

News Release

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WHEN YOU FEEL LIKE YOU DON'T MATTER

(Tampa, Florida January, 2015). Did you experience or do you remember someone else in grade school not being part of the “in group?” Or, were you a part of a particular group for a while and then suddenly found yourself on the outside? In high school were you the smart kid and were made fun of because you received good grades while it seemed like the “jocks” or those who belonged to other groups fit in? Were you the one that didn’t look like a model or didn’t feel as attractive as someone else? Were you picked on because you were different for any reason? Those experiences may have occurred a long time ago but the memories can still exist and even if they remain below the surface, they can still impact your thoughts and behaviors regardless of your age or success or the changes you have made. An example might be that because you never or rarely felt like you fit in with the “popular” kids or “popular” groups that today you find yourself not taking a chance on joining a particular group or activity or even trying for a certain work position. You might even find yourself “settling” for a particular relationship because you don’t think you can “do any better.” Or you might already be in an unhealthy relationship but won’t stand up for yourself or exit the relationship out of fear that “no one will want” you. What this comes down to is that our life experiences become imprinted in our minds and hearts.

Let’s face it – rejection hurts. Abandonment hurts. Finding yourself “at the end of the list” in a relationship hurts. Finding that everything and everyone matters more than you hurts. More and more we read or view in the media how hurtful and how much of an impact such rejection has not only on young people but on people of many ages. The impact of social exclusion of any kind to any degree can range from some temporary upset to a person taking their own life. We have seen that multiple times over recent years when individuals have even made and posted personal videos in which they talked about the impact of feeling like they didn’t matter. There have been situations where their hurt has turned to violence. Feeling like you don’t count hurts at many levels including physical and emotional upset and even impacts how we think and relate to others. Remember the saying: “sticks and stones can break my bones but names will never hurt me?” We could probably also say that “sticks and stones can break my bones but rejection will never hurt me.” The problem is that both statements are

inaccurate and in both situations calling someone names or being rejected does hurt as much as physically being hurt.

Belonging is a critical part of human existence. Imagine waking up in the morning and feeling unloved, unwanted or not needed. Or imagine trying so hard to develop a friendship and relationship to eventually find that you are only “wanted” for a service you provide or because you are needed for something you can provide. It hurts. It also results in a flood of experiencing depression or anxiety or anger or even jealousy. What can then happen is that a person will withdraw and no longer try thus completing a circle of exclusion. Children often see a reflection of themselves due to how they experience how others see them or treat them. And that reflection often stays with them.

Imagine a person who has been told that they are not smart so they never try to further their education because they have incorporated the feedback into their own self-belief. Sometimes they will get positive feedback along the way but may not believe it. And often a person is not consciously even aware of why they won't try – or will try so hard it is exhausting. What can you do if you are yourself feeling this way or you have a child or a teen who feels this way? Reach out for help.

Remember that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit available to all employees and dependents of companies contracted with Wood & Associates for providing confidential free professional assistance 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Remember that you or a dependent may contact the EAP regarding any concern that you might have – you don't have to wait until a problem becomes big to seek help. Above all, keep in mind that concerns develop over time but the way you address them can be changed. And if you are concerned about the impact life challenges are having on your well-being due to experiencing rejection or needing to overcome prior experiences, all you need to do is call EAP. It is that simple. We will help you cope, find assistance, and guide you down the path to effectively deal with painful life experiences whether personal or professional. Keep in mind that while we have all had painful negative experiences to some extent, we can reframe them and reduce their impact on our lives. All you need to do is call your EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of counselors. You can explore in a confidential setting the concerns that you have and receive assistance to determine what is meaningful to you and those you love. Your EAP can help you find a new path so that change is managed, relationships are healed, support systems are developed, and expectations are kept realistic.

What can you do if you if you recognize yourself or a loved one in the above information? Call you EAP. Sometimes dealing with letting go of old patterns can feel overwhelming because we've been responding in the same old way over and over. So if you are struggling with the question of what you need to change or want to change and need some help in accomplishing your goal, help is a phone call away. Your EAP representative will help you find the best solution for your

particular situation. Also your EAP is a tool for personal and professional growth. You can call your EAP at (813) 870-0392 or (800) 342-4670.

About Wood & Associates

Wood & Associates is an Employee Assistance Program and behavioral health consulting firm that helps employers maintain productivity, safety and behavioral health in the workplace. Wood & Associates is a pioneer in the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) industry and has served employers and employees in the greater Tampa Bay area and nationwide since 1982. The firm's diverse group of clients includes a number of major employers who also contract for its mental health and substance abuse services.

Gary L. Wood, Psy.D., founder of the Wood & Associates consulting practice, is a pioneer in the field of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since 1979, his practice has centered on providing solutions to employee and organizational problems. Wood is a licensed clinical psychologist, a member of the National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and a graduate of Rutgers University, West Georgia College and Mercer University.

Patricia N. Alexander earned a Ph.D. in mental health counseling at the University of Florida. Trained in critical incident stress management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, she is a Florida Licensed Mental Health Counselor and nationally certified counselor. Through her work experience she has addressed all types of critical incident situations, including explosions, multiple homicides, suicides, line-of-duty deaths, serious accidents and robberies. Alexander conducts training on stress management for law enforcement and businesses, and has developed peer support programs for law enforcement and industry. Alexander is an educator and consultant on a wide variety of behavioral health concerns.