

Arthur Staats, child psychologist and father of the ‘timeout,’ dies at 97

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Arthur W. Staats, a psychologist who made a science of the “timeout,” a disciplinary technique that gave exasperated parents an alternative to spanking and helped usher in a new era of child-rearing in the second half of the 20th century, died April 26 at his home in Honolulu. He was 97.

The cause was heart ailments, said his son, Peter Staats. Dr. Staats was an emeritus professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Dr. Staats may not have been a household name, at least not beyond the professional circles where he was known for developing a field of study called psychological behaviorism. But his “invention” — as his elaboration of the timeout is sometimes styled — became a fixture in homes where young children bound and play, inevitably breaking things and rules as they go about the hard work of growing up and making sense of themselves and the world.

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