

## **SELF CONTROL SIT TIME**

### **WHAT IS SELF-CONTROL SIT TIME?**

It is a time when your child will sit with their hands folded, legs crossed, and have control over their whole body and mouth.

### **GOAL**

To teach/train your child to sit with hands folded, legs crossed and no talking for 30 – 45 minutes.

### **WHY SHOULD YOUR CHILD LEARN SELF-CONTROL?**

Self control is a key virtue that you need to train your child in. Why?

- o Because all other life skills and virtues in an individual will be a struggle if you do not have self control.
- o **When you are training your child in first time obedience and they choose not to obey, using self control sit time is what you would have your child do, to think about what he/she did wrong. If you have not practiced self control sit time, you can't expect a child to sit for any length of time. Parents wrongly tend to chastise every time for disobedience instead of proactively equipping children with the skills to succeed – like learning to gain complete control of oneself. This ineffective punishment of chastisement is not healthy and could lead to long term damage in your relationship... where learning self-control will only enhance the child's behavior and character.**
- o Self control will help a child to be gentle and kind because it teaches them master their emotions - both positive and negative. For example: when they are disappointed, not getting their own way or frustrated while learning they will know how to handle their frustration, and other emotions.
- o When you have self control you can learn to communicate properly.
- o Self control will help a child to sit, focus and concentrate for longer periods of time. This is a very important life skill.
- o It is better for mom and dad to teach their child self control than to rely on a teacher at school. Teachers do not have time to do this. If a child cannot sit, focus and concentrate, teachers may incorrectly label them with ADD or ADHD or some other kind of learning disability.

### **ADVANTAGES OF TRAINING YOUR CHILD IN SELF CONTROL SIT TIME**

Self control sit time flows into many areas of your day and life. You will find that once you have trained your child in this, you will find that it filters into your whole day.

Examples of when you can use the self control sit time with your child:

- o Sitting in church with you (with no books, toys, food). (You cannot expect your child to do this, if you do not practice at home first.)
- o Dentist/Doctor's office
- o Bank
- o At a restaurant, waiting to be served
- o Stores (when they touch or run around inappropriately, have them sit with self control)

- o When you are training in first time obedience or using this tool for them to go sit and find their ‘happy heart’. This is an excellent way for a child to gain self control and to think about what step of obedience he did not obey in. If you do not have this form of discipline, what are you going to do when they disobey?
  - Chastise – this would happen way too much.
  - Repeat yourself (You will become a repeating parent.)
  - Threaten them (Ex: if you don’t obey, you won’t get...) (You will become a threatening parent.)
  - Or will you just ignore the fact that they disobeyed you. (What are you teaching them? They will do it again and again and again – because there was no discipline or consequences.)
- o When you see your child about to make an unwise choice or behavior, you can have them sit in a reflective time out. If they don’t know how to sit in self control – it is more difficult for them to understand what to do in a reflective time out.
- o The list of how you can implement self control sit time is endless. **BE CREATIVE!**

### **WHAT AGE CAN YOU BEGIN TRAINING IN SELF CONTROL SIT TIME?**

- o Around 16-18 months would be the earliest you could begin.
- o All age children need to do self control sit time.

### **WHEN AND WHERE DO YOU DO SELF-CONTROL SIT TIME?**

- o The best time would be right after breakfast everyday! If that time doesn’t work for you, pick a time that will work and be consistent with this time. The child should be rested and mom should be available to monitor this time.
- o For a 16 – 18 month old, you may want to have them sit in their highchairs to begin this training time.
- o For all other children they should be at the kitchen table, sitting on a chair or a dining room chair, any chair that provides little “wiggle room.” (It will be harder to train in a comfortable chair or couch because the temptation to lean over, lie down is greater for your child.)

### **WHAT PREPARATION IS THERE BEFORE YOU BEGIN SELF CONTROL SIT TIME?**

1. Take the children to the store to buy a timer for **each** one of them.  
Why? When you need to restart the timer for various reasons for one of your children, it is easier to know how much time is left for the other children.
2. Buy stickers, if you want to, so they can decorate their own timers.
3. At home, put their names on their timers. Let the children decorate them with stickers possibly.  
Why? This will help them take ownership. It is fun for the children to watch the timer for how much longer they have to sit.
4. You set the timers for them or you may teach them how to set the timers (if age appropriate.) Check to make sure they have set the timer for the right time. Teach them how to turn them off and put them up (if age appropriate). This may be too much freedom –you will have to be the judge of this.
5. Explain to your child(ren) that after breakfast in the morning, the timers will be set and they will be practicing self control sit time.
6. Demonstrate what that looks like.
  - o At the beginning, it will be your goal to just have them to sit on the chair, at the kitchen table. This may be all you can expect of your child.
  - o It is best if you can add with no talking. But if you know that they would do better by breaking it down into smaller pieces you can work with it there.

## **HOW TO TRAIN?**

1. Have all bathroom needs looked after. Come back to their chairs and sit.
2. After breakfast, review/ask questions, what self control sit time looks like.
3. Have them show you! Praise them!
4. Set the timer for 1 minute.
- 5. Your ultimate goal is to have them sit still & silently, with hands folded & with legs folded.**
6. Start by having them sit on the chair with hands folded. (You might want to break sitting and folding hands into 2 separate goals/steps... however, if they can fold their hands from the beginning, they can sit still easier because they're less tempted to wiggle.)
7. If they slide off the chair, put them back on and say "You need to stay on the chair until the timer goes off." Reset the timer.
8. Praise for success!
9. Work on this everyday. Each day bump the timer up by 1 minute or so. When your child has trouble staying on his chair, then stay at that time for a week before you add on another minute.
10. When your child has successfully sat for 5 minutes for one week then it is time to add the next step.
11. Add "with no talking" if you didn't start with this.
12. Praise! Praise your child for sitting for 5 minutes with no talking. "You are doing such a great job!"
13. If they slide off the chair, or unfold their hands, put them back on the chair, fold their hands and say "Stay on the chair with your hands folded with no talking, until the timer goes off." Reset the timer.
14. Praise! Praise your child when they have reached 5 minutes. It is time once again to add the next step. "It is time to sit, hands folded, no talking... *and now we are going to fold our legs (pretzel style).*"
15. If you need to break this into small increments, set the timer, for 1 minute, which is how long they need to keep their legs crossed. But they still need to sit with hands folded, no talking for another 4 minutes. (You can start with 5 minutes if your child can handle it.)
16. Each day you would add another minute to the timer for the length of time to keep legs crossed. But remember to go up to 5 minutes for sitting still, hands together, no talking.
17. If they slide off the chair, unfold their hands or uncross their legs, put them back on the chair, fold their hands, cross their legs and say you need to stay on the chair with your hands folded, legs crossed until the timer goes off. Reset the timer.
18. Praise! Praise your child when they have reached the 5 minutes of sitting, hands together, legs crossed and no talking.
19. You will go keep doing this completely by adding 1 minute or more **every day!** Work up to your desired time. If your child has practiced, he can do it 45 minutes when needed (like church or a doctor's visit.)
20. Once your child has "mastered" this skill, it does not need to be practiced daily. When you use this skill on a **regular** basis – like by having book time, silent reading time, at a doctor visit, a neighbor's house, while driving in the car, church, etc... your actual use will be your child's practice. When your child is characterized by sitting for 30-45 minutes, I would still revisit the self control sit time, at the table periodically to help maintain! Don't drop this training time completely or there will be slippage.

## **PRAISE! PRAISE! PRAISE!**

Find ways to encourage them for their success.

**USE THE TIMER.** When the timer goes off, you praise them for success. Your child will learn that there is an end time. If you have more than one child, I would suggest each of them having their own timer that will go off. If you only use one timer and it is just 1 child that has not followed through completely, then you would have to reset the timer. Well, when do you let the other child(ren) finish their self control sit time? Don't punish all of your children for something that someone else did. When their timer goes off, you move them on to their next activity.

## **BE ALERT AND RESPOND APPROPRIATELY**

If they are sitting in church with you and they become wiggly, whining, complaining, go back to doing self control sit time at home with no books - sitting again in a chair. Explain the reason they are back in self control sit time. You want them to understand the consequences for their actions of not sitting in church, being wild at a store, etc... is more training time at home. Your attitude is not of negative punishment, but positive training.

## **MOVING ON**

Once your child is characterized by sitting in self control sit time for 30-45 minutes, consider:

- o Move them to a comfy chair, couch or floor to look quietly at books or listen to a story tape.
- o Sometimes your schedule for the day may only allow you to do 20 minutes... vary your times.

## **WHAT SIT TIME DOES NOT LOOK LIKE**

The list below shows forms of disobeying your instructions. When these things occur and you see it, what should you do? Restart the timer! You determine for how long. (If it is a 2 year old and he has already sat for 20 minutes to expect him to sit for another 20 minutes is unrealistic. I would just add an extra 1-5 minutes. You decide!)

- o Putting head on table, or arms.
- o Sitting with one foot standing on the floor.
- o Hands in lap not folded.
- o Legs swinging/dangling.
- o Talking. Sighing.
- o Making faces at siblings.
- o Or even looking at each other, and your child starts to laugh. When this happens it shows you that they do not have self control over their sounds. "If you choose to look at your sibling you must be able to have self control over **all** parts of your body."

**AN EXAMPLE** to share about what happened in a friend's home recently.

- The four children were in self control sit time one morning. Doing a good job!
- The door bell rang, and Mom goes to answer it.
- The men were there to fix their roof.
- Mom had to step outside for 10 minutes.
- When she came back in, the children were no longer sitting in self control sit time. They were all over.
- She called them and asked them if they thought that is what self control sit time looks like?
- They answered "No."
- She sent them to their rooms to sit on their beds to think. (They didn't get to play for room time, which would have been next on their schedule. They lost their room time for that day.)
- Mom needed to think about what would be the appropriate consequence for their actions.
- She called them downstairs. She considered chastisement... But doing another sit time would be much more effective because they lost their play time because of their choice of actions.
- They sat at the table again to do self control sit time over again!
- They did a great job!
- They then carried on with their day.
- Excellent consequences and retraining!

It takes times to do self control sit time. It takes time to think through what the appropriate consequence should be. But being consistent with this, you will find that the benefits are absolutely wonderful!

## **CAN EVERY CHILD BE EXPECTED TO DO SELF CONTROL SIT TIME?**

- Yes! But it may take you longer to train some children. But being consistent, encouraging for little successes along the way will lead to even more successes. Don't lower your standard, but bring your child to the standard!
- Ex: if you have a wiggly child, who you can get to sit in self control sit time for 15 minutes but just can't move beyond that time, continue to work **consistently** with this child every day. Be encouraging. It will come, even if it takes longer than your other children.
- Be careful that you don't start making excuses for them. "This child is just different than the others." "He just can't do it." "I can't expect him to." "15 minutes is good enough." Don't do this to your child! Especially don't let him hear you say those words to anyone. Be careful what you say, little ears pick up many things.

**REMEMBER – self control sit time is extremely important to train your children to do well. If they do not have self control, first time obedience will be more difficult along with many other areas of parenting.**

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