



News Release

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RECOGNIZING VERBAL ABUSE

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When one reads about or thinks about domestic violence, one usually imagines some type of physical altercation. And, haven't we all heard at one time or another that "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me"? In fact, however, verbal and/or emotional abuse can be just as devastating to a person and harmful to a relationship as any kind of inappropriate physical interaction.

There seems to be an evolving pattern to abuse. Initially the eventual victim may be showered with gifts and compliments to the point that they feel like the most important person in the world. Gradually, however, the relationship will deteriorate and the abuser's anger and need to control will be projected onto the victim. Soon the victim will be blamed for not being good enough. There will be the abuse followed by something positive and so it goes. Soon the victim begins to feel like they are on an emotional roller coaster. The victim begins to believe that if only they changed their behavior the problems in the relationship would cease.

The subtle patterns of manipulation, intimidation, unreasonable demands, sarcasm and angry outbursts will soon take their toll – on the relationship and on the victim. Because some of the patterns are so subtle, others may be aware of the abusive pattern before the victim even realizes what is happening.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Does your partner present a positive face to the world and negative behaviors at home?
- Does your partner tend to pick a fight when you are just getting closer?
- Does your partner complain about how you treat him or her?
- Does your partner ridicule you and then say they were only joking?
- Does your partner threaten to leave or to throw you out?
- Does your partner manipulate you with lies?
- Does your partner falsely accuse you of having affairs?
- Does your partner pick at you until you get angry and then blames you for what you are feeling?
- Does your partner set you up so that no matter what you do you wind up losing?
- Does your partner alternate the abuse with promises to never hurt you again?
- Does your partner twist your words and blame you for things you never said?
- Does your partner criticize and call you names?
- Does your partner complain about how you talk, act or dress?

Healthy relationships grow through healthy interactions and communications. If you have answered yes to a number of the above questions, you may be in a situation where you are experiencing verbal abuse. It is difficult to reach out for help when you have lost a sense of self esteem or self worth through the slow erosion brought about by such demeaning behavior on the part of someone to whom you have entrusted yourself.

Remember that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit available to all employees and dependents of companies contracted with Wood & Associates for providing confidential free professional assistance 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Remember that you or a dependent may contact the EAP regarding any concern that you might have – you don't have to wait until a problem becomes big to seek help. Above all, keep in mind that relationships are based on respect, trust and love – not abuse. So, if you are the person experiencing the abuse – or the one who is abusing – help is a phone call away.

About Wood & Associates

Wood & Associates is an Employee Assistance Program and behavioral health consulting firm that helps employers maintain productivity, safety and behavioral health in the workplace. Wood & Associates is a pioneer in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) industry and has served employers and employees in the greater Tampa Bay area and nationwide since 1982. The firm's diverse group of clients includes a number of major employers who also contract for its mental health and substance abuse services.

Gary L. Wood, Psy.D., founder of the Wood & Associates consulting practice, is a pioneer in the field of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since 1979, his practice has centered on providing solutions to employee and organizational problems. Wood is a licensed clinical psychologist, a member of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and a graduate of Rutgers University, West Georgia College and Mercer University.

Patricia N. Alexander earned a Ph.D. in mental health counseling at the University of Florida. Trained in critical incident stress management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, she is a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor and nationally certified counselor. Through her work experience she has addressed all types of critical incident situations, including explosions, multiple homicides, suicides, line-of-duty deaths, serious accidents and robberies. Alexander conducts training on stress management for law enforcement and businesses, and has developed peer support programs for law enforcement and industry. Alexander is an educator and consultant on a wide variety of behavioral health concerns.