

Verbal Abuse In Relationships

by Patricia Evans

Most people recognize name-calling as verbal abuse, but name-calling is just one of more than a dozen categories of verbal abuse. Typically, people who are put down in verbally abusive relationships think that somehow, in some way their being treated has something to do with them. They have the impression that there is something about themselves that makes their loved one mad at them, apprehensive of them, distant toward them, fed up with them, unbelieving of them, or disdainful of them.

Abusers are Often Blind to Their Abusive Behavior

1. If people, in relationships believe that they are entitled to give orders--that it is their right--they don't necessarily think that ordering their mate around is abusive. They usually think that their assumed rights, prerogatives and privileges make this kind of behavior okay. They are then blind to their abusive behavior.
2. Similarly, they may think that they have a right to put down their partner, or to tell their partner what s/he's thinking, meaning, and so forth. They might think they are entitled to act the way they do because of their age, because they've been around the place longer, are of a superior gender or race, or because they make more money than their mate. Their sense of entitlement blinds them to their abusive behavior.
3. The abuser may think verbal and/or physical abuse—acts against their mate—are justified because their mate “makes them do it.” Many people who batter both verbally and physically and who are jailed as a consequence, believe it is their mate's fault—as if their mate did the verbal and physical battering. This “crazy” thinking blinds them to their abusive behavior.
4. The abuser may hold a belief in the right of one person to wield power over another person. This belief blinds abusers to their abusive behavior.
5. People who indulge in verbal abuse are also blinded to their abusive behavior when they are lacking in the ability to acknowledge and accept their mate's feelings, interests, talents, perspectives and opinions.

In these relationships, verbal abuse creates pain and trauma and can lead to physical illness. Ongoing abuse is stressful, no matter how much one tries to ignore it. Stress compromises the immune system leaving the abused person vulnerable to a host of illnesses. Back pain and exhaustion are often the first symptoms.

On the other hand, people can occasionally feel so upset or frustrated that they say something that is abusive, but when they realize how they've come across they apologize and say what they mean in a non-abusive, healthy, way.

If there isn't a feeling of goodwill and understanding between two people in their relationship, if one is hurting and feeling constantly put down by actual comments, for instance, “You can't do anything right,” “You aren't listening,” or is frequently yelled at, then that person is probably in a verbally abusive relationship.

Some people spend a lot of time trying to determine which gender is the most verbally abusive. I don't think that kind of debate is productive. When I wrote the first book to name and describe a “verbally abusive relationship,” I not only defined verbally abusive relationships, but also was first to say that although the book is based on women's experiences, “Men too experience verbal abuse.” Now I am getting agreement. Some men are “coming out” about the pain and confusion

they feel in a verbally abusive relationship. Several hundred of the approximately twenty thousand people I've heard from are men who are in these abusive relationships.

Some people think "You've got to learn to take it. Let it roll off your back, it never hurt me. I'm successful." But one might ask, Does being verbally abused make someone a better, healthier person?

SEPARATED?

If you are separated from your loved one and wonder if there is change, please consider the following case.

A couple were separated. One person (A) wondered if the other had changed, but realized the other (B) had not because of B's relentless pressure exerted on A to come back. Never once did B ask, "How do you feel? What do you want?"

If you are facing this kind of pressure, it might be helpful to ask yourself the following questions.

Do you hear,

- What do you want?
- What bothers you about being around me?
- Do you like constant calls or emails from me?
- How do you feel when you come to the house?
- How do you feel after seeing me?
- What do you envision as best for your future?
- Are you interested in hearing my vision for us again, or do you feel usurped by my constantly telling you how you should be?
- Are you interested in hearing me tell you what I want from you hundreds of times a week?
- Do I sound selfish?
- Have I shown an interest in your reality, experience, hopes, dreams?
- Are you experiencing trauma from the things I said and did for years?
- Do You shake when you see me?
- Can you heal from this trauma?
- Do you believe you could like a person who has been self-centered and abusive for a long time?

For more information, visit these websites:

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<http://www.verbalabuse.com/3.shtml>

http://www.troubledwith.com/Web/groups/public/@fotf_troubledwith/documents/articles/twi_topic_008401.cfm