

# **Meditation Station:**

## **An Other-Class Time-Out Procedure**

Training School Psychologists to be Experts in Evidence Based Practices for Tertiary Students  
with Serious Emotional Disturbances/Behavioral Disorders

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US Office of Education 84.325K

H325K080308

## Introduction

The original *Think Time* Strategy by Nelson and Carr (1996) is a cognitive-behavioral timeout strategy designed to enable the teacher and student to stop a negative social exchange, and provide the student with feedback and an opportunity to plan for future occurrences. By combining precision requests, an other class time-out procedure, problem solving and teacher feedback, the Meditation Station (MS), an adaptation of Nelson and Carr's *Think Time*, can reduce noncompliant and disruptive behaviors (Bowen, Jenson & Clark, 2004). Used in the classroom or other similar settings, the MS procedure can reduce the intra- and interpersonal effects of student-teacher interactions; deliver a stable response to problem behavior across all staff; provide the student a quiet period to enable the student to "save face" and regain self-composure; provide the student with feedback and an opportunity to plan for subsequent performance; and enable the teacher and student to cut off a negative social exchange and initiate a positive one (Nelson & Carr, 1996).

### **Definition**

The Meditation Station is a school-wide strategy involving a time-out procedure that involves removing a student from his or her own classroom to a different classroom for a limited period of time. MS consists of several evidence based behavior management practices. Specifically it utilizes: precision requests, other-class timeout procedures, teacher feedback and problem solving.

### **Reasons to use the Meditation Station**

1. To reduce intra- and interpersonal effects of student-teacher interactions.
2. To deliver a stable response to problem behavior across all staff.

3. To catch disruptive behavior early and diffuse it quickly.
4. To provide the student a quiet period to enable the student to “save face” and regain self composure.
5. To enable the teacher and student to cut off a negative social exchange and initiate a positive one.
6. To decrease variability in teachers’ responses to disruptive behavior.

### **Target Population**

Other class time-out procedures have been used primarily with K-9 students since it requires coordination between two or more teachers. The Meditation Station can be used in a wide variety of schools ranging from rural to urban regardless of socioeconomic status. Other class time-out procedures have also been used successfully among culturally diverse and culturally homogeneous populations since it is not designed to target any particular demographic within a school population.

### **Evidence Base**

A significant body of research exists that supports the principles and practices of the Meditation Station. Several studies have also investigated the effectiveness of Nelson and Carr’s Think Time strategy. Following is a brief sample of the current research:

### **Precision Requests**

Effectively stated requests or commands are a critical factor in facilitating compliance (Rhode, Jenson, & Reavis, 1993). When used correctly by teachers and parents, students often respond more quickly and accurately. The following are suggestions for encouraging compliance and giving effective requests, a precision requests flow chart can be found in Appendix A:

- *Using direct statements:* It is important to use a direct statement rather than a question format to increase compliance. Stating, “I need you to put your books away in your desk” is more effective than asking, “Will you put your book in your desk?” Using direct statements also tells the student to *start* a behavior rather than *stop* a behavior, for example: “Please start your math assignment,” instead of “Don’t play with your eraser” keeps the interaction positive and easy to follow. Using direct statements also includes using *specific* and *descriptive* statements such as “Put your homework in your folder”, than a general statement such as “It’s time for P.E.”
- *Using appropriate body language:* Making *eye contact* with the student or asking him/her to look in your eyes will improve reprimand or request effectiveness.

*Distance:* it is important to face the student and teacher proximity to the student should be approximately three feet. *Voice:* A request or command should be issued in a firm voice. This does not mean yelling, pleading, joking, or persuading. It is also better to issue a reprimand in a firm but soft voice at a three-foot distance than to give a loud reprimand across the room. Loud reprimands tend to be given at distances greater than three-feet, and they tend to distract other students and bring more attention to the noncompliant student. *Non-emotional:* It is always better to give a non-emotional reprimand than an emotionally charged one. Calling a student a name, making threats, or becoming angry are very ineffective.
- *Building behavioral momentum:* When student who are often noncompliant, it is helpful to give them a few simple, easy to follow preferred tasks prior to giving less preferred

and more difficult tasks. Students who are experiencing success will more likely continue the positive momentum and comply with the more difficult request.

- *Give only one or two requests at a time:* Give requests that the student is capable of following. Do not overload the student with multiple requests or demands.
- *Time:* allow enough time for students to respond to a request (5-10 seconds), and do not interrupt this time period. Many adults immediately repeat instructions or give additional instruction without allowing students the time to comply. During this 5-10 second time period do not converse, argue, or respond to excuses. Waiting quickly and matching can prompt the student to respond without further reminders.
- *Repeating:* Requests should be given only *two times*. If teachers or parents need to repeat requests over and over, the students are not listening. Students who do not respond after two requests have learned that they can postpone following through for several minutes, and perhaps avoid the task altogether. If the student does not comply after the second request, the teacher should respond with a planned consequence (not an emotional outburst or ultimatum). Planned consequences might include moving near the student and guiding them through the first step, loss of two minutes of free time, working near the teacher's desk, loss of privilege, etc.
- *Recognition:* It is always important to recognize their effort with verbal praise, smiles, or other positive reinforcement when students do follow requests appropriately.

### **Nelson and Carr's Think Time**

Time-out to another classroom can be an effective form of time-out. However, this procedure requires a well-established plan in order to be effective. Nelson and Carr's three research

studies on their Think Time strategy showed that the average number of critical events (e.g., verbal and physical aggression) decreased by 77 percent weekly across all three classrooms involved, and that two of the three classrooms continued to show decreases in critical events during follow-up. In addition, the average duration of estimated on-task time that students spent increased by 34 percent weekly across all three classrooms, and all three classrooms continued to demonstrate increases in on-task performances during follow-up.

## Materials Needed

1. Debriefing Form. See Appendix B
2. Predetermined Meditation Station classrooms
3. Predetermined and set up Meditation Station desks

## Steps to Implement the Meditation Station

The Meditation Station strategy required that two or more teachers work together to catch disruptive behavior early. Teachers send a disruptive student to a Meditation Station classroom, where a different teacher directs the student to a MS desk, which is located in an area free from distractions. That teacher initiates a debriefing process after the student has had time to think. The debriefing process includes a number of steps: for example, having the student fill out a form (see sample debriefing form in Appendix B), having the teacher check the form, and returning the student to the original classroom. The following is a step-by-step procedure for initiating the Meditation Station in your school:

1. The first step in implementing the Meditation Station involves establishing the desired behavioral expectations with teachers and staff.

- a. Expectations should be positively stated. They should tell students what to do rather than telling them what not to do. When students are told what not to do they can comply with the expectation by engaging in other socially inappropriate behavior. However, when student are told what to do, they must demonstrate the desired behavior to comply. For example, if “No hitting” is one of the classroom’s expectations, than a student may comply with the expectation by kicking, spitting, or pushing. On the other hand, if the expectation is “Keep your hands, feet and all objects to yourself”, than a student cannot physically confront another student and still comply with the expectation.
2. Once school or classroom expectations have been determined, the second step involves organizing the Meditation Station classrooms, desks and teachers’ plan of actions. This includes:
    - a. Arranging with another teacher to use their classroom. It is important to rotate and reciprocate the Meditation Station classrooms.
    - b. Pick a different grade level classroom (generally, a two year difference in grade level is best).
    - c. Have a desk or table set up at which the student can work.
    - d. Have academic work materials available for the student when they finish their debriefing form.
    - e. The student should be expected to quietly enter the classroom and sit down at the assigned desk. They student should not be a distraction and must wait for the teacher to come review the debriefing form at the teacher’s convenience.

3. Next, it is important to introduce and explain the concepts and rules of the Meditation Station to the school/class. This includes:
  - a. Instruction on classroom rules and consequences for misbehavior need to be introduced and explained to the class through discussion and modeling.
  - b. The Meditation Station should be introduced as a consequence that helps maintain a calm classroom and provides students with a place to settle down and gain control.
  - c. Introduce and demonstrate a signal that indicates when a student needs to go to the Meditation Station (e.g. a precision command, a card flip, etc.)
  - d. Expectations on how students are to leave the classroom and how to proceed to the designated class are demonstrated.
4. Upon arrival to the Meditation Station:
  - a. When students arrive at the Meditation Station, they are instructed to wait at the door until the teacher signals them to quietly enter the classroom and go directly to the Meditation Station desk.
  - b. During time-out (usually 20-30 minutes) students are expected to work quietly on their debriefing form. The time-out teacher can ask the student to describe the problem behavior prior to giving them the form to complete. Homework or small additional assignments should also be provided to work on during the time-out.
5. Exiting the Meditation Station



- a. After the designated time period, or when the student has completed the debriefing form, the student quietly waits for directions from the time-out teacher.
- b. When directed, the student returns to class and rejoins the ongoing classroom activity.
- c. When convenient, the teacher can go over the debriefing form.
- d. It is important for the student to have an opportunity for positive reinforcement when he or she returns to class.

## Trouble Shooting

### Potential Problems and Solutions

1. What should I do when a student does not go directly (or at all) to the designated Meditation Station?
  - a. The wandering students may need an escort to the Meditation Station. Another option may include calling the time-out teacher to let them know that they should be expecting the specified student in one minute.
  - b. If the student continues to wander or avoid going to the Meditation Station, additional consequences may be necessary (e.g. recess time reduced, eating lunch in the classroom, administrative intervention, etc.)
2. What should I do when the student's behavior escalates after being directed to go to the Meditation Station?
  - a. This should remind us that it is important to catch the behavior in its early stages before escalation. In extreme instances the Meditation Station may need to be

temporarily moved to the principal's or vice principal's office and the student may need to be escorted by a few team members to the MS desk or office.

- b. As in all extreme tantrums or meltdowns, it is important to keep yourself and the other students safe. It is always an option to remove your students from class for a walk around the building or a surprise 5-minute recess. However, it is important to have an adult supervising both groups.

It is important to give praise to the student after they return from the Meditation Station if they went quietly and appropriately. Once the Meditation Station time-out is completed, a student should no longer be punished for past behavioral issues.

## References

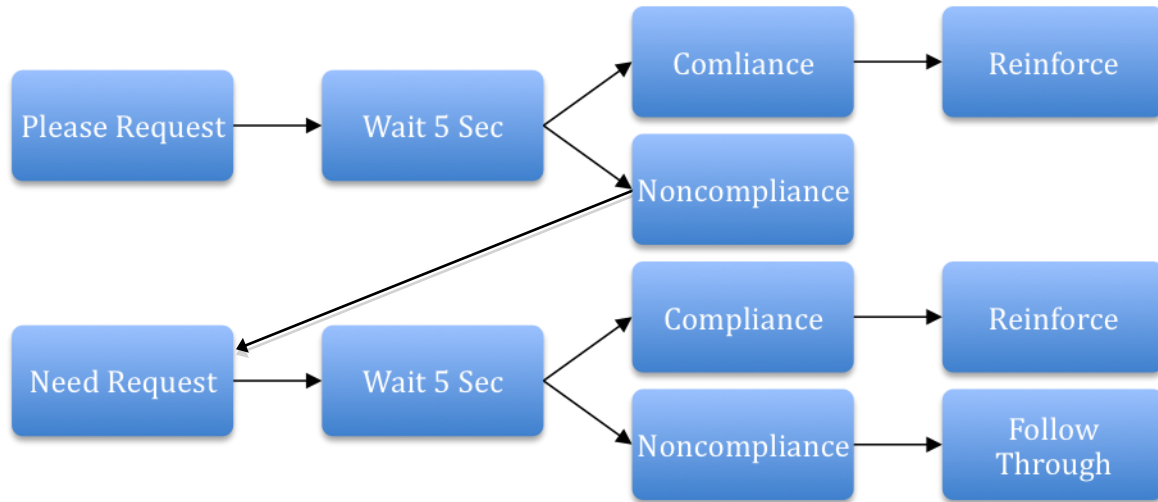
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USDOE: Exemplary and Promising Safe, Disciplined, and Drug Free Schools Programs 2001, pp. 137-139.

### Precision Request Flow Chart



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## Meditation Station

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**Student Name:**

**Teacher Name:**

**Date:**

**Grade:**

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1. What was the problem behavior?
2. Where, when and why did this happen?
3. What will you do next time instead of this behavior?
4. What will you do when you finish completing this form?
5. Do you need to discuss this problem further with someone?