

HARRIS LAW & CO.

Protecting Families & Businesses Through All of Life's Journeys

BUZZ WORDS: ABUSE & NARCISSISM IN DIVORCE & CUSTODY CASES

One of my first contentious divorce cases dealt with a gentleman we will call Mr. Wonderful. He held a respectable position in the government while his wife, the same age as myself, left a position after college to have their child and stay at home looking after her. Other than my personal experiences with abusive narcissists, this was my first professional encounter. Unfortunately, it was far from my last.

I quickly realized that narcissism and abuse are “buzz words” and are taken lightly by many Judges until extensively proven in Court. Further, how you prove these abuses also differs from other types of evidence. I knew I had to approach these issues differently to fight for my clients and to get the Court to understand that abuse is more than a “buzz word”. I grew to realize that Judges need to know the specific type of abuse my client is suffering from, and specific tests need to be requested in a custody evaluation that will illustrate those abuses and the type of violence patterns the aggressor participates in. Unfortunately, abuse is not that uncommon in divorce and custody cases. However, you need a skilled advocate who understands the differences in your case when abuse is present to help ensure your rights are protected. So where do you start? Understanding abuse and the different types is key. Let's explore the terminology.

The Basics: Generally, abuse is defined as the mistreatment or improper use of someone or something. This mistreatment can come in many different varieties, forms, and combinations. The common denominators of this mistreatment and misuse is usually power and control.



The different (major) types of abuse are physical, sexual, financial, emotional, stalking, and digital.

Physical: Physical abuse is any unwanted or intentional contact with you or something close to your body. Physical abuse can include: scratching, punching, biting, strangling, kicking, throwing items at you, pulling hair, pushing/pulling, grabbing your clothes, using any form of a weapon, forced sex, grabbing your face or body to force you to look at them, or grabbing you or physically preventing you from your attempt to leave. Not all physical abuse causes pain or leaves a bruise, but all physical abuse is unhealthy.

Is Your Case Being Handled Properly?

Your attorney should know the types of abuse and how to handle it in Court. Unfortunately, Judges hear claims of abuse every day, so you need an attorney who is able to identify the different types of abuse you're going through as well as how to put those into tangible evidence so the Court cannot turn a blind eye. We are on your team every step of the way, helping guide you through the process.

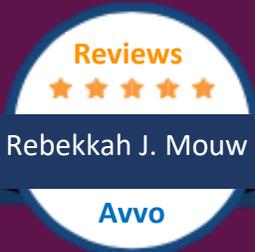


INFORM.
EDUCATE.
EMPOWER.



Rebekkah J. Mouw
is a skilled advocate
on our Family Law
Team.

Our Passion Shows!



Thank you for
helping us better
serve our
community by
referring us to your
friends & family.

Check out our
website for other
helpful articles,
videos, & seminar
opportunities.

Sexual: Sexual abuse seems obvious, but is often dismissed without adequate evidence, especially if it is between former partners in a relationship. It refers to circumstances where behavior of one impacts a person’s ability to control their sexual activity or the circumstances in which sexual activity occurs including oral sex, rape, or restricting access to birth control.

Financial: Financial abuse can be very subtle and is defined by the usage of money, accounts, and control to determine how you are to spend money and whether or not you are able to earn it. This can be seen when you’re given an allowance and your purchases are monitored, taking your paychecks and not allowing you access to the money, keeping you from shared bank accounts and records, preventing you from going to work and/or being successful at work, preventing you from having a job, and not applying the same financial rules to themselves as they apply to you.

Emotional/Verbal: Emotional and Verbal Abuse is defined by non-physical behaviors used to psychologically harm and control the victim. Specific events are isolating you from friends and family, telling you what to do and wear, controlling and monitoring social media and phone communications, jealous and accusatory behavior, threatening to have your children taken from you, threatening to commit suicide if you do not do what they want, and generally gaslighting to confuse and manipulate.

Stalking: Stalking comes in the form of being repeatedly watched, followed, or contacted by someone whom you’ve told repeatedly to stop. This can be in the form of constantly calling and hanging up, leaving unwanted gifts, using digital platforms to monitor you, spreading harmful rumors, or show up or contact your work. This may escalate to damage of property, reputation, and your person.

Digital: Digital dating abuse is the use of technologies (like texting, social media, and websites) to harass, stalk, embarrass, or intimidate a partner. This also encompasses emotional, verbal, and stalking but is done through a digital and usually public platform. Digital abuse comes in forms social media control, use of technology, spyware, or other people to monitor you, or even submitting videos to pornography sites against your consent.

Mr. or Mrs. Wonderful should no longer be able to control and harm you. If you need help or even someone to speak to about the potential abuse in your life, give us a call at 605-777-1772. We are on your team every step of the way and help guide you through your legal options.

**This article is only intended to give general information and not specific legal advice. Consult with an attorney on your situation before taking any legal action.*