended to parents.

There are also a number of other issues with 'Time-Out'. Another common version, as seen on shows like the SuperNanny, is Time-Out on the naughty spot, or the naughty chair, for one minute for every year of age. The child is expected to sit there for the required amount of time, and the child is also expected to sit there and think about what they've done wrong. Unfortunately, there are some major flaws with this version of Time-Out. Firstly, don't expect a child to sit there and think about what they've done wrong – it's not going to happen. Usually children are far too upset or angry to be thinking clearly about anything – this idea is really just a poor attempt at making a consequence sound more like a strategy aimed at helping a child learn to make better decisions and choices. This is an example of 'parenting gone mad' – it is the consequence that stops the behaviour, not the 'thinking about it'. Remember, if sitting there thinking about it was going to be effective, surely it would have worked after a few times of trying this strategy.

The second flaw, and a far more major problem with this version of Time-Out, is the expectation that a child will sit there for the required time. If you have a strong-willed child,

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there is every chance that they won't sit there quietly for very long. The usual recommended strategy if the child 'carries on' or leaves Time-Out before the required time is that the parent is supposed to continue placing the child back into Time-Out, as many times as necessary, until they have done the required amount of time. This may work when parents have the SuperNanny on hand to help, but in everyday life, when a parent has a million things to do, not to mentioned probably looking after other siblings, often who are crying because they've just been the victim of the child in Time-Out, it's just not practical.

The other issue with the child being able to leave the Time-Out spot before their time is up is that by leaving the Time-Out spot, they can keep the parent engaged in the battle. This is the reason why the battle can go on for so long, because the child is able to continually get the parent's attention. This must be avoided at all costs – recall the importance of not engaging in the battle in the Introduction & Rationale.

For these reasons, it is important for the Time-Out strategy to be in a place where the door can be closed and the parent can leave the child in Time-Out. And for it to be of consequence, it must be boring and unpleasant. It also has a door that can be shut, which is often essential in putting an end to the battle. It must be remembered that for the consequence to be effective, it must be of consequence to the child. This means

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the Time-Out location needs to be boring and unpleasant, and with nothing to do.

Time-Out – But Not the Standard Version

The starting point for an effective Time-Out, which is both a circuit breaker and a consequence, is Time-Out in the Toilet. The toilet is boring and unpleasant, therefore it is far more likely to be of consequence than the child's bedroom, or the naughty spot (where they can often still see what's going on etc.) It is also a place where minimal damage can be done, which is important for those children that are prone to 'trashing their rooms' when they are sent to Time-Out. In some situations, if the toilet is simply not practical, the parent will need to find another boring and unpleasant place for Time-Out – often the laundry or bathroom are suitable alternatives.

As mentioned above, a common problem with the standard Time-Out is that the child won't stay there. Again, this allows the child to keep the parent engaged in the battle, and this must be avoided at all costs. There are several things that need to be considered if the child will not stay in Time-Out. Basically the parent has two options. The first option is to have a bigger consequence for coming out of Time-Out before the time is up, however this means coming up with a bigger consequence, and this means the consequence needs to be major! The principal of having a bigger consequence to make the initial consequence effective comes from everyday life –

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this is what we all experience, and it is what makes the consequences effective, which in turn makes us follow the rules. Again, the road rules are a good example – if a driver doesn't pay their speeding fine, the consequence only gets bigger – eventually they will end up in jail. This makes the driver pay the speeding fine, which makes them far more aware of staying under the speed limit. When applied to children, an example may be taking away something that the child dearly loves, however taking things away has its limitations, as mentioned above, but it may be effective, depending on the child. Whatever is used, it has to be seen as a major consequence.

The alternative strategy is to simply lock the door. While this sounds extreme to some, it is by far the simplest way to make Time-Out effective when the child won't stay there. The threat of this itself may be sufficient to make the child stay in Time-Out, however if not, the parent simply needs to fit a lock to the outside of the door (alternatively, the door handle with the lock on the inside can be reversed so the lock is on the outside – the lock is typically only a temporary measure, needed only until the child learns that the parent is in charge). Parents often worry that locking a child into a room constitutes some form of child abuse. This is not the case – it is the toilet for heaven's sake, it's not a dungeon, nor a pit in the back yard. All the parent is doing is going to the level needed too to control a child's behaviour. If the child did as

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they were told there would be no need to lock the door, nor would they be in Time-Out in the first place.

As this is often seen as a controversial strategy, it also needs to be pointed out that this would not be suggested for a timid and reserved child who gets frightened by an adult raising their voice – locking the door on a child with this type of personality would definitely be ‘over the top’ and inappropriate. However it also needs to be pointed out that parents would never need to go to these lengths with a placid timid child, because all a parent needs to do is ‘raise their voice’ and the child does as they’re told. So to quote an old saying – its horses for courses - some children simply need much firmer boundaries and consequence.

It should also be mentioned that the vital message that the child must learn is that it’s the parent that needs to be in control, not the child. This is why it’s vital that whatever strategy the parent chooses to use, that they can remain in control. This is the problem with the standard version of Time-Out where the parent can’t keep the child there – the parent isn’t in control and the child knows it. Placing a lock on the door, or at least letting the child know that you will if they don’t stay in Time-Out, is by far the most effective and easiest way to get the vital message across to the child that the parent is in control. And as discussed in the Introduction & Rationale, vital to a child’s psychological well-being is the knowledge that the parent is in control.

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It is also often suggested that when Time-Out has finished that they should remind the child what they did wrong and also say sorry, but again, this is not good advice. The problem with this idea is that with a strong-willed and self-centred child they often don't think that what they did was wrong, and it then just starts the battle all over again. Or at best, making them say sorry only teaches the child to say sorry even when they don't mean it. It's far better to not discuss anything, simply let the child come out of Time-Out and treat everything as 'business as usual'. Don't give the child anything to fuel another battle – in other words, 'let the consequence do the talking'. The only exception to this would be if the child has hurt someone or damaged something – it's then appropriate to make them say sorry, because this is what is expected in everyday life. If they refuse to say sorry, they can go straight back into Time-Out.

A Small but Important Variation to Time-Out

As already mentioned, Time-Out in the Toilet is not only a consequence but also a circuit-breaker, and this is a crucial strategy in teaching children how to control their emotions. For children in this age bracket, parents are often told that the child should be 'in control of their emotions', and we therefore expect them to control themselves. The reality is that children at this age aren't very good at controlling their emotions, and this especially applies to situations where their emotions tend to escalate, such as when they're not getting their own way.

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And for children that are strong-willed and self-centred, their emotions can escalate very quickly to the point where they are irrational and can no longer control themselves, and this can then go on for hours. This is essentially a tantrum, and it's wrong to think that a child will be able to manage this themselves. After all, adults can experience the same difficulty in controlling their emotions, and adults will often require someone else to step in say 'take a break'. Yes, children need to begin to learn how to control their emotions, but they won't be able to manage this themselves. It is also important to note that this view is very different to the modern-day parenting view that says children need to be free to express all of their emotions and that this is a healthy thing for the child. For a strong-willed child, this is in no way healthy. Society does not tolerate tantrums, therefore we all need to learn how to control our emotions when things don't go our way. Children at the age are still unable to control their emotions once they have reached the 'irrational' stage, and the way they begin to learn to control their emotions is through the experience of being made to control their emotions.

Time-Out is the strategy that parents can use to begin to teach children to start controlling their emotions. This can be done by adding a small variation to Time-Out. As mentioned above, children at around the age of four will understand this small but very important variation to Time-Out – "the time doesn't start until you're quiet". In other words, if the child has four

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minutes of Time-Out, this time doesn't start until the child has controlled themselves. If they are screaming, kicking, banging on the door, kicking the door, or anything that indicates they haven't 'pulled it together', then the time doesn't start. However, the child doesn't have to be silent, just controlled. If the child calls out "Is it time yet?" that's fine, because they have shown that they are now in control. It is remarkable how well a seemingly out-of-control child, even at the young age of four, can learn to control and contain their emotions when they know they will not come out of Time-Out until they have controlled themselves. However, it would be wise to expect that the first few Time-Out's with this variation may go on for one to two hours, or more, but after a few times and with the parent seeing it through until the end, the child very quickly learns. Importantly, this gives parents a much needed and vital strategy to deal with their child's tantrums that can go on for hours and often turn very nasty.

This is also a good time to address some of the other strategies parents are told to use when their child throws a tantrum and gets out of control. These strategies have been developed in line with modern-day parenting ideas, and unfortunately not only are they ineffective, but they can even make the situation worse. One very common and simple strategy is for the parents to simply ignore the child. The strategy of ignoring a child is fine if the tantrum only lasts a few minutes, however, if the tantrum is likely to go on for longer, the child is also then likely to escalate their behaviour, essentially demanding a

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response from the parent, and in so doing the child becomes increasingly irrational and out of control. In these situations, when the child is completely out of control, parents are told they must 'hold' their child, as the child is obviously 'distracted' and needs the nurturing support of a 'loved one' to 'help them through this terrible and traumatic experience'. This strategy has been adopted from research into children that have been truly neglected and traumatised, and it's then been inappropriately applied to everyday situations where the child is unhappy because they haven't got their own way. Importantly, not only is the underlying philosophy wrong, but more often than not the strategy of 'holding the child' simply doesn't work – worse than that, it often escalates the behaviour. This is because trying to 'hold' an out-of-control child allows the child to keep the parent engaged in the battle, and it therefore continues for much longer. As well as this, there are the practical issues to consider, as many parents will testify too – such as trying to hold a child who is in a rage, the parent will almost certainly be kicked, punched, pinched, scratched, spat on, or any other vial behaviour the child can unleash.

Another strategy that modern-day parents are told to use, particularly when the child is becoming aggressive and violent, is for the parent to lock themselves in their own room. This is completely the wrong thing to be doing to manage the situation, and in fact, it is psychologically distressing for the child. Following this strategy essentially leaves an out of

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control child unsupervised and in control of the situation. For the child, this is sending the message that the adult who is supposed to be caring for them can't control the situation – and this is very unhealthy to the child's well-being. It is essential that the parent remain in control at all times.

Getting back to the Time-Out strategy and the 'time not starting until the child is quiet', for particularly challenging children, when it's likely that their 'screaming' and 'carrying on' may go on for hours for the first few occasions, it may be necessary to warn the neighbours of what you are doing. As silly as this may sound, it's actually quite important, as it's one less thing for the parent to be worrying about when they are following through with this strategy. It must be remembered that it's very hard for a parent to not get engaged and to tolerate a tantrum that can go on for several hours, but it's vital that the parent doesn't give in. Therefore, it's easier for the parent when they don't also have to be worrying that the police may be called because it sounds like a child is being murdered! Having said this, if by chance that some well-meaning, or intrusive, neighbour did call the police, don't worry. The police will more than likely congratulate you on doing your job as a parent and going to the lengths you need to to control your child's behaviour. Don't forget, it's the police that have to deal with the teenagers on the street that think they can do whatever they like!

Time-Out is Not Always Convenient

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A common issue that parents have with Time-Out is that the times they need to use it is often inconvenient, such as at bedtimes, or when getting ready for school, or when asking a child to pack up the mess they've made – sending a child to Time-Out at these times often gets in the way of getting things done. Therefore a parent is less likely to use it as a consequence as often as they need too. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that Time-Out is only used as a consequence in certain situations. The two key times that Time-Out should be used is firstly, when the child is displaying any form of aggression, and secondly, when the child's behaviour is escalating. This is because in either of these situations, the child is already at the 'out-of-control' stage, or are very close to it, where the only thing that will work is a 'circuit-breaker' and consequence combined, in other words Time-Out. It's better to save Time-Out for these situations where nothing much else tends to work.

This however leaves the parent with needing to have a consequence for all of the other challenging behaviour that a child can display – such as defiance, answering back, swearing etc. As these behaviours can occur frequently, consequences such as Time-Out can be inconvenient, making it less likely for the parent to follow through – but it must be remembered that for the child to get the message that the behaviour must stop, then there must be a consequence every time the behaviour occurs.

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Alternatives to Time-Out

A parent can certainly come up with alternative consequences for their child, as they know their child best – but the key principles must be adhered to – in other words, it must be of consequence to the child, the parent needs to be able to keep using the consequence, and it must be do-able so that it will be used every time it needs to be. This is where the often suggested consequence of taking something away is often ineffective – firstly, it simply doesn't bother some children, as they usually have plenty of other things to play with, and secondly, once it's been taken away, it's been lost as a consequence for the parent to use next time.

A Great Alternative to Time Out

Taking time off of a child's bedtime has been one of the most effective consequences for children in this age bracket. Firstly, it's definitely of consequence to most children, because children at this age hate going to bed early, especially if they have siblings that will be staying up later than them. Secondly, it's hard to run out of it as a consequence – in other words, every time the inappropriate behaviour occurs, the parent can simply keep adding up the time that's to come off the child's bedtime. Thirdly, it tends to be much better if the consequence can be 'over and done with' by the end of the day. Taking things away for a week, or banning something that is only going to happen on the weekend, isn't typically very effective as a consequence, in part because it's also often very

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hard for the parent to follow through. When the consequence is applied the same day, it tends to be much more effective, and easier for the parent to follow through.

In following the key principles, it is vital that the consequence is given every time the behaviour occurs. With some consequences, this can be exhausting for parents, but with Time-Off Bedtime, the parent just simply adds up the time. As a guide, it is suggested that the amount of time taken off starts at a relatively small amount, such as five or ten minutes. This is simply because with the types of behaviour it's applied to, such as defiance, arguing, answering back etc., the time will tend to add up very quickly. If a parent was to take thirty minutes off the child's bedtime every time the behaviour occurred, a child could end up going to bed as soon as they get home from school. However, it should also be remembered that it must be of consequence to the child. Ideally, it is suggested that initially the parent aim for at least an hour in total being taken off the child's bedtime, as an hour in total should be of sufficient consequence for the child to get the message that they need to do as they're told, or to stop the backchat etc. In reality, this means that if a child is being defiant twelve times a day, they then lose five minutes every time they are defiant, and this would add up to one hour earlier to bed - and of course, it is vital that this is followed through with.

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This is a good time to address the commonly raised issue of whether a parent should allow the child to negotiate the consequences, such as 'earning points back' for good behaviour. The answer is definitely not. In other words, if the behaviour has occurred, it's too late, the consequence must also occur. This would be no different to someone charged with breaking the speed limit and fined \$300, then asking to have their fine reduced if they stay under the speed limit for the rest of the week. More importantly, when you are dealing with a strong-willed child, this ability to negotiate typically just results in more arguments. Simply praise the child for being better behaved, but this doesn't change the consequence – a child needs to learn to do as they're told in the first place.

For Time-Off Bedtime to be an effective consequence, of course it must be 'of consequence' to the child. This means that when it comes to the child's bedtime, the child has to go to bed and lie there with nothing to do – that means not playing with toys, not reading books, nor playing with their iPod. They simply lie there with nothing to do. This is what makes it 'of consequence' to the child, in other words, it has to be boring. It's important to note that the parent cannot force the child to go to sleep – in fact, if the child is sent to bed early and then falls straight to sleep, it often becomes less of a consequence for the child, as they aren't lying their bored while everyone else is still up. It's also important to note that if the child won't stay lying in bed, in other words, they continue to get up and come out, or call out, or muck around,

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it probably isn't going to be much of a consequence either, as the child is likely to be getting attention from this behaviour, which they then turn into a game. If this occurs, there must be a consequence for the misbehaviour that happens after the child's bedtime. One option of a subsequent consequence is to start taking time off of the child's bedtime tomorrow night. This can be effective, however it can also create the problem where the parent ends up 'chasing their tail', where every night the child is mucking around when sent to bed early, so time is taken off the next night, only for the child to muck around again – hence the strategy never becomes effective. If this was to happen, the parent must have another consequence for the child's behaviour that's occurred after the child's bedtime. One option a parent has is if the child typically sleeps with their door open and hates their door being shut at bedtime, a simple but very effective consequence is to explain to the child that their door will be shut until they are lying in bed quietly. Some parents worry that this is in some way 'child abuse' when the child's door is shut. Don't worry, there's nothing abusive about it at all, it's their bedroom for heaven's sake, not a pit in the back yard. Some parents also worry that it will make the child's bedroom an unpleasant place for the child – this also isn't the case. The child simply gets the message that the parent is in control and they need to do as they're told. In fact, this example emphasizes the importance of a parent following through with further consequences and not letting a child 'get away with it',

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and it's this combination of strategies that sends the clear message to the child that the parent is in control.

The Importance of Following Through

With the consequence of Time-Off Bedtime, parents will often question what they should do if it means the child can no longer attend a pre-arranged activity, such as sports practice. It is strongly recommended that the consequence be followed through with wherever possible – if this means missing sports practice, have the child ring the coach and explain why it is that they won't be at practice – this only adds to the effect of the consequence, and the child will be sure to get the message that they should do as they're told next time.

Note to Separated Parents – if parents have separated, and the child has lost time off their bedtime, but they are due to go to the other parents house that evening, where possible attempt for the consequence to be followed through with by the other parent. Unfortunately this is not always possible, in which case the parent has no option to apply the consequence when the child returns into their care. An alternative may be to take Time-Off of something else, for example, computer time – see below for alternatives to Time-Off Bedtime.

What to Do When You're Out

It shouldn't come as a surprise that if you have a strong willed, self-centred child, you will more than likely have to deal with

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their challenging behaviour when you leave the house. In fact, children seem to have an uncanny knack of knowing that when you are out somewhere, for example at friends or at the shops, you aren't going to be able to manage their behaviour the same as you would at home. Some children even seem to exploit this, and hence visits to friends or the supermarket can be a real nightmare.

The SuperNanny is well known for suggesting that the 'naughty spot' should be taken everywhere you go, and be used without hesitation anywhere. Again, this is fine when you have the support of the SuperNanny and a film crew to help get through the embarrassment of 'Time-Out' in the supermarket. But in reality, this isn't going to happen. And how many times would you be expected to put your child back on the naughty spot in a shop full of onlookers? Nevertheless, it's essential that there's a consequence for the behaviour, no matter where the behaviour occurs. The solution is to simply use 'Time-Out' as soon as you get home. Of course, if you can use Time-Out when you're out, this would be best, but you have to make certain that you can follow it through to the end. If you are at a friend's, or at relatives or grandparents etc., and if they are supportive, then it's far better to use Time-Out when the behaviour happens. However, as mentioned above, for whatever reason, if it's not practical to use it when you're out, do it as soon as you get home. Given that a younger child will often forget what they did wrong, it's important to get home as soon as possible, but that doesn't mean you have to

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leave a trolley full of shopping in the supermarket aisle and return home immediately. If you can't leave straight away, simply remind the child all the way home that as soon as you get home, they will be going into Time-Out. And for older children in this age bracket, it's also more effective if the consequence is 'doubled' because the behaviour happened when you were out. In other words, as soon as you get home, the child spends double the standard time in Time-Out. Although there is a time delay between the behaviour and the consequence, if it's applied consistently enough, the child will get the message that the rules equally apply when you're out - especially when the Time-Out time is doubled. When out, it's also very easy for the parent to take Time Off of bedtime as a consequence for any defiance, answering back, swearing etc.

SUMMARY

In summary, it's vital that children learn to do as they're told. Yes, sometimes they can have a choice, but when they're told to do something by a parent or other adult caring for them, they should do it! In order for this to happen, the parent needs simple rules, and it's the consequences that make the rule work. And it's vital that the consequence is used every time the child doesn't follow the rules. The child will get the message that the parent is in control and that they need to do as they're told. Put another way, this is how a child learns to

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respect authority – something that we all need to do in real life.

What if This Doesn't Work?

Just as the consequence of Time-Out can sometimes be inconvenient for the parent, sometimes the consequence of Time-Off Bedtime isn't very convenient either. Children's sporting commitments and working late often make it very hard to take any time off of a child's bedtime. In these instances the parent may need to have some alternatives. Taking Time-Off seems to be an effective strategy generally, so where Time-Off Bedtime isn't possible, some possible alternatives may be to take time off of the child's computer time, or TV time – just as long as it's of consequence to the child, and something that the parent can keep taking time-off.

If following the approaches and strategies in this manual hasn't proved successful, don't give up. There's more that can be done, it's likely the strategies just need to be tailored to your situation. And from following the above strategies, even if they haven't worked, there will be a better understanding of what else can be done. In the first instance, please feel free to contact Simon Beal by email to discuss any issues – simon.beal@bigpond.com.