

# How Children Feel About Time Out

"Time out" has been promoted as an efficient way to deal with physically and verbally aggressive behavior, providing time for children to think about their misbehavior, deal with feelings of guilt, and think about more positive behaviors to be taken in a similar situation in the future. Critics, however, claim that time out does not model or teach children what is a more desirable behavior. In addition, if a child ultimately feels anxious, rejected, hurt, or humiliated as a result of time out, they may be more likely to increase other negative behaviors or withdraw from the adults administering time out.

In a study of two-, three- and four-year-olds in child care centers, children were interviewed about their views of school, remembrance of causes of time out, and feelings and perceptions of being in time out. Reasons for being put in time out fell into three categories: physical aggression (slapping, pushing, kicking, biting, throwing objects); verbal aggression (offensive words); or noncompliance (not following an adult's request).

When asked how they felt about being in time out, children reported negative feelings of sadness and fear, as well as feeling alone, disliked by the teacher, and ignored by peers. Fewer than half of the children could accurately recall why they had been placed in time out, suggesting that children were not contemplating their misbehavior, guilt, or alternative behaviors - all of which time out is meant to provoke. In addition, the study reports that the majority of children placed in time out were there for noncompliance. Researchers state that this suggests time out is being used more often as an easy way for caregivers to deal with children who are interfering with or disrupting the normal flow of the classroom, instead of reserving it for more drastic situations such as when a child is a danger or threat to others.

## Source:

"Young Children's Perceptions of Time Out," C.A. Readdick and P.L. Chapman, *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, Volume 15, Number 1, Fall/Winter 2000.

