

The Cycle of Dating Abuse

Tension Building Phase

Incidents begin to occur such as criticizing, interrogating and accusing the victim. Victim often finds herself "walking on eggshells" trying to keep the peace. She may believe it's her fault the abuser is upset. Victim tries to calm, appease, and please the abuser to avoid escalation and get the relationship back to the "happy" state she experienced when they first began dating.

Honeymoon Phase

Abuser may shower victim with gifts and/or positive attention. Both express love for and dependency on the other. No abuse is taking place and both act as though it has never happened. Victim allows herself to hope abuse is really over this time and they will finally be happy again like they were in the beginning.

Explosive Phase

Tension will be released in various ways, depending on the history of the relationship. Typically, this phase becomes more extreme as it repeats. The abuser will hurl insults and accusations, make threats, break things and become physically or sexually aggressive, as well. Victim may suffer from physical injury and police may be called. This stage is where the victim may decide she has had enough and threaten to leave the relationship.

Reconciliation Phase

The abuser realizes he may lose his partner or control over them and apologizes, tries to convince the victim that abuse won't happen again. Abuser may actually blame the victim for their behavior and minimize the abuse. Victim is still in shock over events in the Explosive phase and wishes things could just be good again, which leaves her vulnerable to accepting apologies, promises, declarations of love and pleas for reconciliation or forgiveness.