

VERBAL VIOLENCE

DEFINITION

This brochure deals with verbal violence in personal relationships.

When we think of violence, it often happens that only physical violence comes to our minds. In the case of verbal violence the perpetrator does not intimidate his partner with blows, but humiliates her with words, destroys her self-confidence, manipulates, confuses and forces her, thus bringing her under his control.

While in a discussion both partners can say their opinions freely and try to know the other person's point of view in an equal measure, in the process of verbal violence the abuser is not interested in the other's opinion, only in the enforcement of his own superiority. In a discussion the standpoints can get closer to each other, and, even if it does not happen, it cannot be known whose will is going to prevail. In the case of verbal violence the abuser not only sticks to his guns, but even the content of the discussion is often lost, the only purpose is maintaining the power, humiliating and confusing the other person.

Like in other cases of personal violence and violence in general, one of the partners controls the other, so it is not about the partners mutually hurting each other. The perpetrator is often in a superior position from the beginning: in a male-female relationship the man, in a parent-child relationship the parent, in an employer-employee relationship the employer is usually the violent partner.

THE PURPOSE OF VIOLENCE

The purpose of all violence, thus that of verbal violence as well, is to obtain and maintain the power of the perpetrator above the other person or to revenge its loss. Men using verbal violence do not regard their partners as equal, their purpose is not the solution of a conflict or developing a common viewpoint, but the control over the woman.

THE INFLUENCE OF VERBAL VIOLENCE ON THE VICTIM

Under the influence of violence victims get confused, they may surrender to the partner using violence. Their self-confidence decreases, they lose their enthusiasm, they are always alert, they have more and more doubts in themselves. They do not believe already that they are

able to have new relationships, they are even afraid to get crazy.

CATEGORIES OF VERBAL VIOLENCE

In the following let us enumerate the most frequent categories of verbal violence, which can help to recognize violence against you or your beloved ones

WITHHOLDING

All relationships assume that the partners share their thoughts, emotions and experiences. A habitual abuser may withhold all communication about his or his partner's inner life for months or years, and only speaks about everyday topics like that he comes home late or there is no more toilet paper left. Subjects of violence usually think that their partner is not talkative, he has problems with expressing his emotions, is shy or even autistic. Their confusion is increased when their partner, confronted with this, usually denies concealing anything.

-I don't know much about you and we don't talk enough.

-What do you want me to say? I do talk to you.

COUNTERING

It is one of the main tactics of many abusers. These men look at their partners as at enemies, it disturbs them if their girlfriend or wife has an opinion of her own, so they disagree with everything without consideration. If there is nothing else, they can start a quarrel even over a question.

-The scene change took too long.

-Oh! I didn't notice that.

-You're wrong.

-Well, I mean it felt fine to me.

-You don't know what you're talking about.

DISCOUNTING

The abuser repeatedly denies the victim's perceptions, emotions, thoughts, presents them as something invaluable, inaccurate, incorrect. He says things like this:

You are too sensitive.

You're jumping to conclusions.

You can't take a joke.

You take things too seriously.

You are sentimental.

Your imagination is working overtime.

VERBAL VIOLENCE DISGUISED AS JOKES

The man tells a joke which hurts his partner. If the victim mentions it, he says that she does not have a sense of humour. For example:

What else can you expect from a woman? A typical blonde one! You couldn't find your head if it wasn't attached.

The perpetrator often disguises violence by saying or doing something that hurts or confuses his partner, then laughing, as if it were only a joke.

BLOCKING AND DIVERTING CONVERSATION

It is frequent that men refuse responsibility or genuine discussion of a question, which is awkward for them, by sticking to a small detail and diverting the conversation from the substance. For example:

-I think we've decided a hundred times that we spend Saturdays with the children.

-A hundred times? Once or twice, I think.

-What happened to those 40,000 forints?

-What are you worried about? You have plenty to spend!

ACCUSING AND BLAMING

The abuser blames his partner for his disappointments, anger, irritation or insecurity. For example:

-Darling, I'm very tired today.

-I you don't want me, just tell me who you want.

Like in this example, the abuser often blames his partner with wrongdoing and with the breach of the basic agreement of the relationship.

JUDGING AND CRITICIZING

Most categories of verbal violence mentioned above have a judgemental overtone, but this type can be present in itself as well. These manifestations do not criticize definite activities that cause problems to the abuser, but instead of the activity they qualify the person.

You're never satisfied with anything.

You aren't normal.

You're stupid.

If you are criticized in front of other people, it belongs to the same category.

She's afraid of her shadow.

Every time she goes shopping she leaves her purse at home.

TRIVIALIZING

Trivializing is when a man does not acknowledge the woman's qualities or achievements.

In fact it was not you employed in that office: you made your friends write the motivation letter.

FORGETTING

It happens with everybody to forget something. However, consistently forgetting interactions, which hurt another person, is verbal violence. It is violence for instance, when the victim collects herself after being yelled at or humiliated and she may try to talk about it, and the man answers:

I don't know what you're talking about. I'm not going to listen to this.

OTHER KINDS OF VERBAL VIOLENCE

It is also verbal violence if your partner threatens you. (If you don't do what I want, I'll...), gives orders (Get rid of this at once).

VERBAL VIOLENCE: A TEST

It can be easy to recognize verbal violence when it has the forms of open quarrelling, threatening or ordering. However, it has forms overlooked by society, which are not regarded as violence. The following list may help you to decide whether you are a victim of verbal violence

Your partner looks nervous or angry several times a week. When you ask what the problem is, he denies it or says that you are the cause of his nervousness.

If something hurts you, you would never be able to discuss the problem. You would get the answer that you want to quarrel again or that your partner does not understand what it is all about.

You often feel frustrated because you cannot explain to your partner what you would like him to do.

You feel upset. Not because of special questions (e.g. how much time you should spend together), but because of the problems in communication; what he says and what he is willing to hear from what you say.

You are confused. 'I don't understand what my problem is. I shouldn't feel so awful.'

It seems your partner has a different opinion about almost everything, and he does not say 'I think' or 'in my opinion', but it is as if he were always right and you never.

You do not remember that you have ever told your partner 'Stop!' or 'Don't do that!'

If two or more statements are true for you, you are probably a victim of verbal violence. In this case you must know that many verbally abusive men will beat their partners sometime. But verbal violence is harmful in itself: it undermines your self-confidence, independence, initiative and self-assurance.

HELP

If you are a victim of verbal violence, you can ask for help at the emergency call of NANE association: 80/505101 (18–22 h)

If you have legal problems in connection with abuse, you can find us at jogsegely@habeascorpus.hu, or on 30/9965666 (Wednesdays 16–18 h).

It is useful to read the book on the basis of which this brochure was made.

If you are a man and recognize yourself when you read about verbal violence, call Stop Male Violence Information Line (Thursdays 18–22): 06-40-200-744 or 06-1-344-3802.

This brochure is mainly based on the book of Patricia Ewans: Verbally abusive relationships (in Hungarian Patricia Ewans *Szavakkal verve... Szóbeli erőszak a párkapcsolatokban*. Háttér Kiadó – NANE Egyesület, Budapest 2004.) The book can be purchased in the bookshops or, together with other publications, ordered on the website of NANE Association: <http://www.nane.hu>.

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Do you know

What verbal violence is?

On the basis of Patricia Evans Verbally abusive relationships (*Szavakkal verve*)

Habeas Corpus Munkacsoport

www.stop-ferfieroszak.hu



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