



News Release

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RELATIONSHIPS – HEALING OR TOXIC?

Tampa, Fla. (January 1, 2007) “Life is difficult” - thus begins the book, The Road Less Traveled, by M. Scott Peck. It sometimes seems from the moment we get up until we go to bed, very little about life is simple. Yet, we are surrounded by all kinds of supportive resources. Ask any specialist in the field of stress management and they will tell you that coping effectively with life’s challenges is ninety percent attitude and only ten percent action. They will also tell you that having a healthy support network is critical in dealing with the challenges of life. Notice that the key word in regard to relationships is the word healthy.

Sometimes we surround ourselves with individuals who could best be described as “stress carriers” or we find ourselves in what is best described as a “toxic relationship.” It is important to take an honest look at the nature of our relationships since others are a key factor in dealing with stress. What, therefore, are some key principles in developing healthy relationships?

- **Choose one or more friends who are in a life situation similar to yours that are doing well in handling the challenges and minefields associated with your situation**
- **Choose friends that you look up to, who are role models of who you would like to be**

- **Be honest with yourself about why you are in relationship with a particular individual: is it to avoid being lonely or because they can take care of you in some way**
- **Choose a friend with whom you can be honest and truly be yourself**
- **Choose a friend who will be able to reciprocate – not a person who takes and takes and doesn't know how to give**

If you believe that you are in a toxic relationship, take steps to restructure it if at all possible or to leave it.

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 can be positive or negative or a combination of both. One of the hardest decisions is knowing what to do when you know a relationship isn't necessarily healthy but you find that you love the person. Remember that when you need to sort out your feelings about relationships, 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.