

# HARRIS LAW & CO.

Protecting Families & Businesses Through All of Life's Journeys

## Buzz Words:

### Are You Stuck in a Pattern of Abuse?

In a previous article, we outlined the different types of abuse and how to distinguish these from just alleging abuse as a general statement so you can clearly distinguish your abuse history to the Judge. After all, the Judge is the single person that is deciding the fate of your family's life.

Now that you are able to articulate the different *types* of abuse, the next step is to determine what pattern you may be stuck in with Mr. or Mrs. Wonderful. This step is important if you are on the fence about whether to either consent to or request an expert forensic or custody evaluator in your case.

As explained more in-depth in our next Buzz Word Article, expert witnesses are professionals that are sought in order to frame your experiences of domestic violence in a light that neither you nor your attorney is able to do through our lawyer-ly rules of evidence and procedure.

These individuals, Forensic Evaluators and Custody Evaluators, are expert witnesses employed by one or both parties to conduct a psychological and scientific review into the depths of your personal life. In the next article, we will review what custody evaluators do, the different types, and what you should expect. In this article, we are looking at a small, but key, portion of what your evaluator should analyze.



More importantly, we are looking at categories that your attorney should be familiar with if there is any hope of you having the representation you truly need (if neither your evaluator nor your attorney are familiar with patterns of relationship abuse and it is a factor in your case—RUN). Knowing the types of violence patterns gives you a feeling of control and allows you to make a step in the healthier direction. It also gives you an edge in the courtroom.

#### **Types of Violence in Relationships**

There are three categories of relationship violence: (1) Situation Instigated Violence, (2) Situational Couple Violence, and (3) Coercive-Controlling Violence.

### Can I Use the Buzz Word Tools to Disprove Abuse?

Yes! The tools the Buzz Word series outline are just as useful for those individuals seeking to disprove false allegations of abuse. The use of these allegations as a weapon instead of as a true part of an experience is its own form of abuse and the sign of an abuse of power. We represent all victims of abuse, including those wrongly accused of it.

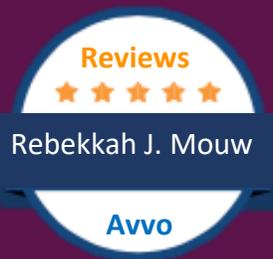


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**Rebekkah J. Mouw  
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opportunities.

**Situation-Instigated Violence:** In the first category, situation-instigated violence represents a couple that has had no history of any type of violence, but violence occurs at the time of separation. This category also means there has not been a history of using intimidation, coercion, or any type of controlling behavior. People’s reaction to change and stress is not always healthy for you, for them, or for your children. There are tools your attorney can discuss with you to guide you through these situations both in the courtroom and out of it.

**Situational Couple Violence:** Also called "common couple violence," is when violence occurs in response to disagreements in specific situations and often (but not always) the nature of the violence is less severe than in coercive-controlling violence. In situational couple violence, neither partner is actually fearful of the other. Partners who engage in situational couple violence both admit their ways of dealing with conflict are inappropriate and the violence *usually* does not increase over time. Statistically, the violence is initiated by both partners, although women incur higher rates of injury.

**Coercive-Controlling Violence:** Coercive-controlling violence is the most extreme of the three categories and the most long-term. The aggressor habitually will exhibit the use of force to persuade the partner to do something through physical means, intimidation, abuse of power, control, and emotional abuse. Victims of this type of violence often live in constant fear and perpetrators are prone to victim-blaming and minimizing, justifying, and/or denying their actions. Coercive-controlling violence does include the use of abusive tactics that are not physically violent but are consistently controlling and manipulative. The aggressor’s need to control and manipulate may be a sign of jealousy, emotional dependency, or a myriad of underlying personality disorders. Statistically, this category has predominately male aggressors.

**What Now?**

Remember, abuse at its simplest definition boils down to two things: control and manipulation. You may read the categories above and think you fall into one, and then later start to see or remember patterns that place you in another. Maybe what you’re experiencing does not appear to fall in there at all, maybe it started as one and has escalated in a pattern not defined explicitly above. That is okay. What is *not* okay is the continued cycle of abuse without appropriate legal recourse.

Whether you are in a pattern of abuse or wrongly accused of it, the time to start feeling like you’re in control of yourself and your family’s well-being is now. Ready to proceed? Let’s Chat. Call 605-777-1772. We are here to be by your side as you take control of your situation.

*\*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.*