

WHY TIME-OUT DOESN'T WORK

NO MORE
TIME-OUTS!
THE TIME-IN SOLUTION



B. Bryan Post

NO MORE
TIME-OUTS:
**THE TIME-IN
SOLUTION**



B. Bryan Post



B. BRYAN POST

Bryan Post is a leading expert in love-based parenting and disruptive child behaviors. With over 20 years of experience, he has transformed the lives of thousands of families through his groundbreaking integration of attachment science and emotional regulation.

Author of *The Great Behavior Breakdown* and *From Fear to Love: Parenting Difficult Adopted Children*, Bryan's work provides simple, actionable strategies for parents navigating trauma and behavioral challenges. His ability to distill complex concepts into relatable guidance has earned him acclaim among parents and professionals.

As founder of the Fear to Love, LLC, Bryan is dedicated to helping families heal and connect through coaching, workshops, and resources. When not teaching, he enjoys family time and spreading his message of hope and healing worldwide.

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No More Time-Outs: The Time-In Solution

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CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE CRY FOR CONNECTION

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CHAPTER 1

THE OLD VS. THE NEW PARADIGM

If you're a parent, you have no doubt experienced infuriating behavior in your children. Your daughter stomps her feet or shouts "No!" when you ask her to do something. Your son humiliates you in public. Your teenage twins lie to you. These behaviors can cause anger and exasperation in even the most patient of parents. They can prevent you from getting to an appointment on time. They can make it difficult to keep your child safe. They can just make you want to scream.

But every parent deals with difficult behavior at some point. It's as much a part of a child's development as learning to walk and learning to speak. But that doesn't mean that there's nothing you can do to deal with these behaviors in a loving way. In fact, you can end these problem behaviors!

The time-out paradigm says, "Children act out for attention; therefore, you give them some time out to think about their behavior." But that belief is simply wrong. The truth is that children don't act out for attention. Children act out because they need attention.

Stop for a second and take that in. For most parents, this is a revelation, and it may even be hard for you to accept right away. But as you go through the principles in this book, and especially as you begin to apply them to situations between you and your child, you will begin to see that this is a fundamental truth.

The techniques in this book are based on a new paradigm—a theory of human behavior I coined called the Stress Model, which explains the root cause of problematic behavior. If you can't embrace the three foundational principles of the Stress Model, it will be hard to apply the information in this book. So, refer to this model often, and remind yourself frequently of the three principles. In fact, if you're able to fully grasp the Stress Model and the wide-ranging implications of its applicability, you will be able to create a healing dynamic for your family within the next moment!

The Three Principles Of The Stress Model Are As Follows:

Principle #1:

All behaviors arise from a state of stress. In between the behavior and the stress is the presence of a primary emotion. It is through the expression, the processing, and the understanding of that emotion that we can calm the stress and diminish the behavior.

Principle #2:

There are only two primary emotions: love and fear. This may be hard to grasp because we identify a large spectrum of emotions, but any emotion or behavior that isn't loving stems from a root of fear. You may see frustration, anger, jealousy, hurt, sadness, or anxiety, or you may see behaviors such as self-mutilation and stealing.

But they all stem from fear. Examine your own emotions, and you'll discover this is true. None of us act out in a negative way when we're feeling the emotion of love. Hence, children's negative behaviors are driven from a place of fear.

Principle #3:

Children DO NOT CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE to act out negative behaviors. These behaviors are driven from a highly unconscious place.

DYSREGULATION

According to Bruce Perry, M.D., we all respond to stress in one of two different ways. We either become hyper-aroused or hypo-aroused, which are just different ways of reacting to stress. So, what's the difference between hyper- and hypo-arousal? Girls tend to go into hypo-arousal, which makes them behave with defiance, resistance, depression, and withdrawal. Boys tend to become hyper-aroused, which leads to anger, hyperactive behavior, and hyper-vigilance. Of course, boys can also become hypo-aroused, and girls can also become hyper-aroused.

This stress state is called dysregulation. Our behavior is an attempt to bring ourselves back to a state of regulation, which is a calmer state, no longer in stress overload. That's why calming your child's stress level (as well as your own) will diminish or eliminate the behavior. Would you feel calm if you were forced to sit by yourself in a corner?

Bear in mind that regulation doesn't necessarily mean the absence of stress. Some degree of stress is necessary to your healthy growth and development, but too much stress will leave you trapped in a state of fear. Regulation, then, is the state of stress within your window of tolerance. We all have our own window of tolerance. If the stress you experience is within your tolerance level, you can stay regulated.

As adults, we have a regulatory system that often allows us to quickly bring our level of stress back into our window of tolerance. For some children (and probably some adults you know as well), the window of tolerance is very small. When children act out, they're demonstrating that they've gone outside of their window of tolerance. Their stress and fear cannot be maintained any longer, and it explodes through that window of tolerance to a state of dysregulation, which results in the behavior.

If your child is chronically acting out or misbehaving, the child is attempting to communicate to you that he or she is in a state of fear and overwhelming stress that cannot be stopped without parental assistance. It may seem illogical that a child would attempt to regulate himself or herself through destructive behavior, but remember that the child is operating from a very unconscious place. How logical are you capable of staying when you're stressed out?

Examples of Behavior

Let's visit three stories of children who exhibit behavior that might cause a parent to put them in time-out.

8-Year-Old Janice

Janice is watching T.V., and her mother says, "Dinner's ready. Come in to the dinner table." But Janice doesn't want to leave the T.V. She simply ignores her mother and doesn't move.

A couple of minutes pass, and Janice's mother says, "Janice! Come in for dinner—now!" But Janice shouts, "No! I'm watching T.V."

Her mother says, “Janice, your dinner is getting cold. We’re all eating. I told you to get in here!” But Janice crosses her arms and refuses. “No! I’m not hungry!”

Her mother stomps into the living room, shuts off the T.V. and shouts at her daughter. “That’s a time-out for you AGAIN, young lady! In the corner alone, and you think about your behavior!”

Janice reluctantly goes to the corner, but not without sulking. In fact, she’s so angry with her mother that when she finally does make it to the dinner table, she barely eats anything on her plate. Plus, the tension lingers throughout the rest of the night.

This has become a nightly ritual with Janice and her family. Getting her from the T.V. to the dinner table is always a battle and always results in a time-out.

Janice doesn’t know why she does this. She’s only 8. All she knows is that she’s comfortable in front of the T.V. and that her mother is making her do something she doesn’t want to do.

10-Year-Old Robert

Robert’s parents are exasperated because he’s terrified of school work. He shut down in school to such a degree that they had to start home schooling him. But whenever they try to do school work even at home, Robert just refuses to participate. He feels completely frozen and unable to take action. He doesn’t want to do anything, and he complains and fights them every step of the way. So, every night, Robert ends up in a time-out, which gets longer and longer in an effort to get Robert to do his homework.

His parents can't understand why the time-outs aren't getting Robert to change his behavior. What they don't know is that Robert feels defeated—like a failure, and he hates that his parents are disappointed in him. When his parents tell him that he'll never be able to take care of himself as an adult unless he gets an education, he feels like his feet are glued to the floor. He can't even bring himself to try.

No matter how many time-outs Robert is subjected to, he digs in his heels. Robert isn't sure if it's worse to stay home with his parents or worse to go back to school and deal with the teachers and principal. Either way, he seems to be doomed, and this just makes him want to stay in bed all the more with the covers over his head.

5-Year-Old Ben

Five-year-old Ben is a foster child. He has been living in his new home for almost three months, attending a new school, and making new friends. Everything was going well until one day at school when all of Ben's new friends brought money for a special lunchtime dessert. But Ben forgot! All of his new friends got dessert, but he didn't. The following week, on special lunchtime dessert day, Ben knew he had saved the extra money. But not feeling quite safe enough to ask one of his foster parents to retrieve it from the special place where they kept it for him, he sneaked into his foster father's change drawer instead and took the four quarters he saw sitting inside. Now, not only did Ben have money for his own dessert, but he also had three extra quarters to buy his new friends dessert, too. All of his friends were going to think he was the greatest kid in the world and so very cool!

His consequence? Ben instantly became terrified that he was going to get caught. Though the dessert was super tasty, and all of his friends thought he was the coolest, there was a looming fear that he was going to be in big trouble.

Most people fail to recognize that foster children struggle with a constant fear of not having a home or not being able to return to the home where they currently live. At five years old, such a fear can turn into sheer panic at the thought of any possible conflict. In fact, the fear becomes so great that Ben is unable to sit still, listen, or do his school work correctly the rest of the day. This leads to the teacher issuing repeated threats for Ben to calm down, or there will be consequences.

Unbeknownst to the teacher, these threats just increase Ben's fear even more, which lead him to become even more fidgety and inattentive. Before he knows it, Ben is sitting in the corner with his face pointed at the wall. He has been given a time-out. This leaves Ben frozen in terror! The possibilities of what could come next cause his insides to twist into a terrible pain.

Ben is terrified that his foster parents will be told about his behavior and that they might not want him anymore. Surely, at the very least, he won't receive any food that night, and perhaps he'll be locked in his room or in the basement for a time-out for the whole week, or maybe even forever.

Ben fears that he could possibly even die! The taste of the sweet dessert and celebration of being the cool kid are long forgotten memories. Ben's only thoughts now are of sheer survival. He cowers in his time-out corner, shaking in his shoes with horrible thoughts about what might happen.



CHAPTER 2

CHILDREN DON'T ACT OUT FOR ATTENTION

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CHAPTER 2

The scenarios in the first chapter may seem different, but they all have something in common which offers you a magical opportunity for teaching and healing. Remember what was said in Chapter 1: There are only two emotions—love and fear. So, a child who is misbehaving is a scared child. This is a simple but profoundly transforming truth. The behavior starts with a threatening event, causing the child to become stressed, resulting in fear. If this fear is not alleviated, the child may go into panic mode and do the first thing that comes to mind, which might be lying, defiance, stealing, aggression, or any number of other behaviors. Worse yet, if the fear is exacerbated by the isolation and shame of time-out, not to mention the anger from the parent that leads to time-out, that fear could turn into sheer terror. Then, the child's behavior is only going to escalate.

Now, you may not feel that your child has any reason to be afraid or stressed out. For you, as an adult, it may not make sense to you that your child is scared. But your child is not an adult, and a child's fears are often irrational and unconscious. (Let's face it: Adult fears are often irrational and unconscious, too.) The bottom line is that your child's fears don't have to make sense to affect behavior.

So, before moving on and learning the alternative to time-out, read each of the scenarios in the first chapter again, and this time, try to identify the fear of the child involved in each situation. After you have done that, think of three instances of behavior that you have experienced with your own child which have led to time-out, and look for the fear in those incidents.

STOP!

If you haven't completed the exercise of reviewing the stories and thinking of three instances of behavior from your own life, ask yourself, "Am I really committed to ending my child's problem behaviors?"

Remember that there are only two primary emotions, love and fear. All other feelings are a display of one of the primary emotions in disguise. Underneath defiance, there is first the experience of stress. Underneath lying, there is first the experience of stress. Underneath stealing, there is first the experience of stress. That stress leads to fear in all cases. For example, there is the fear of rejection, the fear of failure, the fear of abandonment, the fear of abuse, and on and on.

To alleviate one of these fears and avoid a situation that feels threatening, a child may become defiant, a child may lie, or a child may, yes, even steal or self-mutilate. Therefore, all of these behaviors are based in fear. Even if your child appears to be angry, that anger is based in fear. Even if your child appears to simply want to make your life miserable, the behavior is based in fear. Even if you can't understand what your child would find threatening in the situation, the behavior is based in fear. The sooner you can grasp this concept, the quicker you will see your child's behaviors begin to transform.

In each scenario, the child is compelled to avoid something that feels threatening. The problem is that in the moment of stress, the child is not thinking clearly. In fact, brain researcher Joseph LeDoux tells us that in times of stress, our thinking becomes confused and distorted and our short-term memory doesn't work effectively. Therefore, in the midst of a stressful, threatening situation, such as doing

homework or even going to the dinner table, the child is no longer thinking clearly. Furthermore, any attempts to teach the child in such a moment will be ineffective because the child will not clearly process or remember what is being taught.

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3

CHAPTER

THE TRANSITION
FROM FEAR-FUL
PARENT
TO LOVING PARENT

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CHAPTER 3

In the scenarios in Chapter 1, we see children who are caught in fear and have selected negative behaviors as the safest solution for their self-preservation. If they were not in a fearful state, they would have been able to think through the problem and would not have chosen the same solution. The parents in each situation are about to face the same decision. There is no doubt that being faced with one of these situations would send any parent into a “fear-full” state. But if they use the key in Chapter 2, understanding that their child has acted out of fear rather than laziness or a desire to hurt their parents, they will be able to begin the process of calming their own fears first, followed by calming the fears of their child through the process of Time-in. We will follow each scenario through this process.

8-Year-Old Janice

Janice and her mother have been on the hamster wheel of dinnertime defiance for more than a year. If someone wrote the script from one night, it would be followed almost word for word the next night, followed by a time-out. Janice’s mother is simply out of ideas for how to handle her daughter’s behavior, but she’s starting to feel like a failure as a parent because of it.

These feelings of failure only make Janice’s mother push harder to get her daughter to the dinner table. This only seems to cause her daughter to push back harder in response.

It has come to the point where Janice’s mother is crying a lot at the end of the evening because she feels so frustrated and helpless that she’ll ever be able to deal with her daughter’s behavior. It worries her that her daughter isn’t

eating much dinner, and it worries her further that her daughter is getting ready to begin puberty. How bad will it get when her daughter begins to date? Will she refuse to come home at curfew or defy her mother by going out with dangerous boys? She won't be able to use time-out in those situations! Janice's mother finds herself becoming more and more fearful about what the future will bring, and she is at a loss as to how to deal with her daughter's behavior.

Finally, Janice's mother speaks to the school counselor, who helps her to understand that her own feelings of fear and failure are making the situation with her daughter worse. She also realizes that she has to try something different because the time-outs clearly aren't working. So, the first thing she does is learn how to meditate so that she can calm down her own fears before doing anything else. Meditation is a great relief because it really helps to ease her anxiety.

10-Year-Old Robert

Robert's parents have tried everything to get him to do his school work—reasoning with him about the importance of education, begging him, and putting him in time-out. Nothing works!

Instead, the situation just gets worse. They're beginning to think that they'll have to send him back to school, but if they do, they'll have the same problems every day with getting his homework done. Plus, they'll have the embarrassment of dealing with the teachers and the principal as well.

Meanwhile, Robert's behavior is taking a toll on his parents' marriage. They're fighting with one another because they can't agree on discipline strategies. They often fight about it in the evenings when Robert's father gets home from work,

shouting at the top of their lungs in their bedroom.

Eventually, Robert's father storms out and spends a couple of nights at his brother's house. In response, Robert's mother gives Robert the cold shoulder. After all, she feels that her son is responsible for her marriage problems, and if he would just do what he's supposed to do and told to do, everything would be fine. When Robert tries to help her to feel better, she pushes him away. She's simply too stressed out and overwhelmed to be touched in that moment. Robert feels responsible, too, and like he's a failure in every aspect of his life. He believes he can't do anything right—something his father has told him in anger on more than one occasion.

The next morning, Robert's mother feels terribly guilty for pushing her son away. He had tried to offer her solace, but she just couldn't accept it. When Robert's father comes back home, the two of them sit down and really try to talk about the situation calmly. They know that fighting about it isn't going to solve anything and could only hurt Robert.

Robert's father tells his wife that he remembers a similar situation when he was a child, and he suddenly recalled how bad he felt when his parents appeared to be so disappointed in him. Yet, he says that he remembered that he couldn't seem to control his behavior no matter how hard he tried.

Robert's father tells his wife that he remembers a similar situation when he was a child, and he suddenly recalled how bad he felt when his parents appeared to be so disappointed in him. Yet, he says that he remembered that he couldn't seem to control his behavior no matter how hard he tried.

He now realizes that his son is feeling the same way. The two of them cry together and come to terms with the fact that they love their son more than anything and want him to feel that love. Even though they aren't sure yet what to do

about the problem, they no longer feel right about punishing him. Clearly, he isn't doing it out of spite, and their efforts—including time-outs—aren't working anyway.

5-Year Old Ben

Now, let's return to Ben—the boy whose lunchtime dessert turned into a fiasco. Ben's foster mother, Mary, has always felt compelled to care for children who need help. She left college in the middle of her education in early childhood development to raise her own children who are now grown. Ben's foster father, Tim, is a supportive, involved parent; but he's very traditional in his beliefs about parenting. He was raised by a strong-handed father and by a mother who believed that the discipline of the children was the father's duty. As a result, Tim strives to do things differently than his parents. Although he believes in time-out, he also believes that there are other ways to get better outcomes.

When Mary receives the phone call from the school about Ben's fidgeting, she feels immediately anxious. Her initial thoughts are that Tim will hit the roof! She deliberately breathes and gives Tim a call to tell him the news. Tim takes a deep breath, saying, "Mary, I'm really at the end of my rope with this young man. I don't know that I'm cut out for being a foster parent. Remember all the fights between our son and me? I just don't know if I can do this again." Mary is compelled to feel responsible for bringing the added stress to the family by her desire to be a foster mother. She makes a conscious effort to breathe and then breathe some more. Then, she begins to share with Tim that she's afraid he won't support her in this desire. She expresses her deepest fear that the added stress will lead to a break-up between her and Tim.

Tim reassures her that he understands her deepest fear but that he has no plans to leave her. Mary realizes this fear is not so much connected to Tim as it is to her father leaving when she was a young girl. Mary and Tim breathe together, as Tim soothes Mary's fear and reminds her that this is not a new fear; it's simply an old fear being triggered anew. Mary shares with Tim that she would like to try the new parenting ideas that the two of them have been studying. She suggests that she pick Ben up from school and that she take the first few steps. She asks Tim to call before coming home, so that he'll know what to expect before coming into the house. Tim agrees to this idea and offers Mary whatever support she needs.



4 CHAPTER

TRANSITIONS EXPLAINED

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CHAPTER 4

Any parent facing a scenario such as these would typically react with anger and frustration. Since there are only two primary emotions: Love and Fear—which one do you think drives your anger and frustration? You guessed it: FEAR. In reality, you aren't angry at your child for the behavior. You may feel angry, act angry, yell, spit, and fuss, but the truth is that you're scared about your child's behavior. You may think the behavior means that your child doesn't trust you, thinks you aren't safe, thinks you aren't a good parent, or any number of other distorted thoughts.

Just as your child's behavior is driven by stress and fear, the behavior triggers stress and fear within you, thus driving your own negative behavior. And don't forget that in the midst of stress, you aren't thinking clearly either, and your short-term memory isn't working effectively. If you were thinking clearly, you would have already learned that your repeated time-outs are failing to end the problem behavior. Furthermore, because your short-term memory isn't working effectively in the moment, you forget that handling the behavior the same way as the last time probably isn't going to change it now. So, you must be willing to do something different. In the words of Bishop T.D. Jakes, "If you always do what you've always done, you will always be where you've already been!"

The truth is that the angry parent is not an effective teacher. You will only cause the guilt, remorse, shame, and fear that your child is already feeling to be redirected toward you, thus delaying the healing process.

When you're angry (i.e., fearful), your child can't internalize the feelings that have led him to the negative behavior so that he can make a different choice. When you become angry toward your child, you get in the way of the lesson that is inherent in the problem, giving your child an opportunity to blame you for the problem rather than taking responsibility for it himself. Don't do this!

It's a common problem with the traditional parenting approaches of both today and yesterday. Rather than discipline, which is meant to teach, we punish, which only creates more stress. Then, your child's frustration is directed outward, or sometimes even inward, which can be worse. Then, it causes low self-esteem and even self-hatred on the part of the child, which can be crippling for years to come. The loving parent may also be a scared parent, but rather than blaming the child for their fear, loving parents use the fear as an opportunity to teach. Then, the lesson can be learned naturally without force, fear, shame, or blame.



5

CHAPTER

ALTERNATIVE TO TIME-OUT: TIME-IN

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CHAPTER 5

When your child is misbehaving, he is communicating to you in this way because he doesn't know how to communicate in words. He is essentially saying, "Mom, Mom, Mom, Dad, Dad, Dad, I don't know what to do right now. I need your help." When this happens, the child needs time-in. You do it for a 5-year old, you do it for a 2-year old, and you do it for an 18-year old.

In my opinion, time-out sucks away your child's emotional stability! Remember that time-out comes from the old paradigm that says children act out for attention. If a child is acting out for attention, how does that make you feel? It causes you to feel stressed out. So, you say, "Sit over there in time-out, and think about how you're acting."

If the child is acting out "for" attention, you don't want to reward the child, so you give the child "time-out" to think about the negative behaviors. The belief is that the child will make a better decision the next time.

Over time, these experiences condition us to believe that practices like time-out are love-based, but they aren't. They're fear, plain and simple. I once had an audience member chastise me for making such statements. He said that he wanted his child to fear him because that's how his child would learn respect. I countered this by saying that while his son would indeed fear him, fear only breeds more fear. It doesn't breed respect because only love breeds respect.

So, instead of sending the child off to sit in a chair or be isolated, where the child's stress and fear will only escalate, bring the child close to you for a period of time. Have her sit next to you, hold your hand, or stand beside you. Say to the

child, “When you’re feeling better, you can go back and play.” In other words, allow the child to decide how much time-in she needs. You don’t give them the minute-for-every-year formula. I don’t know where that came from. But when children are capable, let them decide. Try it with your child, and you may be surprised. On the other hand, if you say, “As soon as you feel safe, you can go back to play,” and your child runs out to play within two minutes, you will need to make the decision for them. Decide on a timeframe based on how you assess the child’s feelings.

Time-in says, “I can see that you’re really scared. Come spend some time with me.” The difference between time-in and a consequence is in the way it’s communicated. It’s in the way the physiology communicates. I’m not into consequences because they are blame and fear-based. Consequences don’t encourage parents to take responsibility. They encourage parents to blame children for their behaviors because they come from that old paradigm.

Therefore, you address this by bringing them close to you to regulate their fear and stress. What they need in those moments is not to put their nose in a corner. They need regulatory relating with you. You bring them in; you don’t put them out.

When you use time-in as a consequence, it looks like this: The parent sees the child misbehave and says, “I can see that you don’t want to play like everyone else right now because if you wanted to play, you wouldn’t be out there fussing and kicking. So, get over here and have some time-in with me.” That’s time-in as a consequence. That’s blame-based.

Time-in as a love-based intervention that creates regulation says, “Whoa! Come here. Hurry, hurry! Wow, I can see that you’re stressed out right now and really scared. Why don’t

you hang out here with me for a little bit. When you start feeling a little safer, then you can go back out and play.” There’s a huge, huge difference in the resulting dynamic, but you can see that it’s also a fine line in terms of how you word your response.

When you have a very sensitive child who is easily stressed and easily scared, time-in is exactly what they need. Simply say, “Honey, come on over here and stay with me for a little while.” “Stay here with me while I’m doing this or while I’m doing that.” “Stay here on the couch with me and watch my show with me.” “Sit here in the kitchen with me.” “Sit here in the bathroom with me.” “Sit over here on the park bench with me.” You bring the child in because the child needs your attention. Here’s an important point: It is not imperative that you touch the child during this time. A child who does not want to be touched or reacts violently should not be touched. In that moment, the child is in survival mode and feels very threatened. Keep your distance, but indicate to the child that you are nearby and will stay close until the child feels safer.

In my experience, 95% of the time, children will stay in time-in longer than they will stay in time-out. One parent, who had been giving her 7-year-old seven minutes of time-out, tried time-in. She said, “My daughter sat beside me for 45 minutes. I couldn’t believe it!”

Commit this to memory: Time-in, which is part of the new paradigm, comes from the understanding that children don’t act out for attention. Children act out because they need attention. That’s big! Time-in can be a very effective alternative to time-out. It teaches compassion, regulation, and understanding.

Are you having trouble taking this new information in? That’s because our immediate tendency is to reject anything new. We’ve been taught to see children and their behaviors

new. We've been taught to see children and their behaviors in a certain way, and change is never easy. You may find that these concepts are very different from your customary way of thinking. For this reason, they may be difficult for you to accept at first. What's required is a paradigm shift—a new perspective.

I understand the difficulty of challenging your paradigm, but I challenge you to ask yourself every day: “Is what I'm doing now based on love or fear?” The truth is that fear is easy, but love is difficult. In fact, one might even say that a practice of true love can be very scary and fear-full. Love requires faith, trust, and patience. When we're in a fearful state, faith, trust, and patience quickly fall by the wayside.

THE NEUROPHYSIOLOGIC FEEDBACK LOOP SYSTEM

Research has been able to determine that we communicate with one another and are connected to one another on a cellular level. Our cells vibrate, resonate, and communicate with other people. That's why physiologists say that 90% of communication is non-verbal. So, what do you communicate when your child walks toward you? What do you communicate when your child walks away from you? What do you communicate when your child goes to bed at night? Or when you go to your office? What are you communicating that doesn't come out of your mouth? What comes out of your mouth is just the tip of the iceberg. What is really being communicated under the surface? That's powerful!

So, it's important to shine the light of consciousness on that unconscious activity. If you are really sincere and ask yourself, “What am I communicating right now?”, you will

get in touch with something much deeper than what you were feeling just five seconds ago. Your mind or cognitive state tells you that you're feeling one way, and your body tells you that you're feeling completely different, perhaps even completely opposite.

Scientists have told us that through our non-verbal communication, we create neurophysiologic feedback loops, which are vibrations between people that are invisible to the human eye. I demonstrate this with a relaxation breathing technique called 4-7-8. You start with a short exhale, then inhale for a count of 4, hold it for a count of 7, then exhale for a count of 8. You do this for a cycle of 3. So, you do: 4-7-8, 4-7-8, 4-7-8.

Whether you're sitting at home or driving, you can practice this relaxation technique. It makes your breathing become deeper and more regulated. With practice, you can take in more and more air, and your aim is to make it quieter and quieter. When I do this in my workshops, we practice this in two cycles of 4-7-8. After we finish, you could hear a pin drop on the floor. It inevitably becomes that quiet. Just two minutes earlier, the energy in the room was escalated. I was all fired up with people sitting on the edge of their seats listening and writing notes. But the physiology of everyone in the group changes when we do the relaxation technique. Everything calms down.

**That's the power of our connection to
one another physiologically.**

What I often do in my lectures is give an example of a negative feedback loop. The dynamic is that we communicate in these feedback loops. You say one thing, I

say another, you say one thing, I say another, and this little invisible feedback loop gets bigger and bigger and bigger. Before you know it, the loop has become all encompassing. That's why they say that laughter is contagious, because laughter is creating a positive neurophysiologic feedback loop. When there are two or three people laughing, and someone else comes up and says, "Hey, what's going on?", that person usually finds himself or herself laughing before even hearing the joke.

That's the power of physiology; it pulls us in to other people. That's why people who are positive, energetic, uplifting, or passionate are so contagious and why we're drawn to them in the same way we're repelled by people who are negative and pessimistic.

The opposite of that laughter response is a negative neurophysiologic feedback loop. It's something you have experienced time and again from childhood to now. It's something you've experienced with your child on all levels. So, what I do in my sessions is have people practice a negative loop. I tell them that every time I say, "It's a great day," they're to say, "No, it's a terrible day." Many times, I unconsciously pick out someone who really has had a terrible day.

It's the most fascinating thing that happens, even though I have no conscious intention of doing so. Again, it's the power of the unconscious. We instinctively know things that we don't know we know!

When I play that game with someone in my workshops, I have them answer me with "No, it's a terrible day" four times. Then, I ask them to answer my statement with "Yeah, you know, it really has been a great day." Whenever they make

that positive statement, everyone in the room changes. I ask, “Did you feel that?” And everyone in the room says that when the participant made the “No, it’s a terrible day” statement, they felt “intense,” “anxious,” “upset,” “frustrated,” or “fidgety.” When the participant makes the positive statement, everyone says they feel relieved and calmer. It’s that immediate and that powerful!

Another example of the power of non-verbal, energetic, negative neurophysiologic feedback loops comes from a study on parental depression. The study examined a depressed couple with a baby and a healthy couple with a baby. The babies were hooked up to brain scans. When the healthy parent held her baby and then, put it down, the baby’s brain scan looked exactly the same as the other baby’s brain scan when the depressed parent walked toward that baby. You know how a baby feels when its mother puts it down. Well, that is how the other baby felt when the depressed parent walked toward it. So, when the parent who is in a positive state puts down the baby and walks away, it triggers fear and stress in the baby because the parent is no longer there to protect it. When that parent walks away and doesn’t acknowledge the baby’s reaction, the parent is fostering the negative feedback loop. Stress will show up on that baby’s monitor.

But when the depressed parent moves toward the baby, that depressed parent is communicating fear and stress to the child on a non-verbal level. Of course, the baby is supposed to feel safer and more secure when the parent approaches, but the parent’s emotional state prevents the baby from experiencing what would naturally be a positive neurologic feedback loop. Again, that’s the power of unconscious communication.

I want you to begin to pay close attention to the dynamic when you and your child get into an interaction that involves negative words thrown back and forth. Look at how big the dynamic becomes. Let me illustrate it through an exercise. Draw a small circle on a piece of paper right now. That's your child saying, "No, I'm not going to do it." Draw another little circle. That's you saying, "Yes, you are!" The child says, "No, I'm not!" Then, you say, "Yes you are!" Draw the circles larger around each time. That's the power of a negative feedback loop.

But positive neurophysiologic feedback loops are just as powerful. A negative cellular state of communication cannot persist in the midst of a positive feedback loop. Positive neurophysiologic feedback loops have the power to embrace negative feedback loops without letting the negativity escape in an eruption. It's like the positive loop suppresses the negativity. The negativity goes right into the middle of the circle, and the positive surrounds it.

The significance of this is that when one person is able to maintain his or her state of regulation, controlling the amygdala (fear center of the brain) it becomes very powerful—just like the laughter response or the way the room changes when someone acknowledges it's a great day as opposed to a lousy day. Signals are sent from the amygdala of the regulated person directly to the amygdala of the other person. The physiologic communication of the regulated person causes the dysregulated person to shift and become more regulated. The signals of the regulated person's amygdala embrace the scared, dysregulated amygdala of the other person.

The following three principles fit into the negative neurophysiologic feedback loop:

1

When we're in a place of stress, we can't help someone else through their stress. We act out negative behaviors in the midst of someone else's negative behaviors. We can't help them move into the positive if we remain in the negative.

2

When we're in a place of fear, we can't help someone else with their fear.

3

This is unconscious stuff, and as long as it remains unconscious, we're powerless to change it. You have to shine the light of consciousness upon your unconscious state and admit to yourself, "I feel scared. I feel scared. I feel scared."

THREE-PHASE INTERVENTION

The Three-Phase Intervention consists of: **Reflect, Relate, and Regulate**. As long as your child is not at risk of hurting him or herself or someone else, the first thing you do as a parent is **stop and reflect**. You ask yourself, "How am I feeling right now!" Stop in your tracks and ask yourself because I don't believe it's okay for a parent to say to a child, "Tell me how you feel" unless the parent has examined his or her own feelings. When you connect to yourself, you can then communicate to your child in a secure way about what you're feeling. So, first, reflect on your own internal state, and do the 4-7-8 breathing technique to get in touch with your own fear. Breathe, calm yourself down, and embrace your fear, even if your child is having a tantrum at the same time.

Next, is the Relate phase of the intervention. While you're breathing and growing in your brightness, you say to your child, "I feel scared right now, and I need to know how you feel." In the midst of the tantrum, your child may say, "I don't know how I feel." Remember that in the midst of stress, our thinking processes become confused and distorted, and our short-term memory is suppressed. You were unable to determine how you felt until you stopped, took some breaths, and connected with yourself, right? The same is true of your child. So, you say again, "I feel scared right now. How do you feel?" Your child may again say, "I don't know."

So, watch his behavior. If you see anger, identify it as such: "I think you're mad right now. You look mad to me. Are you feeling angry?" Your child then has permission to say, "I'm mad right now." And because you have calmed yourself down and are no longer threatened by your child's anger, you can say, "Give me more." What happens in intense states of emotion is that all of the energy and vibration grows like a tornado or a hurricane. Because our society hasn't learned how to express emotions in a healthy and positive way, we act out our emotions in our behavior. We tear things up like the tornado.

That's what kids do. They become violent because they have no other means for expressing their fear.

When you reflect your child's anger by saying, "You look angry," you can say, "I want your anger. I can see it. Give it to me." The anger may twist and scream, and it may kick and hit, but it will not be able to get outside of your positive feedback loop. It will be contained inside the positive loop. When you say, "Tell me, tell me louder, tell me more," you're encouraging the screaming and yelling. You're encouraging your child to use words and emotions instead of disruptive behavior.

If the child continues to hit, kick, and scream right in your face, you might find that it's too much for you to handle. So, go slow, and be gentle with yourself. You might surprise yourself, however, and discover that when you come from a place of regulation, you're more comfortable with your child's extreme behavior than you thought you would be. In our society, we're taught that behavioral acting out is okay and that emotional expression is not okay. We tell kids not to cry, yell, or talk to us in an angry fashion. Then, they have no alternative but to redirect the energy into behavior. Those emotions have to go somewhere. So, I'm asking you to recondition yourself and go against the norm, helping your child to release those emotions directly.

This is why these techniques are so powerful because I'm going against the norm. God says that "Perfect love casts out all fear." Love encourages expression of emotion, while fear suppresses and runs from it.

It's very important, however, that you recognize that you respond differently to a child you think is angry and a child you believe is fearful. Right now, in your mind's eye, envision two children standing side by side. See an angry child and a scared child, and pay attention to your physiological reaction to each. Look at the angry child, and then, look at the scared child. Your body's state will change in reaction to each of these emotions. In order for you to respond proactively to a child you think is angry, you need to recognize that fear is under that anger.

Remember that there are only two emotions: love and fear. You don't want the child's anger to trigger your own fear, which will only escalate the situation. The third phase of

the intervention is **Regulate**. In the middle of a lecture in Norfolk, Virginia, a woman stood up and said, “Dr. Post, I want to be one of the parents you talk about.” Everyone in the room laughed, including me, and I said, “I want you to be one of the parents I talk about.” This was a grandmother raising her granddaughter. She said, “I’m going to try this stuff, and I’ll let you know how it worked.”

That evening, I was giving a parenting class at a local hospital on the three-phase intervention, and guess who stood up? It was Grandma from my earlier lecture! She said, “I’ve got something to tell you. Today after school, I picked up my granddaughter, and it’s always a bad day because she never wants to leave. She always gives me defiance and back talk. But this day, I walked in and was going to be calm. I got there early and was breathing, and I said, ‘Honey, it’s time to go.’ And she started in with the same dynamics as usual, so I said, ‘Grandma feels scared right now.’ My granddaughter stopped, looked at me, and said, ‘Grandma, what are you afraid of?’

You scared someone is going to hurt me? Are you scared someone is going to hurt you?’ I said, ‘No, honey. I’m scared because every day is like this, and the evening is like this. And we’re not having a very good relationship.’” Her granddaughter looked at her and said, “Grandma, everything’s going to be okay.” And they walked out of that school hand in hand. This grandmother told me that before she came to my class, her granddaughter helped her set the dinner table. “We have had one of the best days that we have ever had,” she told me. All of this happened as a result of: Reflect, Relate, and Regulate.

CONTAINMENT

Some children will need a lot of your attention during time-in. So, if you have a child that needs a lot of your attention, what you want to practice is containment. With containment, you're creating regulation between you and your child. You keep the child close to you in order to decrease the space that causes the child to feel threatened. This regulated interaction allows the child to calm down in an environment where he or she doesn't feel threatened. Containment is a dynamic that can be used in schools, with parents in the home, in markets, or in malls.

I work with a family that has seven adopted children. When they were planning a trip to Disney World, I asked them what they were going to do there with seven kids. The mother said, "I'm going to keep them close." I said, "You better believe it!" That's containment. When you keep them close, there is a greater likelihood for regulation because you are regulated, and they're feeling your regulation. When that happens, the whole environment changes.



6

CHAPTER

HOW TIME-IN WORKS

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CHAPTER 6

Sound simple? Maybe even too simple? Well, of course. But it IS just that simple! The only thing that may vary is the intensity of your reactions to your child's behaviors. But the root of the behavior—the fear—never changes. Fear is always the base cause. Think about that over and over before you're in a situation where you have to deal with negative behavior.

Then, when you're placed "in the moment," you will already have Time-in in mind. If you immediately feel extremely reactive and angry toward your child for his or her behavior in spite of what you've learned here, remember that it's a normal reaction and that maybe some fear has been triggered from your past.

Remind yourself that stress has triggered the fear, which has caused your child to feel the need to behave in this way. Calm yourself, try to connect with the fear you're feeling yourself, and think about when you have felt that way before. It will help you to calm yourself and your child if you take a moment to ask yourself this series of questions:

WHAT AM I AFRAID OF?

HOW WILL THAT FEEL?

AND IF THAT THING I'M
AFRAID OF HAPPENS,
WHAT WILL IT SAY
ABOUT ME?

WHEN HAVE I EXPERIENCED
SOMEONE REFUSING TO DO
WHAT I WANTED, AND HOW
DID THAT MAKE ME FEEL?

WHEN HAVE I EXPERIENCED A LOSS OF CONTROL,
AND HOW DID THAT MAKE ME FEEL?

You can also make your own list of questions that might help you think more about the stress behind your fears.

I am convinced that following this approach will help you to solve your child's problem behavior. Remember that underneath the behavior is stress and fear. If the behavior continues, spend more time listening to your child, and try to figure out what it is in your relationship with your child that has caused so much fear. Then, bring your child into you in order to regulate your child's stress and fear.



Fear is at the root of it all, even when you don't know what the fear is or even when you can't understand what on earth your child could be frightened about. I look forward to hearing about your phenomenal success with Time-in.

Please send me a personal note at bryan@postinstitute.com , and let me know how Time-in worked for your child.

May God richly bless you
and your family,

Bryan Post



