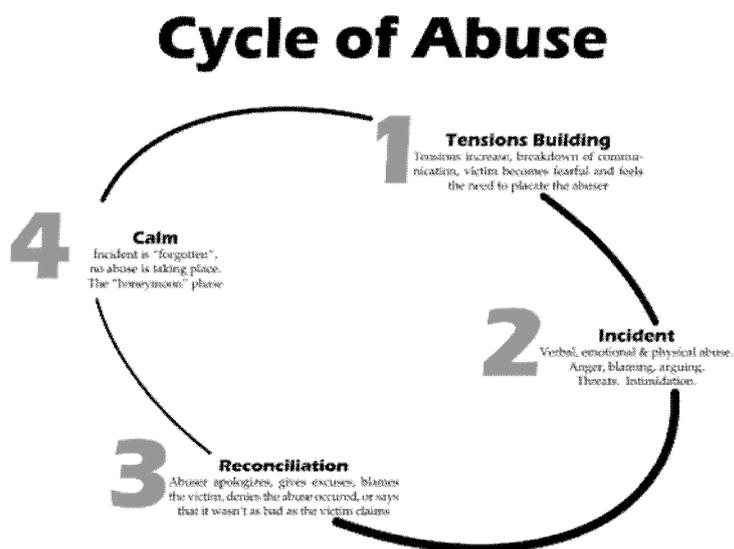


Cycle of abuse

This shows the cycle of violence within one person's pattern of abuse. For a broader pattern of violence and intergenerational cycle of violence, see [Cycle of violence](#).



The four phases of the Cycle of Abuse

The **cycle of abuse** is a [social cycle theory](#) developed in 1979 by [Lenore E. Walker](#) to explain patterns of behavior in an abusive relationship.

The Cycle of Domestic Violence

In 1979, psychologist Lenore Walker found that many violent relationships follow a common pattern or cycle. The entire cycle may happen in one day or it may take weeks or months. It is different for every relationship and not all relationships follow the cycle—many report a constant stage of siege with little relief.

This cycle has three parts:

1. **Tension building phase**—Tension builds over common domestic issues like money, children or jobs. Verbal abuse begins. The victim tries to control the situation by pleasing the abuser, giving in or avoiding the abuse. None of these will stop the violence. Eventually, the tension reaches a boiling point and physical abuse begins.
2. **Acute battering episode**—When the tension peaks, the physical violence begins. It is usually triggered by the presence of an external event or by the abuser's emotional state—but not by the victim's behavior. This means the start of the battering episode is unpredictable and beyond the victim's control. However, some experts believe that in some cases victims may unconsciously provoke the abuse so they can release the tension, and move on to the honeymoon phase.
3. **The honeymoon phase**—First, the abuser is ashamed of his behavior. He expresses remorse, tries to minimize the abuse and might even blame it on the partner. He may then exhibit loving, kind behavior followed by apologies, generosity and helpfulness. He will genuinely attempt to convince the partner that the abuse will not happen again. This loving and contrite behavior strengthens the bond between the partners and will probably convince the victim, once again, that leaving the relationship is not necessary.

This cycle continues over and over, and may help explain why victims stay in abusive relationships. The abuse may be terrible, but the promises and generosity of the honeymoon phase give the victim the false belief that everything will be all right.

Violence Wheel

The chart below is a way of looking at the behaviors abusers use to get and keep control in their relationships. Battering is a choice. It is used to gain power and control over another person. Physical abuse is only one part of a system of abusive behaviors.

Abuse is never a one time event.

This chart uses the wheel to show the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. Each part shows a way to control or gain power.



**What do counselors, mediators, socialworkers need
to know to meet the victim's need?**

A Check-List

- What do I know from the file? How have I / my agency been involved into the case? What is my/our role? What is my directions, what is my aim?
- What do I know already about the victim before I meet her/him?
- When was the incident? How long ago the crime has been taken place? What has happened in the meantime?
- Who reported the crime to the police? And how close to the incident?
- What is my responsibility as a professional?
- Is the victim injured, physically and/or mentally? Sexual abuse?
- Conflict, Crisis or Trauma? How deep is the injury?
- What do I know about flash-backs? Would I be able to notice early symptoms?
- Who is the perpetrator? Does the victim know him/her? Is it a close person, the husband? Or is it a complete stranger to the victim? Is there still a relationship between victim and perpetrator? Is there a possibility to meet accidentally the perpetrator?
- Is the victim interested in meeting the perpetrator or not? And for which reasons? What is the expectation of the victim?
- Am I familiar with the circle of violence in cases of domestic violence?
- Gender specific differences?
- Is there a power imbalance between victim and perpetrator?
- What is my opinion to ethic topics: Neutrality versus Partiality? Confidentiality versus What is in the interest of the victim?
- Am I aware about my points of vulnerability? Do I know something about Secondary Traumatic Stress Disorder?
- Cooperation with Victim Support Organizations? Is there a program for it in my organization?
- Resources . Am I informed about resources for the client, for me?

Needs of Victims

- **To be taken seriously**
- **Safety** . Protection from perpetrators und revictimization
- **Information** . verbal and written information about justice system
- **Access** - Ability to participate in the Justice system process
- **Support** . enable participation in justice processes, recovery from trauma, repair of harm
- **Continuity** . continuity of support through all stages of the justice process and trauma recovery
- **Voice** . Empowerment