**EDUCATIONAL SPEECH**

**FOR**

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Hello everyone. Thank you for allowing me a few moments of your time to speak on a subject, that, unless constant, glaring, intolerant attention is focused on... in order to disrupt its very existence, will not go away. Abuse of any kind is unacceptable. Today, we shine a light on domestic abuse. We are all hearing too many stories... whether from the news, within community circles, or as a “confidential” confession from a friend, colleague, or family member, that someone was treated in a manner, by a “loved one,” that may seem at first unremarkable, but actually is, abusive behavior.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, here are some disturbing statistics to think about:

* Throughout the United States, about twenty people per minute, on average, are subjected to physical abuse by an intimate partner.
* Approximately 30% of females and approximately 25% of males have been subjected to some form of domestic abuse in his or her lifetime.
* The Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence tells us that in 2016 alone, almost 106,000 incidents of domestic violence were reported to law enforcement.

Clearly, this is a category of offense that must be addressed and **stopped**. The time has come for us to speak openly and honestly about domestic abuse... abuse in and of itself is completely unacceptable in any form. It doesn’t discriminate... it doesn’t matter where one lives, how much money one has in the bank, how accomplished or “down and out” a person might be, abuse of any form is wrong and it must be called out and eradicated.

So many of us cannot imagine that abuse might happen to us or our loved ones or our friends or neighbors, but it can and it does. Excuses don’t make the offense go away. Rationalizing doesn’t help. Turning a blind eye certainly doesn’t work. What works is paying attention, knowing the types of abuse that might exist, and building up personal and community defenses to confront and diffuse potential acts.

Abuse, and in this case domestic abuse, can take many forms. It can start off as a seemingly incidental nudge, verbal put down, or awkward behavior... and then it can escalate. Some warning signs can be subtle, but each person must have the courage to trust his or her gut... if something seems off, don’t make excuses... pay heed and see if a pattern can be established.... and remember.. **YOU** will not change someone. Your love, as great and as sincere as it may be, will not stop the inevitable.

Some warning signs that may seem more subtle or benign at first usually aren’t... no one should be treated with disrespect... and if an internal alarm is set off, then something proactive must be done. Some of those red flag warnings can manifest as:

* Humiliation ... A simple dig... an embarrassing insult... a raised voice in public...
* Verbal insults... yes... we all can, at times, lose our tempers and say things we regret, but we also have to assess our situations and relationships. Does an insult or foul language...”go there??” Was that insult hurled to wear down self esteem and weaken the recipient’s personal will?
* Physical violence is **NEVER** acceptable. Not even a shove or a push. That can easily escalate to chokes, punches, and worse. **STOP** making excuses. This does not end well. Those inflicting physical abuse probably innately know they have initiated a process of breaking the will of their partner. That’s what they count on.
* Other forms of abuse may include controlling behavior, unpredictable mood swings, picking at faults, separating a partner from friends and family in order to establish alienation, denial of any blame or responsibility or recognition of abusive behavior by the abuser, and so on.

If any of these conditions appear or exist, those at the receiving end should seek outside support and guidance as soon as possible... **BEFORE** law enforcement interventions are needed.

The only way we will put an end to domestic abuse is with awareness... discussions... like this one... education... practical applications and actions to have handy as needed. We must educate ourselves to the warning signs, we must watch out for our relatives and friends and call out any awkward or alarming behavior or observations, we should have “Plan B” in place... whatever that is in our communities... organizations, counselors, checklists, safe houses, precautionary and preventative measures and systems to access. We should familiarize ourselves with techniques to “tap out” trauma... also known as “Thought Field Therapy,” a technique that uses forms of acupressure to reduce feelings of anger, guilt, rage, stress, and embarrassment that often act to immobilize those at the effect of domestic abuse.

There is no rationalization for domestic abuse. It is **NEVER** acceptable to denigrate or demean another person... **ESPECIALLY** one considered to be a loved one. It is up to all of us, as a community, to work towards the well being of each of our families, friends, neighbors and associates. We all must work together and strive for **ZERO** tolerance. Every one of us, as human beings, has earned the right to maintain a dignified existence.

Thank you all.