

Toxic Relationship Recovery for People in the Lifestyle

Presents

Recognizing and Responding to Verbal Abuse

Thrive 2021

What is abuse

- Abuse is a pattern of behaviors used by one person to maintain power and control over another person in some kind of a relationship.
- It is a choice
- Can co-occur with (but is not caused by):
 - Mental illness
 - Drug and alcohol abuse
 - Any “reason” that normalizes abuse
- Is not limited to one role, sexuality, orientation, or social context

What is *not* abuse

- Frequently a result of religious / spiritual abuse
 - Consensual, negotiated power exchange
 - A social/sexual orientation other than heterosexual and monogamous
 - A trans or non-binary gender identity
 - Consensual kink play

13 Categories of verbal abuse

A note about suggested responses

- Learn to respond without explaining
- Stick to your guns
 - Frame control
- Suggested responses = pattern interrupt

1. Withholding

- The abuser decides to keep to themselves
- Giving up
- Different presentations of withholding
- Responses to requests for communication

2. Countering

- Arguing against the thoughts, feelings, or lived perception of the partner
- Subjective -> Objective

3. Discounting

- Denies others' reality and lived experience

- Preoccupation / distraction
4. Abusive “jokes”
 - Very common experience
 - Crassness or “wit and style”
 - How the “joke” is used
 - Jump scare
 5. Blocking and Diverting
 - The abuser sets the rules of engagement
 - Refuses to communicate
 - Determines communication
 - Withholds communication
 - Diversion tactics
 - Blocking invites justification
 6. Accusing and blaming
 - To distract or shame into submission
 - Actual questions vs. abuse
 - Can be used proactively
 7. Judging and criticizing
 - Invalidating the partner’s point of view as inferior or wrong
 - Used with other forms of verbal abuse
 - “You” and “They” statements
 - Critical (or untrue) statements
 - Words out of context
 - “Just trying to help”
 8. Trivializing
 - Frank and sincere tone
 - Bait-and-switch
 - Occupying the partner’s thoughts
 9. Undermining
 - Statements that have the effect of diminishing the partner’s confidence and determination
 - Used after other forms of abuse
 - Undermining and sabotage
 10. Threatening and name calling
 - Threatening
 - Using the partner’s fears to control them
 - Loss or pain
 - “If you... then I’ll...”

- Name calling
 - Overt
 - Invalidates the nature of the partner

11. Abusive forgetting

- Denial and covert manipulation (Threatening is an example of overt manipulation)
- There is no history in the relationship other than what the abuser sees as benefitting them
- Important errands
- Gaslighting

12. Ordering and denial

- Ordering
 - Denies equality and autonomy
 - Sees the partner as a mere extension of self
- Denial
 - Reality of the partner's lived experience

13. Abusive Anger

- Free-floating, illogical anger that the partner can do nothing to avoid
- Unable to perform correctly
- No apologies
- The partner deserves the anger
- The transfer of feelings

Relationship Bill of Rights

1. Goodwill from the other
2. Emotional support
3. To be heard and responded to with courtesy
4. To have your own view and reality
5. To have your experiences and feelings acknowledged as real
6. Sincere apologies for offensive jokes
7. Clear, informative answers
8. Live free from accusations and blame
9. Live free from criticism and judgement
10. Respect of your work and interests
11. Encouragement
12. Live free from emotional and physical threat
13. Live free from angry outbursts and rage
14. Never be called by names that devalue you and your experience
15. To be respectfully asked instead of ordered

Resources

- YouTube

- Angie Atkinson
 - Free daily video coaching
 - Kink aware/Polyam friendly
 - General and targeted support groups on Facebook
 - Weekly QA sessions
 - Important holiday hangout sessions
- DoctorRamani
- Lisa A. Romano
- Stacy Hoch
- Books
 - Complex PTSD From Surviving to Thriving by Paul Walker
 - Alice Miller
 - The Drama of the Gifted Child
 - For Your Own Good

Donations encouraged

- PayPal: adler.adaya@gmail.com
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Bonus Material

Why is verbal abuse so hard to detect?

- Verbal abuse is largely covert
- What do we mean when we say that verbal abuse is covert?
 - It doesn't happen around others
 - In most cases, it presents in a form that is both surprising and coercive
- We are taught that verbal abuse sounds a certain way
 - Invalidates less-than-obvious experience
 - Shame

General Characteristics of verbal abuse

- Hurtful
- Attacks the nature and abilities of the partner
- May be overt or covert
- May sound sincere and concerned
- Manipulative and controlling
- Insidious
- Unpredictable
- It is the problem
- Expresses a double message
- Escalates

