



## INCREDIBLE YEARS® PARENT GROUP LEADERS GUIDE ON CALM DOWN TIME (AKA TIME-OUT)

*Developed in consultation with Carolyn Webster-Stratton by New Zealand Incredible Years® Parent mentors*

### Background

The 'Time Out' section of the Incredible Years Parent programme is being rebranded as 'Calm Down Time.' The name Calm Down Time is preferred as it positively describes the process to help children regulate their emotions. This document provides guidance for New Zealand Incredible Years® Parent programme group leaders on Calm Down Time. This has been developed in response to group leaders requesting clarification on delivering Calm Down Time with fidelity.

*It is important to reassure you that this topic can be delivered within the NZ legal context and it must be delivered to maintain fidelity*

Calm Down Time is a collaborative process aimed to help children learn to calm down based on their developmental readiness. Understanding and effectively implementing Calm Down Time is essential for delivering the Incredible Years Parent programme with fidelity.

Please note that in 2021 guidance was developed for the Incredible Years® Teacher group leaders when using vignettes that contain physical redirect. These guidelines can be viewed here: [Guidance for Incredible Years Teacher group leaders when showing vignettes that contain physical redirect.](#)

### Key Documents

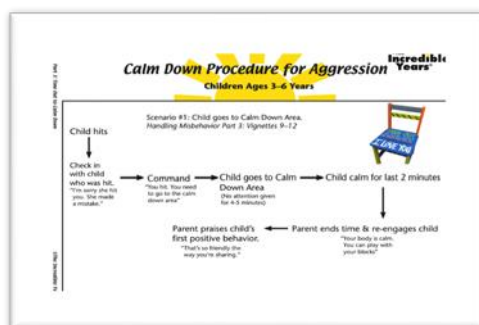
Here are several recommended readings covering key points on delivering Calm Down Time effectively:

- [Time-out works because of the quality of time-in](#)
- [Weighing in on the time-out controversy – an empirical perspective](#)
- [Role of time-out in a comprehensive approach for addressing challenging behaviours](#)
- [Time-out is one of many tools in the Incredible Years® tool Kit](#)
- [Trauma-informed Incredible Years® approaches](#)
- [How parents can build emotional resilience in young children who are anxious](#)
- Chapter 9 Time-out to Calm Down in the revised edition of *'The Incredible Years: A Trouble Shooting Guide for Parents of Children Aged 3-8 Years (by Carolyn Webster-Stratton)*

## New Handouts

Please utilise the below updated handouts to support the delivery of Calm Down Time. All of these resources can be found on the Incredible Years website [here](https://www.incredibleyears.com/).

### 1. [Calm Down Areas Scenarios](#)



### 2. Parent Self-Reflection Inventory Weekly Tools. You might like to give the parents these self-reflection tools as you complete the topics. These help to remind parents to use these strategies regularly.

[Build my child's positive behaviours skills](#)

This week I used these IV Parenting Tools to build my child's positive behaviors!

Tool	Frequency	Success	Notes
1. Praise			
2. Redirect			
3. Ignore			
4. Time Out			
5. Problem Solving			
6. Self-Talk			
7. Deep Breaths			
8. Relaxation			
9. Visualization			
10. Other			

[Refuel my parenting skills](#)

This week I used these calming and support to refuel my parenting skills!

Tool	Frequency	Success	Notes
1. Praise			
2. Redirect			
3. Ignore			
4. Time Out			
5. Problem Solving			
6. Self-Talk			
7. Deep Breaths			
8. Relaxation			
9. Visualization			
10. Other			

[Prevent & reduce my child's inappropriate behaviours](#)

This week I used these IV Parenting Tools to prevent & reduce my child's inappropriate behaviors!

Tool	Frequency	Success	Notes
1. Praise			
2. Redirect			
3. Ignore			
4. Time Out			
5. Problem Solving			
6. Self-Talk			
7. Deep Breaths			
8. Relaxation			
9. Visualization			
10. Other			

### 3. [Responding to dysregulation and teaching children to self-regulate](#)

**Responding to Child Dysregulation and Teaching Self-Regulation**  
Carolyn Webster-Stratton, Ph.D.

**child is upset, angry, defiant & beginning to dysregulate**

**Parent Self-Talk**  
My child is upset because... and needs help to self-regulate and problem solve.  
I can stay calm. This will help my child to stay calm.  
I can ignore this behavior as long as he is not hurting someone or breaking something.  
I can be supportive without giving too much attention to disruptive behavior.  
If my child is responsive and cooperative to my teaching, then it's a good time to teach. If my coaching makes her angrier, then she needs space and privacy to calm down.

**Parent Response**

- Model deep breathing, patience and being sympathetic to child
- Help child use calm down thermometer and take deep breaths
- Redirect child to another activity
- Ignore child's dysregulated behavior as long as behavior is not unsafe
- Label child's emotion and coping strategy: "You look angry, but you are trying hard to stay calm with breathing and remembering your happy place."
- Stay nearby and be supportive
- Give attention and coaching to behaviors that encourage your child's coping and emotion regulation

**The Incredible Years**

**Slow Down**

When children are angry and dysregulated, parents may also feel angry and out of control and may respond by yelling, criticizing, or spanking. At these times, Time Out can provide time and space for the parent, as well as the child, to self-regulate. Here are some tips for parent self-regulation:

- STOP and challenge negative thoughts and use positive self-talk such as: "All children misbehave at times. My child is testing the limits of his independence to learn that our household rules are predictable and safe. This is normal for children this age and not the end of the world."
- Do some deep breathing and repeat a calming word: "relax," "be patient," "take it easy."
- Think of relaxing imagery or of fun times you have had with your child.
- Take a brief break by washing your face, having a cup of tea, putting on some music, or patting the dog. Make sure your child is safe and monitored.
- Focus on coping thoughts such as: "I can help my child best by staying in control."
- Forgive yourself and be sure you are building in some "personal time" for relaxation.
- Ask for support from someone else.
- Reconnect with your child as soon as you are both calm.

**Like your child you can get yourself into a "green" calm state and try again.**

## Guidelines for Delivering Calm Down Time for IYP Preschool

### Highlight key messages to parents:

1. Calm Down Time is one of many tools in the Incredible Years® toolkit.
2. Calm Down Time is a non-punitive strategy.
3. Calm Down Time is only effective when used in the context of a positive parent-child relationship, built on positive time together and interactions that model, coach, and teach positive pro-social behaviours.
4. It is normal for children to be non-compliant some of the time – this is how they learn about boundaries and expectations.
5. If all other strategies in the toolbox are used effectively and regularly, Calm Down Time will not often be needed. Calm Down Time is only used for highly dysregulated behaviour and/or for planned compliance training.
6. The weekly reflection charts are a helpful way to support parents to view Calm Down Time as a self-regulation strategy which is part of an integrated approach to be used with other strategies.
7. Parents model how to stay patient and coach children to be calm at times when everyone is calm. Calm Down Time supports children to learn self-regulation skills that they can use when they are upset. Research consistently shows that when done effectively, Calm Down Time produces positive child outcomes and better parent-child relationships.

### Protocol for Pre-school Calm Down Time (Programme Four Part 3)

Adhere to usual IY principles and processes. Follow the agenda as in the manual.

Please read the introduction notes in the manual. There is a lot of helpful information and preparation tips for common questions group leaders are asked.

#### *Tailoring to meet the needs of your group:*

When planning your group session, select vignettes that match the needs of your group. Think about the type of problems parents are experiencing, the age of their children, the needs of the child, and any additional supports around the child/whānau.

Remind parents that introducing Calm Down Time requires the parent to model and demonstrate remaining calm themselves. If the parents are feeling heated, they can comment that they “need to take a few moments to calm down and to do some deep breathing”. This models for our children that we all need to take time to calm down.

Remind the parents about the sessions on Ignoring, and the strategies they used to stay calm, for example using a mantra or coping statement to help remain calm. Parents need to use these strategies themselves to help them stay calm when their child is escalating.

### Explaining Calm Down Time for hitting (Vignettes 1, 2, 3, & 4)

#### Introductory Narration:

Go through this, pausing to explore concepts and comments.

Vignette 1: An example of an effective explanation- explore what Dad covered and what he left out.

Vignette 2: A multi-cultural parent - an effective explanation with two children. Explore what makes this effective, what else would make it more effective, then practice.

Vignette 3: The explanation – explore what was effective and what would make it more effective. Vignette 4: This is a good example of a parent choosing a calm time to explain.

#### Calm down time for non-compliance (Vignette 5)

This is only for highly non-compliant children (disobedient 70-100% of the time). and may not be a problem being experienced by parents in your group. If non-compliance is not a problem for your group, you can show this as a strategy to have in their toolbox. For most children, other strategies are more appropriate.

Vignette 5: The dad talks about a 'time out room' (bedroom). Visible time out locations are also effective such as a cushion, chair, or mat. When this vignette is used, facilitators can emphasise that despite the location, it is important that parents withhold attention. It also needs to be where the child and parent can be kept safe, and the child stays in calm down time. Holding the child may result in someone getting hurt and emotions escalating. This strategy needs to be tailored to each family/whānau. Please read carefully the consideration in the manual for this vignette.

There are better vignettes covering non-compliance later (Vignettes 22-26).

#### Practising calming down (Vignettes 6-8) all good to show

Calming down is very important and needs to be emphasised. Children need to practice it when they are calm - "*Practise makes it easy to do.*" One option is to try using puppets.

#### More examples of explaining Calm Down Time (Vignettes 9-12)

Vignettes 9, 10, 11, and 12: These vignettes can be left out, because other vignettes cover the key concepts better. However, Vignette 9 narration is a good summary of the steps used for Calm Down Time for hitting. You can show this narration and leave out Vignette 9.

#### *Some suggestions when showing these vignettes:*

Vignette 9: Highlight that this is not the best way to approach Ryan's behaviour. Help parents to explore other strategies specifically for three years olds when a redirect or ignore is more appropriate. Once again read the considerations in the manual.

Vignette 10-11: Ignoring child in time-out chair - Focus on the ways Mum is effectively ignoring the child and identify what parents can do themselves to ignore their child (this will have been covered in the Ignore topic).

Vignette 12: Ending Calm Down Time and reconnecting - It is important to emphasise the reconnecting part in teaching Calm Down Time as many parents miss this part. Positive connection ends the ignore part of Calm Down Time and begins the next interaction with a 'cleanslate.'

#### Appropriate examples for carrying out time-out/calm down time in a play setting (Vignettes 13-15)

Vignette 13: this vignette is for oppositional and unkind words. Therefore, Dorian gets a warning first - "If you don't do what I ask, then you will have to go to time out." Remember you do not give a warning for hitting. Hitting is aggressive and results in an immediate time out. This mum wants Dorian to change her words, so she gives her a warning.

Vignette 14: Coaching the victim to speak up gives the child the words to say. This is important to help children learn the script and be assertive.

Vignette 15: explore how these parents manage Robin while Dorian is in the Time-out (no teasing) and then end with an invitation to come and play and be reconnected.

#### Kaylee in the classroom (Vignette 16)

Please recall all the positive interactions this teacher has invested into the relationship over the previous topics (praise, emotion coaching, social coaching, keeping calm etc...). Kaylee is a highly dysregulated child and needs support from a specialist teacher as part of their management plan. Time-out to Calm Down is carried out respectfully, with kindness, and in the context of a positive trusting relationship. Some parents will need more support or training to be able to do this. Please read the considerations in the manual carefully. Kaylee has learned over the past that tantrums result in her getting what she wants. This 're-learning' takes time, patience, and many practices to 'unlearn.' Over time, Kaylee learned that Calm Down Time was helpful and eventually she was able to take herself there to calm down. Because her pro-social behaviours were always being reinforced with praise and attention, she learned that there were better ways to interact.

Also read the narration at the beginning of Vignette 17 saying that if Kaylee is not hurting others, then she can be ignored where she is.

**Please note this vignette is also used in the IY Teacher programme. If you are delivering in an education setting, please be familiar with the New Zealand Incredible Years® – 'Guidance for Incredible Years® Teacher group leaders when showing vignettes that contain physical redirect.'**

#### Vignettes 17-19 - Leave out unless the group needs more discussion

Parents managing themselves when carrying out Calm Down Time. There are lots of things to do differently. Vignette 17 is an example of a mum using a harsh tone. Calm Down Time is not the best option here and there are other strategies, e.g. Abby could be encouraged to problem solve. The mother is quite reactive, and she is quick to anger. This might be why her children are provoking her? Time-out to Calm Down needs to be done by calm, respectful parents who are in control of their tone, their words, and their actions.

In general, it is best to show examples of how to do Calm Down Time well. This way, parents in your group have an image of what to do. Showing the examples of what NOT to do, will generate discussion but then you need to practice HOW to do it.

#### Older children (6- to 8-years) (Vignettes 20-21)

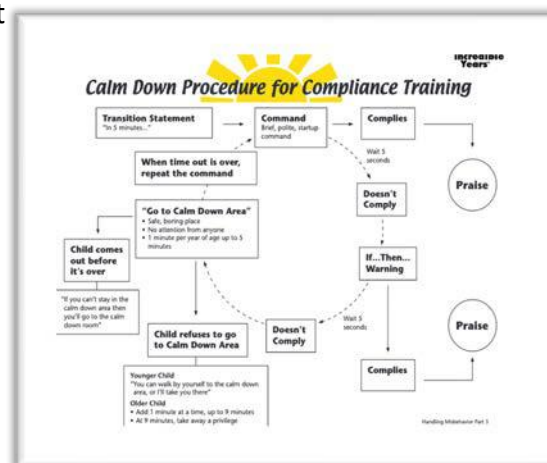
If you have parents with older children, then Vignettes 20-21 shows how you add minutes if the child resists going to the Calm Down place. Once again this is done respectfully and with previous explanation and practice, so the child knows what to expect.

## Calm Down Time for non-compliance (Vignettes 22-26)

Remember this is only for highly non-compliant children (disobedient 70-100% of the time).

Is this a problem for the parents in your group? If not, then go through this as another strategy in their toolbox. It would be enough to show the chart with the steps and then if there is family who needs extra support, take them through the steps as part of individual coaching with lots of practice.

For most groups, focus on the other consequences they can use when their child is a little bit non-compliant.



Remember, Calm Down Time for non-compliance is a compliance training technique that takes time, energy, and calm, coping parents to carry out. If you have families who need this strategy take your time and go through it carefully. These children may also need other supports around them and the whānau, e.g., an Individual Behaviour Plan developed across agencies.

Please note: Calm Down Time for non-compliance vignettes should only be used if this is relevant for parents in your group. These families may also need additional support and group leaders may need additional consultation.

Vignette 22: This narration is a good summary and provides an example of carrying out the steps

Vignette 23: Following through with command and issuing an 'If Then' warning. Please consider the age of this child, the appropriate place to calm down, and what needs to happen when Calm Down Time is over. Also consider when this strategy is the best to use.

Vignette 24: Shows the trap of holding the door. If you show this, it needs to be discussed in terms of what the problem is with this? What behaviour is being reinforced? How can Dad be sure his son is safe and won't run away? How can Dad be safe? What alternatives are there to holding the door?

Remember, this strategy is only for highly non-compliant and aggressive angry children who need to be kept safe. Restricting escape routes may be necessary to keep the child safe while they calm down. How can this be done? This is specialised work and whānau/families will need additional support.

### Common Traps (Vignettes 27-29)

Focus on what you would do differently.

Leave these out unless parents need practice thinking about alternative strategies.

Remember you will be reviewing alternative strategies for difficult misbehaviours in the next topic: Natural & Logical Consequences.

See What You've Learned!

HOME ACTIVITIES FOR THE WEEK

To Do:

Make a list of what strategies you would use for the following misbehaviors. Add other misbehaviors you are wanting to manage.

Misbehavior	Discipline Strategy
1. Hitting and shoving peers	
2. Refusal to do what parent asks	
3. Whining	
4. Tantrums	
5. Dawdling while dressing	
6. Not eating certain foods at meals	
7. Smart talking/arguing with parent	

### A Note on Apologies

**Many parents raise the issue of needing to make the child apologise after being aggressive and having Calm Down Time.**

A discussion in the group around the risks of making a child apologise is important. Be sure to highlight, for example, the potential for the child to escalate again, losing the value of the Calm Down Time, and when the focus is on the important reconnection. Consider the emotional effort the child has made to calm down. It is better to support positive connections after Calm Down Time. Parents could provide descriptive comments to promote friendly reconnection e.g., "Peter's body is calm and he has come to play. He wants to be friendly and I'm going to share my blocks with Peter." Avoid insisting on a response from Peter – rather model what he can do to show he is ready to be friendly.

### Brainstorming the Pros and Cons of Calm Down Time/Time-Out Versus Smacking

Allow parents to list all suggestions and then reflect on who the advantages are for and who experiences the disadvantages and whether the advantages vs disadvantages are short term or long term. Allow time for this realisation to occur. This is quite profound and takes time to process.

### Further Information and Support on Calm Down Time for IYP Group Leaders

Consider the following:

- Reviewing related footage at peer coaching
- Consulting with regional practice leads
- Attending IYP Group Leader or Peer Coach "Connect with your Mentor sessions"
- Attending IYP Group Leader Fidelity Workshops or Fidelity Days