

# News Release

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## Walking on Eggshells

**Tampa, Fla. (April, 2014). While physical abuse is easily identified because of the external evidence, verbal abuse is difficult to identify. Why besides the fact that there are no external bruises? Because the victim feels confused, often wonders if they are the one who is “crazy,” feels like they are walking on eggshells all the time, and feels diminished in the relationship. And what makes it even more difficult to recognize is the fact that the abuser often seems to care for the person they are abusing. So why does the abuser use words as weapons? Usually the abuser’s behavior is about control and the abuser’s own issues – particularly in regard to the abuser’s own poor sense of self esteem. And to further complicate the matter, the abuser often demonstrates little awareness or ownership regarding their abusive behavior – often becoming more defensive and argumentative when the person being abused attempts to discuss the abuser’s behavior with them.**

**What are some of the signs and symptoms perpetrators of verbal abuse exhibit?**

- **Name calling**
- **Constant criticism**
- **Sarcasm**
- **The perpetrator going verbally ballistic over minor issues**
- **Externalizing blame to the extent that it is always someone else’s fault**

- **Avoidance of any topic where the perpetrator has to acknowledge their own responsibility**

**When verbal abuse occurs in a relationship, one begins to see oneself and one's needs as unimportant, of little consequence and irrelevant. When one finally recognizes that verbal abuse is occurring, it is important to focus on obtaining help. You can talk with the abuser to let them know how their behavior is having a negative impact on you and the relationship – if they are even able to be aware or acknowledge their responsibility. You can try to set boundaries and not engage or react to the abuser's behavior. You can limit your exposure to the abuser's behavior by leaving or using your support system. And you can seek counseling.**

**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 concerns develop over time but the way you address them can be changed. If you are the victim of verbal abuse or wondering if that is in fact what you are experiencing, all you need to do is call the EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of counselors. It is that simple. We will help guide you down the path to effectively dealing with the emotional wounds that verbal abuse can bring.**

**Sometimes dealing with letting go of old patterns can feel overwhelming because we've been responding in the same old way over and over. So if you are struggling with the question of what you need to change or want to change and need some help in accomplishing your goal, help is a phone call away. The EAP can help you find a new path so that change is managed, relationships are healed, support systems are developed, and expectations are kept realistic.**

#### **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.**