

Spring 2013

News from Allies in Change

Beliefs

In our last article, we described a variety of types of abusive behaviors: physical, verbal, psychological, property, economic, sexual, and collateral abuse. Each of these is hurtful towards others. However, what makes this more of a concern is when there is a pattern of these behaviors, most typically limited to one's romantic partner and children. When behaviors are truly a mistake they are implicitly limited because they are not the way we typically behave or want to behave. While mistakes need to be corrected and acknowledged, little more is usually needed to be done to keep them from happening again. When there is a pattern of behavior, on the other hand, there are usually underlying beliefs and presumptions that drive those behaviors, which is why they continue to occur. They aren't mistakes - they reflect choices a person is making. Therefore, it's not enough to stop the behaviors, the underlying beliefs need to be changed as well or similar behaviors are likely to continue even if a particular one is no longer done.

While there are a number of beliefs that drive abusive behaviors, the most common one is based on one's orientation towards power. In her book, *The Verbally Abusive Relationship*, Patricia Evans describes this orientation as *power over* and its non-abusive alternative as *personal power*. Power over is based on a hierarchical either/or perspective. Either you win or you lose, you are right or you are wrong, we do it my way or we do it your way. It's a one up/one down view where one person is on top and the other person is on the bottom. In this

view there is a presumption of scarcity - that there can only be one winner, one right answer, only one person can get their way. This is also referred to as a "zero sum" perspective - for every point up someone goes,



someone else needs to go down a point. It is similar to being on a see-saw - for one side to go up the other needs to go down. Because of this it is presumed that there will be a power struggle to determine who gets their way. This leads to an external focus - focusing on the other. In order for me to be right I need to prove you wrong. For me to win you need to lose. In order for me to get my way I need to keep you from getting your way. It is presumed that others are foes and competitors that we need to defend ourselves from. This naturally leads to a tendency to want to control others, particularly those close to us. This power over world view is a big part of everyday culture and society, particularly for men. Academically, excellence is defined by getting high grades and doing better than other students. This is why we tend to dislike the geeks who study more and pull up the curve while liking the slackers who pull the curve down and make it easier for the rest of us to get a good grade. Athletically, good means finishing first and beating other athletes. You're a winner or a loser. Professionally, it's a person's worth (literally and figuratively) being defined by where one is on the workplace power sheet and how much one makes compared with others.

In this worldview, there are also truths with a capital T. People who believe they know the Truth naturally try to get (make) others see the Truth, which all-too-often also leads to controlling behaviors, particularly with the people close to them.



Content developed and/or compiled by Allies in Change Counseling Center, its staff, and/or community partners.

Beliefs Continued

While it is easy to assume that people who have a power over view tend to put themselves in the one up position, they often feel they are in the one down position. They view others as taking advantage of benefiting at their expense, so they're quick to feel or become defensive, quick to play the victim. Whether you see yourself as one up or one down, you're still viewing the world from a power over perspective.

Patricia Evans calls this "Reality I" because this isn't just the way they see the world, they believe that everyone is this way. In their view, the whole world is this way. They are quick to presume (often falsely) that others are also in power-over mode. In fact, much of what abusive individuals do comes from a perspective of being "one down." In this reality, being one down means defending themselves from the attacks of others.



The alternative stance towards power is *Personal Power* (aka "Reality II"). Personal power is based on equality and mutual respect. It takes a both/and approach. It presumes that I can win *and* you can win, that I can be right *and* you can be right, that I can get my needs met *and* you can get your needs met. There is a presumption of abundance - that there can be many winners, many right answers, that all can get their needs met. The source of abundance is an internal focus. Power comes from within, not from the outside. Rather than measuring myself against others, I measure myself against myself. It's not what others do, but what I do. It's not how I measure up against you, but how I can measure up against myself. There is a greater focus on the process rather than on the outcome. When there is no longer an external focus, there is no longer a need to control others. Others are presumed to be allies and collaborators until proven otherwise.



Academically this means that I focus on my goals of learning and education. These are independent of what other students do so there's no need to control or focus on them. Athletically, the question is whether I performed well based on my own goals, not how I compared to someone else. The focus is on enjoying the competition and sport, regardless of what the ultimate outcome is. In power over, if eight runners run a race, there will be one winner and seven losers. In personal power, if eight sprinters race, all eight can have a great time even though only one crosses the finish line first. Professionally, the value of a job is based on the joy or benefit it produces rather than where the job falls in comparison to other people's jobs.

Here is a quote from Agnes Whistling-Elk that captures the differences between power over and personal power well: "Let me explain what I mean by power. That is a word whose meaning has become twisted in your world. When you say power, people become afraid. They think of the police and tax collectors and someone having power over them. That is not what I mean by power. Power, in my way, is the spirit of medicine energy that flows through all beings. Power is strength and the ability to see yourself through your own eyes and not through the eyes of another. It is being able to place a circle of power at your own feet and not take power from someone else's circle. True power is love."

In order for a relationship to be based on personal power, both people need to have that view. If only one of the two has a power over view, then the relationship is compromised. Many of the abusive individuals we see at our agency have a power over perspective. A significant piece of the work is to help them shift to a personal power perspective. While that is easier said than done and some never make the shift, when they do, it often heralds a significant decline if not cessation in their abusive behavior. For more information, check out *The Verbally Abusive Relationship* by Patricia Evans.

Upcoming Events

Advanced Techniques in Working with Abusive Men May 16th & 17th, 2013

Praised by attendees as "excellent" with "cutting edge information," this advanced domestic violence training finally offers "something other than the same old DV trainings." Register for all eight unique presentations today. Contact us for a brochure or to register.

Bike Back the Night and Take Back the Night April 25th, 2013

PWCL and PSU partnered for this annual event which promotes the right that every person deserves to feel safe on our streets. March or bike through the streets of downtown Portland and attend a community vigil to show your support. All people are welcome to join.

Women's Empowerment Project 14 Week Program

Sponsored by Clackamas County, WEP is specifically designed for women wanting to create healthy, violence-free lives. The 14 week class is free. Please contact Patricia Barrera at 503-655-8776.



Allies in Change Updates

Board of Directors

We are thrilled to introduce you to our three new board members. Renee PirkI, Ron Clark, and Susan Stoltenberg will bring their passion and experience to our new and growing board. Renee is a licensed psychologist with a private practice in Portland, Ron Clark is a minister with Agape Church, and Susan Stoltenberg is the Executive Director with Impact NW.

We're Hiring Facilitators

Interested in working for an organization that makes a difference? Do you want to work with people that share your values and enthusiasm for good work that truly helps people? We believe that helping others is more important than making a ton of money. Our dedicated staff believes in helping people make positive, lasting, and healthy change. Apply today!

Women's Recovery Group

We are accepting new clients in our Women's Recovery Group. This group focuses on providing support to women who are either currently in or have been in an abusive relationship. In this group, clients work towards recovery by learning about forms of abuse and controlling behaviors and beliefs, while learning how to set clear boundaries, develop effective communication skills, and practice positive self-care.

Donations can be made by mail or telephone. Please contact our office if you are interested in giving to Allies.

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ALLIES IN CHANGE'S MISSION

The mission of Allies in Change Counseling Center is to raise awareness of, educate about, and encourage the practice of healthy, loving and respectful relationships with oneself, one's partner and family, and the community. As our name reflects, Allies in Change intends to promote working with others as allies. We acknowledge that some cultural values such as traditional definitions of gender roles and power undermine a person's ability to be fully loving in relationships. We seek to address and change these values on individual, familial and societal levels. As an agency, we seek to practice these values ourselves in both our professional and personal lives.

CHANGES

Allies
in Change
Counseling Center

Spring 2013

Featured Article:

Beliefs

This article discusses a number of beliefs that drive abusive behaviors, including the most common belief systems, Power Over and Personal Power.

News:

Upcoming Events

Allies in Change's Advanced Techniques in Working with Abusive Men training, PWCL& PSU's Bike Back the Night, and the Women's Empowerment Project. Details inside.

Allies Updates

See exciting updates from Allies, including the introduction of our new board members, our women's recovery group, and information about employment opportunities at Allies.



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