HEALTHY VENTING AND EMOTIONAL DUMPING

WOUNDED WARRIOR PROJECT®

Life can be full of challenges – frustrations out on the road with other drivers, or the many things on the news that feel like they are out of our control, yet affect how we feel. We all have the need to vent sometimes. While talking with a friend, a loved one, or a WWP Talk specialist in the WWP Talk program during supportive listening calls, this can be an opportunity to offload what has been building up, with a trusted person. There are two forms this could take: healthy venting or the less-productive emotional dumping.

Venting for 10 minutes could allow us to just get off our chest what has been building up. It gets the frustrations out of the way before we can focus on quality time or productive conversation related to progress or accountability with established goals. Here are some things to keep in mind for healthy venting. When engaging in healthy venting, you are aware of the other person's emotional state and are talking about a specific issue in a back-and-forth conversation. The person sharing is receptive to input and feedback, and has an openness to solutions. A person who is engaged in healthy venting is able to pay attention to social cues and the other person's reactions and feelings. Venting tends to be limited in both the scope of what is being shared and the time spent sharing.

There is a line that can be crossed where healthy venting can become emotional dumping. Sometimes we can be so on edge and tightly wound while dealing with difficult and frustrating things outside of our control, that, all of a sudden, the metaphorical dam breaks, and there is no longer a two-way conversation. The person engaged in emotional dumping could carry the conversation all on their own without any input or comments from the person they are talking to. Dumping is an unhealthy behavior that tends to involve long, uninterrupted monologues about at least one stressful, painful, or traumatic experience a person has had. Disclosure is often sudden, and it can involve oversharing with long-winded rants, happening in large chunks over short periods of time. The person who is engaged in emotional dumping is often resistant to input or feedback, or may shoot down solutions. Social cues are missed, or the feelings of the listener are ignored. Productive, two-way dialogue that could lead to a productive conclusion of some sort is no longer possible.

For the person engaging in emotional dumping, it can feel like there is a tornado of thoughts and emotions swirling around in their mind and chest; having the need to calm that storm is valid and part of being human. In a time like this, often it can be best to pour it out onto paper through journaling, which really is an effective way of getting everything out for processing and calming that storm within. Then, when you have quality time with a friend, a loved one, or a WWP Talk specialist, conversation can be more focused, with two-way dialogue, and more productive.

If you would like some additional support or information, Wounded Warrior Project®(WWP) has employees who are knowledgeable and specialized in teaching emotional regulation and communication skills. You may also find it helpful to work with one of us in our WWP Talk program. For questions about the WWP Talk program, and for more information, please call the WWP Resource Center, at 888.997.2586.