



THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

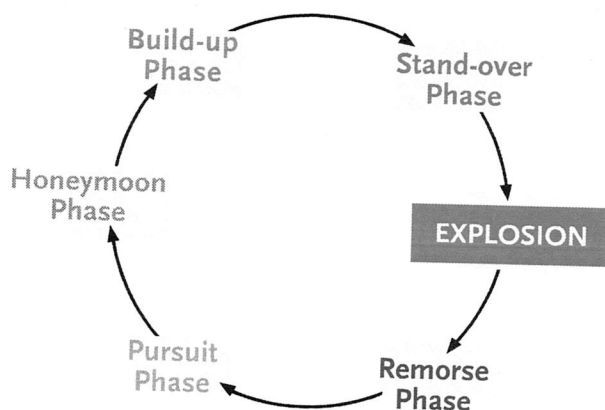
The theory that domestic violence occurs in a cycle was developed in 1979 by Lenore Walker as a result of a study conducted in the United States.

The **cycle of violence** theory explains how and why the behaviour of a person who commits domestic and family violence may change so dramatically over time.

The **cycle of violence** theory also provides an understanding to why the person affected by domestic and family violence continues to face a violent situation.

The cycle goes through a number of stages.

However, it is acknowledged that it is **not the same for everyone** and some people may experience only some stages of the cycle (or not relate to it at all).



Source: Dr Lenore Walker, 1979, USA

The build-up phase

This phase may begin with normal relations between the people in the relationship, but involves escalating tension marked by increased verbal, emotional or financial abuse.

In non-violent relationships these issues can normally be resolved between the people in the relationship.

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The stand over phase

This phase can be extremely frightening for people affected by domestic and family violence.

The behaviour of the person who uses violence in relationships escalates to the point that a release of tension is inevitable.

The person affected may feel that they are 'walking on egg shells' and fear that anything they do will cause the situation to deteriorate further.

Explosion

The explosion stage marks the peak of violence in the relationship. It is the height of abuse by the person who uses violence to control and have power over others.

The person who commits domestic and family violence experiences a release of tension during an explosion phase, which may become addictive. They may be unable to deal with their anger any other way.

The remorse phase

At the remorse stage, the person who uses domestic and family violence in their relationship feels ashamed of their behaviour.

They retreat and become withdrawn from the relationship.

They try and justify their actions to themselves and to others, unaware they are actually addicted to the release they have just experienced.

The pursuit phase

At this stage, the person who uses domestic and family violence in relationships promises to the other person affected, never to be violent again.

They may try to make up for their past behaviour during this period and say that other factors have caused them to be violent, for example, work stress, drugs, or alcohol.

The violent offender may purchase gifts, and give the person affected attention.

Also, the violent offender may go through a dramatic personality change.

The person affected by the violence will feel hurt, but possibly relieved that the violence is over.

The honeymoon phase

During the honeymoon phase of the **cycle of violence**, both people in the relationship may be in denial as to how bad the abuse and violence was.

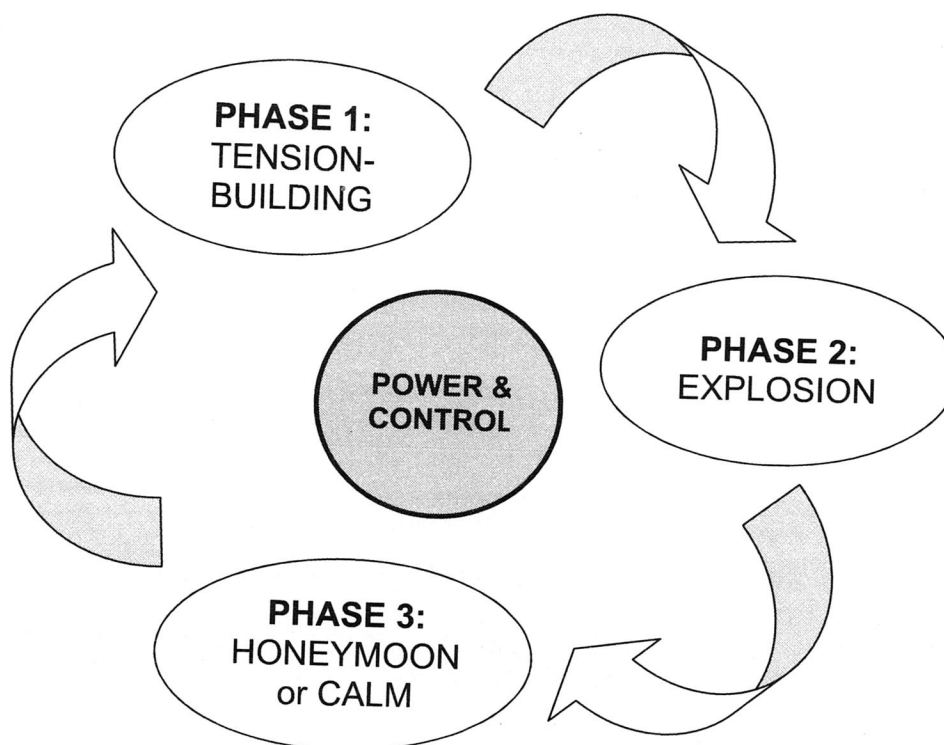
Both people do not want the relationship to end, so are happy to ignore the possibility that the violence could occur again.

After some time, this stage will fade and the cycle may begin again.



The Cycle of Violence

Abusive relationships generally follow a three-phase cycle of violence. Without intervention, the violence tends to escalate in both frequency and severity over time.



Phase 1: Tension Building

- The abusive partner becomes increasingly irritable and angry and may engage in "minor" abusive behavior (slapping, verbal, and/or psychological abuse).
- The abused partner becomes increasingly fearful and may try to placate the abuser to defuse the situation and prevent an explosion
- The victim may make excuses for the tension, blame her/himself, and excuse or minimize the batterer's violence.
- The victim may withdraw emotionally to escape the increasing stress.
- The victim may seek help from law enforcement only to be told nothing can be done until violence occurs.

Phase 2: Explosion / Acute Battering Incident

- The acute battering incident is an explosion of physical, sexual, or verbal abusive behavior.
- The explosion is generally the shortest phase and can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few days.
- This phase can lead to serious injury or death.
- The victim will generally do whatever s/he feels is necessary to survive, which may or may not involve seeking help from family or friends or from law enforcement.

Phase 3: Calm Period or "Honeymoon"

- The environment becomes tranquil and even pleasant.
- The batterer apologizes and promises to change. This may involve gifts, promises to seek help, reminders of the good times in the relationship, etc.
- The victim may see this side of the batterer as who they "really" are and see the violence as an aberration.
- This is usually the longest phase, although it generally gets progressively shorter over time.
- This is often the time when the victim seeks help, because there is a window of calm and safety.

The Cycle of Violence

Explosion

- Danger to Others
- Physical Violence
- Verbal Violence
- Serious Threats

Escalating Violence

- Poor communication
- Being rigid
- Feeling threatened
- Partner emotionally too distant or too close

Explosion

What's going on here?

Frustration, Hurt, Anger, Vengeance

- * Yell / Scream
- * Throw things
- * Foul language
- * Bring up past to "control" / hurt / demean
- * Want "respect" through "control"
- * Point the finger
- * "In" Partners face

Remorse

- Express feelings of remorse, guilt helplessness
- Not accept responsibility Say "I lost control"
- May / May not be forgiving
- May seek assistance (More likely to be in touch)

Remorse

What's going on here?

- "I haven't deserved this"
- Self-justification
- Minimization
- Trying to "buy" trust
- Manipulative

Pursuit Phase

- Make promises
- Buy gifts

Build Up

What's going on here?

- Dominance
- Controlling
- Resentment
- Frustration
- Annoyed
- Aggravated
- Projecting
- Anticipating
- Assuming

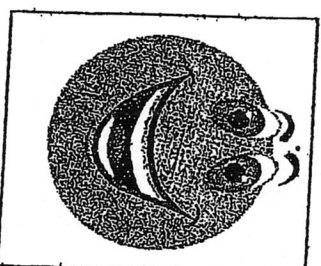
Honeymoon Phase

- Partner has forgiven
- Physical closeness with partner
- Improved Communication
- Needs reassurance
- More compliant to partner



Stand Over

- Control
- Fear



Walking On
Eggshells

Cycle can take
days, weeks or
minutes!