



News Release

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Walking on Eggshells

Tampa, Fla. (October, 2009). October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. 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, all you need to do is call your EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of financial counselors. It is that simple. We will help guide you down the path to effectively dealing with the woundedness that verbal abuse can bring.