

VICTORY OVER VERBAL ABUSE

A Healing Guide
to Renewing
Your Spirit and
Reclaiming Your Life

Includes
*Inspiring
Affirmations*
for Every Week
of the Year

Patricia Evans

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE VERBALLY ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP*

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This book is dedicated to those who have lived, or are living in, the nightmare of a verbally abusive relationship.

Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to the thousands of people who have shared their lives with me. I have heard their strength and fragility, their clarity and confusion, their confidence and their self-doubt. I have learned from them. Thank you.

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About the Author

What Victory over Verbal Abuse Means

Victory over Verbal Abuse has been written to provide answers to many questions about verbal abuse and in particular to support recovery from the impact of verbal abuse. To recover from verbal abuse, it is essential to know that healing is possible. This book is designed to assist you on your journey to recovery, clarity, and personal power.

Abuse can begin anytime—in infancy, or in an adult relationship. It can be perpetrated by anyone who cannot tolerate your separateness and so attempts to shape you into his or her projected self, while ignoring your real self.

Thousands of cases testify to the fact that while some perpetrators have consciously malevolent motives, many, even most (especially in personal relationships), are responding to inner agonies generated in their own childhoods. Seemingly, because of their illusion, these agonizing moments are happening to them all over again, or so they experience them in the relationship. Thus, they can become extremely toxic to their partners, even without yelling or physically assaulting anyone. They can be so psychologically dangerous to the person or persons they target that they can eventually destroy the others' perceptions so as to leave them debilitated, physically ill, even suicidal. Personal victory over verbal abuse can best be equated with healing that brings clarity and peace to body, mind, and soul.

If you have experienced verbal abuse, you must know clearly that you are not responsible for anyone's abuse of you. You cannot make it happen to you. You may not be able to tell when it is happening to you. In a relationship, you know that the perpetrator is a separate person, but as strange as it seems, the perpetrator does not recognize you as a separate person. The perpetrator defines your inner world as if he or she were living within you.

Your victory also means clarity about who you are, what you like, what brings you satisfaction, along with awareness of your talents and gifts. Your victory is the journey you take to create what you want in your life—a life that gives you meaning and purpose and is most fulfilling. Your victory is fully realized when any fears, self-doubts, and confusing perceptions disappear.

As we collectively come to understand just what verbal abuse is and how it impacts humanity, we will have a healthier world. In this regard, victory over verbal abuse is extremely important to all who want to live in a world without war in any form—that is, people seeking power over other people. Achieving this can be one of our most important goals if we want to make it so. If we progress in achieving this victory, the dark cloud of verbal abuse will gradually dissipate in the light of awareness, just as the sun dispels the fog. This will make a difference in the lives of millions of people. For example, a dictator using verbally abusive and controlling behavior could not rise to power if most who witnessed verbal abuse recognized it for what it is!

People who are verbally abusive use Just Plain Senseless (JPS) negative statements that denigrate, accuse, imply, disparage, or in any other way define a person. They perpetrate

defining behavior without examples, evidence, or facts. Verbal abuse is a lie told to you about you, or about someone else. *It is most insidious when the accusations are perpetrated through implication.*

Here is an example of how insidious and evil implication can be. Jill is home with three children under six years of age. The twin girls are two years old. The oldest, a boy, is five. She is exhausted by the time her husband gets home from work, but she makes sure dinner is ready. Her husband Jack walks in, looks around, and sees a toy on the kitchen floor. He looks at the toy and says, "Look at this! *I* worked all day. It must be nice to have time for a nap."

Jill is shocked. She tries to defend herself against the implication that she doesn't work. "I don't have time for naps. I was taking care of the kids, the house, the meals, the laundry, and the grocery shopping," she says evenly.

Jack sighs and rolls his eyes, picks up his five-year-old son, "Wanna go get a burger where the fun people are?" he asks his son.

"But dinner is ready," Jill says.

"We don't mind missing it, do we Jackie?" Little Jackie agrees, nodding at Jack who is so important in his life.

"Okay, my little man," says Jack.

He sets Jackie down, takes his hand, and heads out the door saying, "If anything's left, save it. I might want a midnight snack."

In personal relationships, some controllers disparage their partner in front of their children and so attempt to bond together with the children against the partner. This is very common. It's a way to gain power and feel connected; in some cases, it's the only way a controller feels connected to anyone. In the example above, Jack may have felt anger that the house didn't look as perfect as he desired. He may have resented that his wife didn't meet his expectations, which might have been to be admiring, maybe even adoring of him, when he arrived home.

When Jill told him what she had been doing all day, he shut her out completely, avoided recognizing her as a separate person, and subtly bonded with his son, Jackie, against her.

During the interaction, Jackie saw his dad ignore his mother, saw his dad sigh as if he had had all he could take, realized that mom was not much fun and that his dad approved of him as his "little man."

When he is an adult, Jackie may perpetrate the same behavior in his own relationships.

What could Jill have done? The best response to JPS behavior, even the most subtle, is to say something like, "Would you repeat that?" while holding up a video camera. Then, if he does repeat it, laugh and say, "That's what I thought you said." If he doesn't repeat it, he may be a bit more *conscious* that his behavior is senseless. This is a victory for consciousness. Victory over verbal abuse is victory for consciousness, while verbal abuse seeks its own destruction.

How to Use This Book

Victory over Verbal Abuse is divided into two main parts. Part 1 is composed of chapters addressing different aspects of verbal abuse recovery. Part 2 contains weekly affirmations followed by a message that clarifies and reinforces the affirmation.

Millions of people suffer from verbal abuse from parents, partners, peers, and even cultures that define them. Thousands of women and some men have told me how they have suffered for years from what they have been told about themselves by others. Readers who contact me for information, consultations, and resources want to know how to recover from verbal abuse. Their questions and desire to recover compel me to respond.

The impact of verbal abuse is immeasurable. The shock and trauma are often disabling. A man told me this very morning, “The beatings ended when I was ten. I have forgotten them but I cannot forget the verbal abuse.” And women cry out, “I can’t get the cruel things he said out of my thoughts.” “I just don’t know how to keep going and not keep hearing his words in my mind.” Readers say, in so many words, “You gave me back my mind. I know I’m not crazy. Now I know there is a name for what I suffered, and I know what is wrong with abusers, *but how can I heal?*” *Victory over Verbal Abuse* presents a path to recovery.

Whether you have been put down or defined in any way, whether in childhood or as an adult, by anyone—a parent, sibling, teacher, school bully, coach, church leader, relative, or significant other—this book is written and designed to facilitate your recovery toward a lifetime of clarity and growth in awareness. Your victory over verbal abuse is our victory over the cloud of confusion that shadows our planet.

If someone has defined your inner world, told you what you are, what you think, feel, want, and so forth, you have heard verbal abuse. If you have been told, for example, “You’re too sensitive,” “You don’t know what you’re talking about,” or “You can’t do anything right,” you have heard verbal abuse. Even if you have not been so defined, but instead been totally ignored, have not received a response to any question or comment, were defined as nonexistent, you, too, have been verbally abused. I believe this book will support you in building your confidence and self-esteem. Recovery is possible, whether you have suffered from verbal abuse in one or in many relationships.

Throughout these pages, most examples refer to women’s experiences of verbal abuse because thousands of women have shared their stories with me. Nonetheless, the healing processes and affirmations should be of great support to men as well as to women. Most of these men were told they were not good enough, would never amount to anything, and needed to toughen up. All the while, the emotional pain and mental anguish they suffered was not allowed expression by their abusers.

The information, resources, and affirmations are all meant to be your personal guide and are designed to support anyone who has suffered the confusion and betrayal of verbal abuse.

Questions about Healing from Verbal Abuse

- How do I ever trust again?
- How do I not feel so alone?
- How can I stop questioning myself, “Am I doing anything wrong?”
- How do I overcome my sadness and depression?
- How do I stop worrying?
- How do I relax?
- How do I get back my confidence and self-esteem?
- How can I know who I am and what I want to do now?

- How can I overcome my fear of being alone?
 - How can I overcome my fear of ending up homeless?
 - How can I recover the person I used to be?
 - How can I sleep through the night?
 - How can I stop the nightmares?
 - How can I get past this exhaustion?
 - How can I get those words out of my mind?
 - How can I stop startling at every unexpected sound?
 - How can I heal from trauma?
 - How can I become the person I was meant to be?
 - I know I am free to be me, but who am I?
-

Moving Forward

The following chapters light a path out of the cloud of verbal abuse, dissipating its blinding darkness. Beyond that, they offer insights and methods that support anyone striving to grow beyond where they are now.

No matter where you are on your own path of self-actualization, I believe you will feel stronger, clearer, more self-aware, and more determined much sooner than you might have thought possible by following every avenue this book opens up for you. Even if you thought you would never heal, much less be really happy, I am confident that, as you put the healing practices and affirmations into your daily routine, you will surprise yourself with the true self you discover.

I have heard from thousands of people who have described the steps they took to find peace, purpose, and passion, even beyond their highest expectations. I synthesize the journey for you. If you haven't already, I recommend that you find time to read my earlier four books that explain verbal abuse and control. Each gives you some information that facilitates healing.

The first, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, validates your experience of any relationship where you were defined.

The second, *Verbal Abuse Survivors Speak Out*, shows you some other forms of control that could have impaired your ability to be both self-defining and self-determined.

The third, *Controlling People*, shows what is “wrong with” the abuser, so any thought of blaming yourself is dissolved in new awareness.

The fourth, *The Verbally Abusive Man Can He Change?* shows how to wake up an abuser, if possible, and what it would take for an abuser to change.

These books help readers to see how irrational abusive behavior is and why, in relationships, abusers are usually much kinder to friends and neighbors than they are to their own partners.

It is my intention that, if you are recovering from anyone's attempt to control you and from the emotional pain and mental anguish of verbal abuse, whether overt or covertly perpetrated by anyone, in any circumstance, you will find strength and peace using this book to support you. It is meant to give you the determination to overcome any adversity. It is a guide to living your life with ever-increasing clarity, confidence, and caring—caring for yourself as much as you have cared for others. It can support you in setting your own goals.

and in achieving them.

Part 1

Recovery from Verbal Abuse

This section includes chapters that validate your experience of verbal abuse and address what verbal abuse looks like, how you can identify it, and what you can do to heal from it. This part explores how verbal abuse obscures clarity and limits your potential, how to recover when you are forced to remain in contact with a verbal abuser (such as when you have children together), and how to maintain a positive approach to recovery (even when it is difficult). The chapters in this part cover self-help processes to facilitate recovery, including how to discover and recover your greatest gifts and how to develop a strong sense of self. This part also includes a review of therapies to recover from trauma and shows you the steps to achieving victory over verbal abuse.

Validation

Being blamed, defined, and deprived can impact anyone's confidence, expectations, and aspirations. It can happen to anyone in the presence of *a person who indulges in verbal abuse* on a regular basis—henceforth referred to as the “abuser.” In a world, or a relationship, that defines you, the process of recovery becomes a process of self-discovery. It is important to have hope and faith in yourself and to know that healing is possible. There is no room for despair, for giving up on yourself and your right to a peaceful, motivated, and happy life.

Control Through Verbal Abuse

Even if you have not been negatively defined in your personal life and relationships, you may have been defined by the dominant culture in which you live. One example is women defined as not as deserving of equal pay for equal work. Another is women defined as objects to be fought over by rival suitors. Another is men defined as not really men if they express their humanity in sadness, grief, and kindness to others; that is, if they are “toughened up” to be unfeeling and un-empathetic.

If you have been defined by anyone, especially if by a parent or spouse, please begin this journey knowing that you are not what you've been told and you are not alone. Additionally, you do not deserve any negative behavior or attitude, from the silent treatment to subtle implications, interrogations, accusations, threats, name-calling, or any other abuse.

Verbal abuse is an attempt to control you. When Mickey Rooney, claiming elder abuse, testified in court, he described how he was defined by those who would attempt to control him. In his testimony he was, in effect, speaking of his experience of verbal abuse. He revealed his experience in the advance testimony.

The testimony read:

Over the course of time, my daily life became unbearable.... I felt trapped, scared, used and frustrated. But above all, I felt helpless.... For years I suffered silently, unable to muster the courage to seek the help I knew I needed.

Sometimes the transition from being in control of your life to having absolutely no control is swift, but other times it is so gradual that you wonder exactly when it truly began. In my case, I was eventually and completely stripped of the ability to make even the most basic decisions in my own life.

You have the right to control your own life, to be happy, and not live in fear. Please, for yourself, end the cycle of abuse. Tell your story to anyone who will listen and above all, have hope.

Those targeted by verbal abuse can become confused, adapted to the abuse, and brainwashed while their spirit and sense of self are eroded. This can happen to anyone who is under, or has been under, the influence of a person who, over time, defines them in a negative way. Part of healing is understanding how this could happen. Partners of abusers often ask, “How I could have been so brainwashed that I thought there was something wrong with me?”

In some cases, the partner of an abuser may eventually come to the conclusion that something is wrong in the relationship but not know what it is. This is most common if the abuser is covert. The abuser may quietly counter nearly every comment and enthusiasm the partner expresses. Among other subtle responses the abuser may roll his eyes like “you’re crazy,” not respond to any question unless it is with another question, argue against all of the partner’s views (even ones he has expressed as his own view in the past), and disguise cutting remarks as jokes.

A woman described how she’d experienced years of verbal assaults, diminishment, and disparaging comments about her abilities, spontaneity, and positive approach to life’s problems. Most were cloaked as “just a joke,” a “helpful” criticism, or an “offhand remark” that she took “too seriously.” Without her realizing it, her basic nature was slowly eroding.

After her marriage ended, she met an old college classmate who told her he remembered her as a confident, vibrant, and dynamic person. That was when she realized the degree to which she had lost herself, for she was no longer the confident person she’d been. She wasn’t at all sure of herself. She had trouble making decisions and she had trouble putting forth her best qualities even in a job interview. She didn’t want to sound like she was “bragging.” However, the good news was that since she remembered how she’d been she knew what she wanted. She wanted to reclaim her *Self*. She was determined to take every step she could to become herself again.

Recovery Through Validation

The path of recovery really begins when a person discovers that there is a name for her or his experience and a reason they didn’t realize what was happening to them. This is validation! If you are uncertain about a relationship, I refer you to *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, 3rd Edition (Adams Media, Inc., 2010). It was written to allow readers to recognize this kind of relationship.

If you have been the target of verbal abuse in any relationship, it may take some time to get past the pain verbal abuse inflicts—the loss of what you thought your abuser was, and the feelings of betrayal and shock that this could happen to you. If you have been targeted by verbal abuse, you may not only experience assaults to your own identity, but also, believing that your abuser is somehow rational, you may become confused and feel that there must be something wrong with you. While in this kind of relationship if you try to reason with the abuser, you only become more confused. The more you try to explain that you are not who the abuser says, the more the abuser escalates the abuse.

You are not alone, even though friends or relatives of your abuser did not see the abuse nor even believe your experience. You stand with the millions of people who have had the

same experience. And many have discovered that most abusers don't abuse in front of other people.

As you come to see how no one can define your inner world and that verbal abuse is irrational and ridiculous, you are on the path to healing. The verbal abuser tells you who you are, what your motives, thoughts, and feelings are, as if he or she were you. How crazy is that! You are self-defining. You are not too sensitive, nor do you want to start a fight, nor are you afraid of any other negative comment you've been told about yourself. But even if you know that what a verbal abuser says is nonsense, it is still a blow to your mind and consciousness.

Sometimes friends and family have no understanding of verbal abuse. When you try to explain your experience, you may hear something like, "He is so nice. I don't see how this could have happened."

Your response might be, "Oh, I understand how you feel. Even a murderer's in-laws said they didn't think he could have done anything to their daughter. He was so nice. That was until they found out he had killed her."

Maybe you have been so insidiously controlled you didn't know what was happening to you. I want to validate your experience right here. Following are some of the feelings people have had when they were in a relationship with a person who verbally abused them. If you recognize these feelings, your feelings are validating you.

You May Feel Brainwashed

Verbal abuse so wholly defines its target that it is like brainwashing. If you are, or have been the target of verbal abuse:

1. You may have been told that you are not who you have known yourself to be. For example, if you sought peace and a good relationship, you were told that you "want to argue," or that you "don't care." This kind of abuse breaks down your identity.
2. You may have begun to feel guilty, especially if you received constant criticism or correction that implied that you should do better, just don't measure up, aren't good enough, or aren't smart enough.
3. You may have begun to believe that the negative, demeaning, or critical comments the abuser made about you were true. In other words, you may have internalized the words, accepting them as if they were true. This is so, especially, if your abuser offered some relief, that is, he acted as if nothing happened—as if you had nothing to complain about. And, conversely, if you commented on what he said, explaining that what he said wasn't true, he accelerated the abuse.
4. Eventually, if you were abused over time, you may have sought relief from your confusion, lost identity, and feelings of unworthiness by trying harder to please, to comply with the abuser and mainly *to adopt the abuser's view of you*. You may have come close to losing your Self.

You May Feel Betrayed

Verbal abuse lies to you. If the person who promised to love you and claimed to love you

then proceeded to attempt to erase your mind, your awareness, your very consciousness by telling you what you are, think, feel, even your motives, or that what you just heard and said didn't happen, your abuser has attempted to deceive you and so, of course, you may feel betrayed.

Further validation comes with knowing that verbal abuse is not only a lie told to you about you, it may also be a lie told to others about you. And conversely, a lie told to you about others.

I had not finished this paragraph when a woman called to tell me that she had attended Sunday service at a church in a very small town in almost the exact middle of the United States. The members listened to the minister define the population of California not as who they are, but as “evil,” and enjoined the congregation to pray with him that the entire state would fall into the ocean. They complied, except for the woman who called me after the service. Having lived away from this community, she saw the contrast between normal people and people who would have more than thirty-seven million be dead or be displaced.

The congregation listened to the minister, a wolf disguised as a shepherd, because his disguise fooled them. They were betrayed. They were lied to. The woman who called me knew the congregation was misled by the minister's persona of kindness, charity, and wisdom. She had believed in him herself until this incident. Similarly, the partners of abuse feel betrayed when they realize that the abuser, who first appeared so kind, is actually abusive and controlling. This switch from good to bad behavior is explained in *Controlling People* (Adams Media, Inc., 2002). Similarly, I talked with a woman who realized that the lies told to her about her family, were indeed, lies. Throughout her marriage her husband had consistently and subtly disparaged her parents and relatives. As time passed, his comments ridiculed and even made fun of them, and gradually he convinced her of his views. She became somewhat isolated from them. She had a general feeling that they were not very intelligent, sophisticated, or even well educated. As she began to recognize his verbal abuse of her, she started to think about her family and she realized that they were all high achievers and highly educated. Her grandfather had been a doctor and her mother had a professional career when not many women did and her cousin was well-known. “In a way she said, “they're all the opposite of what he said. At last, I am proud of my family.”

You May Feel That It's Somehow Your Fault—Abuse Internalized

Many women who have been in a verbally abusive relationship and who have also experienced physical abuse say that verbal abuse is worse. Of course there are exceptions, but in general, recovery from verbal abuse takes longer because verbal abuse is about the erasure of mind, and ultimately the destruction of consciousness.

People on the outside looking in on a verbally abusive relationship might wonder how verbal abuse can be so bad. One reason seems to be that when a person sees a blow coming or their life is threatened, they often disassociate from the terror. Later they don't remember much of what happened in those moments. Then they see the evidence, a bruise, and feel the pain, but their mind is not focused into what is happening second by second.

On the other hand, when people hear verbal abuse—orders, criticism, or angry outbursts—directed at them from someone they trust, are in a relationship with, or look up to, they may over time, begin to believe what they are told. If they don't know that what they are hearing

is actually verbal abuse, they may try harder to please their abuser. They may become depressed. They may spend years explaining themselves to the abuser. They may build their identity around what they're told. They may internalize the words they hear, thinking, for example, "I'm too sensitive," or, "I'm blowing things out of proportion," or "I can't do anything right."

Quite unlike battering, verbal abuse affects the partner's mind, impacting its organization and thought processes. When the partner hears something like, "You're too sensitive. You just want to argue," *she is totally focused into her mate's words*, trying to make sense of them, trying to figure out:

1. Why he thinks she wants to argue.
2. How she can get back to the issue that might have been something like, "I'm just saying that I didn't think that comment, that you said was 'just a joke,' was funny."
3. How to explain that she doesn't want to argue.

Failing to accomplish these efforts, she gives up. She is silenced. Furthermore, if the abuser is periodically *nonabusive*, she cannot reconcile the two opposite experiences. Mental anguish, racing thoughts, and exhaustion can all ensue. Physical scars heal; however, the scars of verbal abuse linger for years. They have invaded her psyche.

You May Feel Afraid of Your Abuser

If you are with someone you fear because he is periodically out of control, threatens your life, hits, pushes, grabs or shoves you, blocks your escape, falsely imprisons you, demonstrates violence, harms or threatens to harm your child, don't try to get your abuser to see what he is doing, or explain to him what is bothering you. Instead, call your local domestic violence prevention program or the national domestic violence hotline for help, and then tell all.

Recovery takes time but once you are safe from contact with the abuser, I hope you will focus on your success and how strong you can be in your stand against abuse. You will have the knowledge to help others.

Following is a true account of a case that, while extreme, illustrates the power of words. A woman was forced to sit and listen to her well-liked and well-known spouse rage for hours. What hold did her husband have over her? What words bound her to her chair? "If you move the kids will pay, and believe me, you don't want to know how." His abuse had escalated. She had been taught to be powerless. This man's inexplicable rage—a torrent of accusation and blame—was matched only by her fear and confusion. But now, because of the children, she knew he was crazy and that meant *she* wasn't. "With his power," she thought, "I know he will take everything, but I am willing to give away everything but I won't give away my soul."

Planning her escape with her children did take time. Records had to be built. How could she ever leave her children alone with a "crazy" man? Who would believe her? No bruises. No black eyes. Who wouldn't believe him, with a highly perfected and charming persona—the one he showed to the world? What could she do when he had his wealth and she didn't have a penny? Powerless as she felt, she began to ask for help and so her recovery began.

At times she was traumatized, but saw on a regular basis a supportive and knowledgeable therapist who was skilled in trauma therapy. There were times when she could remember little of what had just happened. She temporarily disassociated. And there was a time she was flooded with flashing memories of literally hundreds of shocking behaviors perpetrated by her now ex-husband. Even after her divorce, she was attacked and punched in the cheek during a child exchange. Breathless, she did call the police, and this time they protected her. She built a team through trial and error. She never gave up. She now has the support of doctors, lawyers, and others who will see her through, freeing her children from her unsupervised visits with them—the ones where they are terrorized, just as she was.

Her children are getting therapy for trauma and its impact. And, like many of my readers, she will speak out, bringing awareness to others and saving lives. This, too, is part of recovery. This, too, fuels her determination.

An Awful Feeling—What Is It?

Many women who have been married to or in long-term relationships with abusive men have told me about being overcome by a feeling that seemed to immobilize them. It was an awful feeling that something terrible would befall them. It happened at different times. For example, they started to feel it if they talked to someone about a problem in the relationship. They felt it as a kind of guilty anxiety if they bought a book about it. They felt it a lot more if they opened their own safety deposit box with cash so their spouse wouldn't know. They felt it even if they wanted the safety deposit box only to store some personal or private records. They got the same feeling, even worse, if they opened a savings account in their own name to deposit cash gifts from their own family without telling their spouse about it. They felt like they needed to report to their spouse about what they were doing but, at the same time, they did not want to tell him. They didn't want to share this information with him because they didn't want to hear an interrogation about it, or anger about it, or some sarcastic put-down about it. Of course, talking to a lawyer just to gather information in case their relationship became intolerable was an intolerable thought.

Naming the Awful Feeling

These women were feeling dread. What is dread? It is a feeling that you will experience some unknown and unnamed doom if you proceed. People who experience dread feel a terror or overwhelming fear of what might happen if they do what they were thinking of doing, or if they actually do it despite feeling that something bad will happen to them.

But why would a person feel dread about saving some money, or securing private documents, or gathering information about a possible life change? The answer can be found in what these women all had in common. They were all acting, or about to act, on their own behalf without permission from a man.

The feeling of dread comes from a long history of oppression—social as well as personal. Women in particular have experienced many accusations, burnings at the stake, beheading, and deaths by stoning in the past, and in some places, in the present. Consequently, our collective history or memory holds an authoritarian power tantamount to an earth-shattering

voice descending from the skies, parting the clouds, and booming, “Thou shall not....” Many women feel as if they are breaking a taboo to act on their own behalf without permission from a man.

An unwritten taboo that is still built into most cultures is about the subjugation of women.

The evil taboo: “You may not act without permission from a man.”

The fear: “Acting on your own behalf will bring you harm.”

Five Steps to Overcoming the Awful Feeling

If you have felt dread when acting on your own behalf without permission from a significant other, these steps may help you to overcome it.

First, know that the feeling of dread comes from breaking a taboo. Just knowing what the feeling is about and that it doesn't represent anything that will happen in your future helps to dissolve it.

Second, talk to yourself in a positive way. Here are some examples:

- “I am acting on my own.”
- “I am opposing a bad, ridiculous, controlling, enslaving rule.”
- “Acting on my own is a great, good thing. My guardian angel is applauding me, as are all the saints and angels.”
- “The universe supports me because I am exercising my free will, bringing no harm to others, and doing something really good for me.”

Third, look for support from people who are really there for you. Family, friends, and online support groups are all possibilities.

Fourth, notice that the feeling fades away and over time ceases to reappear.

Fifth, notice that no doom befalls you.

Coping with a Verbal Abuser

If you're the partner of an abuser, you need to arm yourself with the knowledge of just how delusional your abuser is. You can't give weight to the abusive words. You must constantly remind yourself that the negative, abusive statements are simply the lies that bullies indulge in—pretend talk—by someone who seeks to silence you, their target, so they can seemingly continue to pretend to be God, to know what you want, think, and are trying to do. Armed with this knowledge, you won't be in a fog, and you won't wonder if you are crazy. You won't keep trying to figure it out. You will see that you are hearing nonsense. You are looking at the abuser from an observer's standpoint.

After stating your request that your abuser not define you as if he knew your motives and thoughts, if he continues, you observe as a scientist and your mind isn't caught up in trying to make sense of nonsense. You know he is irrational and so you don't waste a moment of your time trying to explain to him how what he said wasn't true. You know you cannot reason with an irrational person. You don't react defensively. Instead, you respond with disbelief. Here are some suggestions:

- “What?”
- “What did you say?”
- “Did you just tell me what I am?”
- “Did you just tell me what I do? That is so silly. You are not me and do not know what I am, or what I am doing, or my motives.”

You see he is impaired and severely compromised. What he says has a less destructive impact. And, now there is something you can do. You can see if you can wake him up to his nonsensical behavior and see if he is willing to get help. Or you can make a plan to leave.

If You Feel Powerless

When you feel that there is nothing that you can do, you may be deeply traumatized. One way to overcome the feeling of powerlessness is to know that there is something you *can* do. Plan not to react, but to respond. Verbal abuse is traumatizing; however, when you know that it is irrational nonsense and that there is something you can do, it may be less traumatizing. Try preparing yourself by asking yourself, “What can I do the next time I am attacked?” If, for instance, you can respond with “nonsense” and walk away, you may be empowered to take other steps as well.

When considering the toxicity of verbal abuse, it’s not the snake bite (the hostility of the attack). It’s the venom! The venom is in the nonsensical statement. It can permeate your psyche if you try to make sense of it or explain to the abuser why it is wrong. The bite (the fact that the abuser attacked) fades like a bruise, but the venom can permeate your mind and soul.

When it comes to Jekyll and Hyde behavior—that is, an abuser’s first being kind, then unkind—you don’t need to try to figure out, “Is he a saint or a sinner, a devil or an angel?” You only need to know that he may be just plain toxic to you!

I invite you to think of anything negative you’ve been told about yourself that could shape your sense of self and ask yourself if you have come to think it’s true or if you used to think it was in some way true. Has anyone told you that you are made wrong? That you are too sensitive? Has anyone entered your mind and told you that you are jumping to conclusions or blowing things out of proportion? Has anyone told you that you do everything wrong? If so, you have heard irrational statements!

Over time, these assaults, and possibly hundreds of others, do have a serious impact. By understanding the deep impact of verbal abuse, you will be clearer about your healing and recovery, I believe. Although it can take time and determination to recover, the benefits are worth it—you will become a stronger, more confident, self-defining person, empowered from within to be self-defining and who you were really meant to be.

Most people feel compelled to discover and develop their gifts and talents and, ultimately, to make a positive difference in the lives of others. The process of “becoming” is lifelong. Isn’t that what makes the journey exciting? The better you know yourself, the more successful you will be, not just financially, but in terms of satisfaction, a sense of accomplishment, and appreciation of yourself.

Recovery is all about dissolving the influence of negative comments and demeaning

treatment as well as the underlying, and sometimes unrecognized, feelings of inadequacy, unworthiness, and low self-esteem that such treatment generates. And it is about discovering and using your gifts.

Your recovery is greatly facilitated by the knowledge that you don't say to the abuser what the abuser says to you; that what he says is a lie told to you, about you, and it is completely irrational.

Also know that if you even see the handwriting of a former abuser, you may feel unsurprisingly stirred up inside, unable to feel the energy that you felt before. This is because you are re-traumatized. Just as a person who suffered trauma in a war might feel shattered upon hearing a firecracker unexpectedly go off, you will feel the same shock. Know that in a few days you will feel yourself again. If you do receive any money from him in, for instance, child support, try to have it transferred automatically to a bank account you set up for that purpose.

As you heal from the emotional pain, mental anguish, and physical impact of verbal abuse, you can lead an increasingly satisfying life. As a survivor, you have great potential whatever your age or circumstance. After all, you have survived the oppression of verbal abuse. Imagine what you can do when not subject to it.

Now let's look at the ways people have coped with verbal abuse and how to manage if you must be in contact with an abuser.

Guidelines: Separated but Still in Contact with the Abuser

Recovery from verbal abuse is difficult if you are in contact with your abuser because you are reminded of the past. Just seeing the abuser's name in an e-mail or on a check can re-traumatize you. However, in some cases circumstances require that you have some contact with your abuser. If this is your situation, you may hear verbal abuse again, even if the abuser is trying to reform. It takes time and extensive therapy for abusers to change.

Even if you have completely or temporarily separated from your relationship, you may still have meetings or conversations with the person who abused you. If you are sharing custody, you may have to discuss child-related decisions. Any contact may re-traumatize you, however, if you are prepared to protect yourself you will feel more empowered and will be on the path to recovery.

- Tell the abuser that you will not accept the statements that define you and list examples.
- Tell your abuser that you will video all meetings. Then keep a video camera with you.
- Limit contact with the abuser.
- Say, "What did you say?" if you do hear verbal abuse.
- Be prepared to leave the presence of the abuser if you are abused.
- Hang up the phone if you are abused.
- Try to keep any necessary communication via e-mail, not phones or text messages.
- Save abusive e-mail as evidence but don't respond.
- Never text if you are bombarded with texts from your abuser.
- Never go where your safety is threatened.
- Trust your intuition.
- Don't explain or defend yourself.

- Don't try to lock your abuser out of a home he owns with you. Instead, leave or make plan about where you will go. Call 911 if you are threatened with physical violence.
- A restraining order may be possible. Always get legal advice.
- If you are exchanging children, try to arrange a safe exchange at a neutral site.
- Don't hesitate to report physical abuse or threats to your life.
- Don't hesitate to call the National Domestic Violence Hotline for information and resources in your area. That number is 1-800-799-SAFE (7233).
- If you are separated or divorcing but living in the same house because of economic or other reasons, here are some suggestions. Use a note pad to leave important information. Divide the house as well as the cupboards and refrigerator. Each person is responsible for his or her own meals and laundry.

You have already come a long way toward recognizing verbal abuse and determining that you want it out of your life. The next chapter offers guidelines that are designed to assist you in removing not only negative people from your life but also the negative comments that may have been programmed into your mind. The goal is to gain increasing trust in yourself so that your confidence grows. No more second-guessing, "Did I say that right?" No more self-doubt, "Shouldn't I feel better by now?" "Will I ever feel like myself again?"

If you take one day at a time, as in all processes, I am confident that you, like thousands of women I have talked to, will continue to grow, to find essential meaning and purpose in your life, and to feel personal power that is your right.

Recovery from Verbal Abuse

To begin healing from verbal abuse, you may find it helpful to follow some general guidelines. These basic guidelines are suggestions that have benefited many. However, these are recommendations, not the Ten Commandments. In all things, my highest recommendation is that you allow your intuition to guide you and that you love yourself.

Guidelines for Recovering from Verbal Abuse

1. Stay away from people who define you. This is a goal that may take time to achieve. As you become more aware, you may realize that a friend is more a critic than a friend to you, or that a relative has been, and may always be, controlling toward you. You may need to pull away from some people and send a card rather than make a phone call, or meet on Facebook instead of a coffee shop, or block a toxic person from your Facebook page (and your life) altogether.
2. Monitor your thoughts. You are in charge of your thoughts. No one can stop you from monitoring your thoughts—that is, being mindful. If you are alert to any negative thoughts, such as, “If I were smarter, I wouldn’t have been in this mess,” change the thought to a positive one. For example, “I am smart and getting smarter all the time.” Anyone can be fooled by an abuser and when the bad behavior shows up, an abuser can be very convincing that it is the partner’s fault.”
3. Don’t blame yourself for not making the relationship work. Know that no one can fix an abuser. A verbal abuser is damaged and only the abuser can fix himself or herself with intensive therapy.
4. Don’t blame yourself for choosing the relationship. Anyone can be fooled by an abuser because nearly all verbal abusers present perfectly to their partners in couple relationships until they feel secure, then they project their lost selves into their partners. I suggest that you read *Controlling People* if you would like to understand more about the “lost self” and how it can be projected into you and then often withdrawn when you leave.
5. Gather information. Learn everything you can about verbal abuse and controlling behavior so that you will recognize anyone’s attempt to define you in any way. The more knowledge you have about verbal abuse, the safer and more empowered you will feel.
6. Find support. Tell only those you can trust what you are going through or have gone through. Don’t expect everyone to understand. Many people don’t. Join an online support group, a divorce support group, or a grief recovery group. One verbal-abuse support group can be found at www.verbalabuse.com.
7. Develop confidence and self-esteem. Stay focused on your goals. A positive attitude and

even the smallest success can increase your self-esteem.

8. Don't look back. Remind yourself to stay in the present and plan for the future. The past is gone. If you think of the name of the abuser or something the abuser said, or something that happened with the abuser, say "erase!" and focus on the present and something nearby such as counting the buttons on the phone, or the total in your checkbook.
9. Prepare for dealing with your abuser. If circumstances require you to stay in contact with your abuser, see the guidelines in Chapter 1 for coping with this situation. Be aware that contact can re-traumatize you and take steps to prepare yourself.
- 10 Use this book to stay focused on your healing path. Never hesitate to make your path your own, to follow your intuition and to love yourself.

Verbal Abuse as Blame

If you trust and love a person and then hear him yelling at you, putting you down, giving you the silent treatment, countering your every thought, or accusing you, it can be very difficult not to think that you have inadvertently said or done something wrong, something that provoked the abuser. It can be extremely confusing if the abuser was very kind and seemed to be a different person at the beginning of the relationship. (My previous book, *Controlling People*, fully explains this switch.)

It is easy to believe that you have somehow provoked the abuser. It is easy to think that it is you who is somehow at fault. After all, that is what you're told. It is hard to realize that the abuse is not your fault.

For all these reasons and more, it is very important that anyone who has heard, "If you change, your abuser will change," understand that this is a blaming statement that implies that you are responsible for the abuser's behavior. You are not.

Taking Care of Yourself

The most important thing you can do right now to recover is to take care of yourself. Here are some tips for getting started:

1. Reduce stress and avoid people who verbally abuse you or denigrate others behind their backs.
2. Get some exercise daily.
3. Eat some live food—greens daily.
4. Love yourself by talking nicely to yourself.
5. Care for yourself like you would care for the sweetest, most innocent child you could ever imagine.
6. Go where you feel like you are yourself. If you feel good around people in a coffee shop or alone by a lake, or even in your favorite department store, that is where to go when you feel down.
7. Know that what is communicated to us affects us but negative programming can be erased.
8. Deprivation impacts the psyche as well as words do, so by knowing what is normal or

may realize the deprivation to be overcome.

9. Know the source and impact of verbal abuse; thus, you can become clear and what you've been told will lose its influence upon you.

10 Discover your own overriding goal.

11 Pursue your passion to always bring meaning to your life. Some examples are to be a artist, singer, songwriter, yoga practitioner, volunteer.

Life is about self-discovery and increasing awareness. Life is a journey.

Finding What's Healthy and Normal

A woman told me, "My supervisor, with whom I'd become friends, said, 'Do you realize that you've been abused for so long, you've forgotten what healthy, normal behavior is?'"

Look within at how you feel in the presence of others. If you feel comfortable, uplifted, encouraged, understood, you are experiencing healthy, normal behavior. Here are some attributes of healthy normal people. They:

- Don't define you and your inner world
- Ask you about you, rather than only talk about themselves
- Share themselves with you rather than remain secretive
- Are spontaneous, not compulsive
- Are calm, not angry
- Are conversational, not silent
- Are expressive, not stilted
- Express empathy and understanding, not anger
- Apologize if they make a mistake, not blame you

Healing from the Impact of Verbal Abuse

Knowing the impact of verbal abuse and knowing that the real you can emerge from the limitations that verbal abuse instills are essential. As a partner or child of an abuser, you may experience many different symptoms. If you find that you are experiencing some of these symptoms from recent or past abuse, please know that healing is possible. You are one of millions of people throughout the world who react to the blows of verbal abuse in similar ways. You are not alone. You are not crazy.

Symptoms Chart

Verbal Abuse Creates
Emotional Pain

Verbal Abuse Creates
Mental Anguish

Sadness
Difficulty remembering what happened

Confusion
Feeling a setback after feeling fine

- [**download online Myth: A Very Short Introduction \(Very Short Introductions\) here**](#)
- [What's Wrong with Homosexuality? \(Philosophy in Action\) for free](#)
- [The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity online](#)
- [**download Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany \(Harvard Historical Studies\) here**](#)
- [**read The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory**](#)
- [read *The Nation* \(June 3, 2013\)](#)

- <http://yachtwebsitedemo.com/books/No-Drama-Discipline--The-Whole-Brain-Way-to-Calm-the-Chaos-and-Nurture-Your-Child-s-Developing-Mind.pdf>
- <http://omarnajmi.com/library/Capital--A-Critique-of-Political-Economy--Volume-3.pdf>
- <http://aircon.servicessingaporecompany.com/?lib/Loaded-Magazine--UK---June-2012-.pdf>
- <http://www.satilik-kopek.com/library/Advertising-Empire--Race-and-Visual-Culture-in-Imperial-Germany--Harvard-Historical-Studies-.pdf>
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