

Episode 14 - RTT Series - Time Outs

This podcast episode discusses the use of timeouts as a common and effective technique in residential treatment programs working with children and adolescents. Timeouts are employed to manage disruptive behaviors and prevent the spread of problematic behaviors and emotions within a group, similar to containing a fire's spread.

The episode emphasizes the importance of setting limits in a firm but non-harsh manner to encourage cooperation and internalization. While timeouts can be used as a purely behavioral intervention, their effectiveness can be enhanced by targeting cognitive development.

Warnings and timeouts can be combined, encouraging self-awareness and self-control while providing specific advice for calming down. Time Outs can also be effectively used without warning. These Automatic Time Outs are based on written rules that are regularly reviewed with the group.

Processing timeouts with children is discussed, focusing on helping them take responsibility for their actions, consider the impact on others, and engage in relationship repair or restitution when necessary. The episode also highlights the benefits of group explanations, where clients review their timeouts with the group, fostering accountability and constructive feedback.

The concept of "chaining" or "linking" is introduced as a technique to help children map out the sequence of events leading to a timeout, identify thoughts and feelings associated with each step, and recognize choice points where alternative actions could have been taken.

Different approaches to determining timeout duration are explored, emphasizing the goal of reintegrating the child when they are calm and the group is ready. Techniques for aiding children in calming down, including organizing tasks and physiological centering exercises, are mentioned.

Lastly, the concept of "resets" is introduced, which are self-timeouts that allow children to regain control and rejoin the group, promoting self-control and self-determination. Overall, timeouts are seen as a versatile tool that can serve both as a behavioral management technique and as a means of teaching children to become centered and self-regulated.