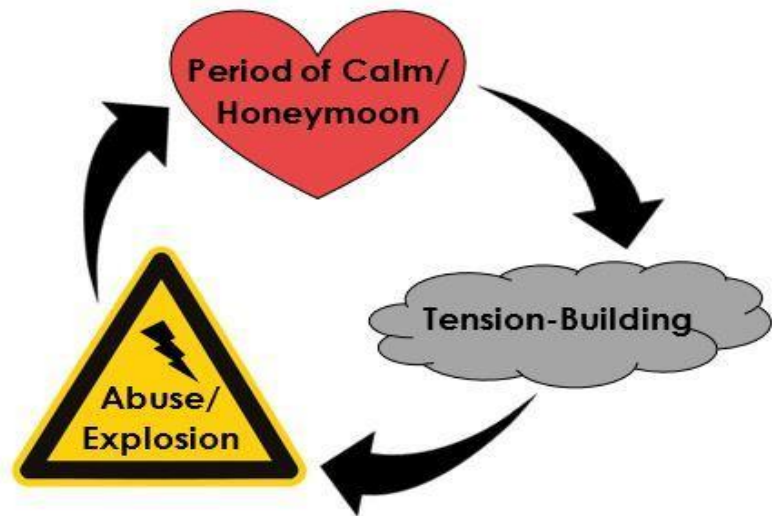


Cycle Of Abuse

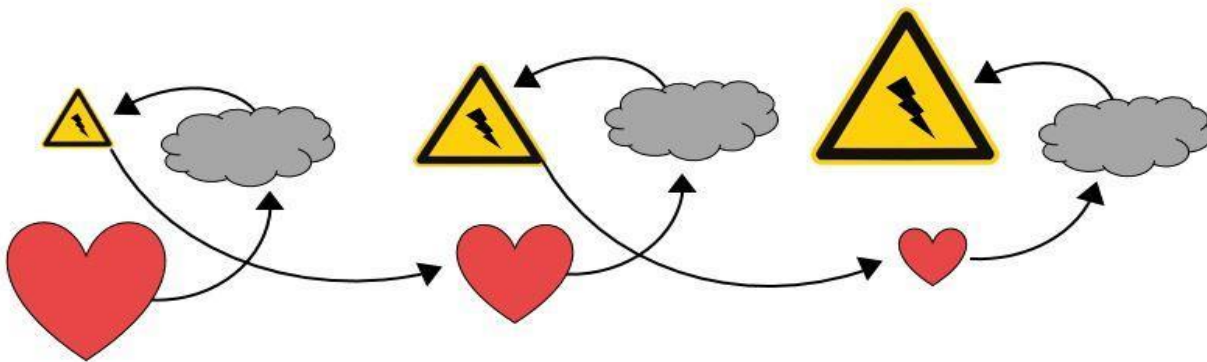
Most abusive relationships don't start out that way. In fact, those who use abusive behaviors will often attract their partners by purposefully displaying extreme kindness and over-the-top gestures of affection in the early stages of their relationships. This initial dating period is often what keeps those experiencing abuse from leaving the relationship. They remember how good things once were and are hopeful they will return that way.

Though not all abusive relationships will fit this pattern, the diagram below represents the recurring cycle of behavior that's frequently seen in abusive relationships. Within the cycle, the person using abusive behavior displays affectionate, remorseful and calm behaviors in-between periods of tension that grow into physical, sexual or emotional abuse. This can sometimes cause the survivor to focus the majority of their attention on avoiding conflict and tension causing situations, so much so that they can lose focus of their own needs.



The Cycle Over Time

The cycle is fluid and constant, but each couple's situation is unique and the length of each phase can change. Over time, abusive incidents tend to become more severe and occur more frequently, and a couple may go through the entire cycle several times a day. Additionally, as time goes on, the honeymoon stage will sometimes disappear altogether. The diagram below represents the honeymoon stage getting shorter and the abusive behavior getting worse.



WARNING SIGNS

The following are warning signs that a relationship may become abusive. They are often seen when a couple first begins dating, before the relationship becomes more committed. Independently, these may not be strong indicators. However, when several of these occur in combination, they are more predictive that the relationship will become abusive in the future.

- **Controlling behaviors:** Telling partner how to style hair, what to wear, or always deciding where to go/what to do on dates; accompanying partner to appointments; getting inappropriately angry if partner is late or unavailable.
- **Cruelty to animals:** Punishing animals harshly and being insensitive to their suffering.
- **Cruelty to children:** having unrealistic expectations of children’s capabilities; bullying or teasing children until they cry.
- **Disrespect:** Speaking disrespectfully to partner; being rude to waiters and waitresses; expressing racist or sexist attitudes; being outwardly disrespectful to others of different social background, religion, race, or disability.
- **Double-standards:** Having different set of rules and expectations for partner and self.
- **History of violent behavior:** Having a history of violence in past relationships is predictive of violence in future relationships. Many, but not all, abusers have been victims of domestic abuse in their families when growing up.
- **Isolation:** Monopolizing partner’s time; sabotaging partner’s relationships with family and friends; calling or texting frequently to check up on partner.
- **Impulsivity and mood swings:** Not thinking through the consequences of actions; having explosive mood swings; acting like “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde;” ranting and raving over minor things.



Cycle Of Abuse

- **Jealousy:** Demonstrating excessive possessiveness; expressing ownership of partner; dropping by unexpectedly; having friends “keep an eye” on partner; accusing partner of flirting with others; making excuses for jealous behavior by saying it is out of love.
- **Minimization and blaming:** Avoiding taking responsibility for actions; blaming others for problems and feelings; denying or minimizing past history of abuse or violence.
- **Quick involvement:** Pushing a partner to commit to a serious relationship very quickly; wanting partner to move in, get married, or have children in a short period of time or before they are ready.
- **Threats of violence:** Saying things like, “I’ll kill myself if you leave me,” or dismissing threats with comments like, “I was just joking,” or “I really didn’t mean it.”
- **Unrealistic expectations:** Expecting partner to be perfect and meet all of their needs; expecting partner to conform to rigid gender roles; demanding that their needs to come before partner’s needs.
- **Use of force or coercion during sex:** Guilt-tripping partner into having sex; showing little concern over whether partner wants or does not want sex.