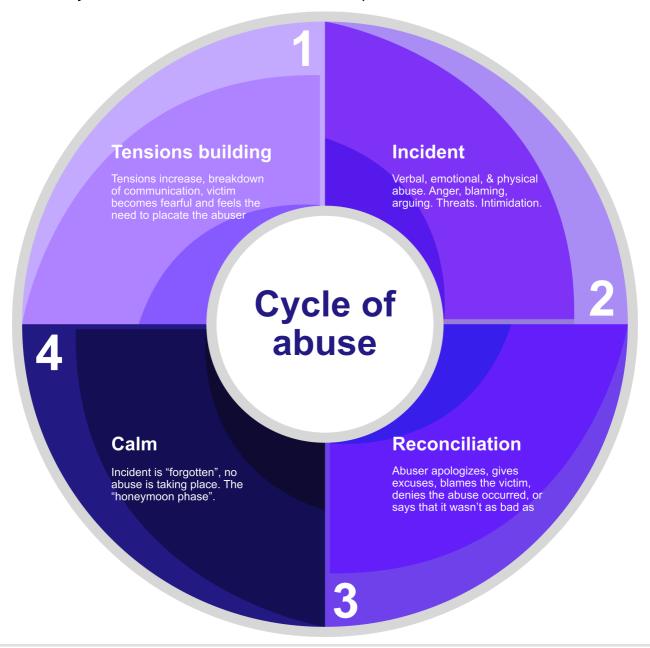
# Cycle of Abuse Wheel

### Introduction

The cycle of abuse, a concept developed by psychologist Lenore E. Walker, describes the recurring pattern of behavior often seen in abusive relationships. This cycle can manifest over varying time frames, from days to months, and consists of four distinct phases.



# 4 phases of abuse

## Tension building phase

During this initial phase, tension escalates due to common domestic issues such as financial stress, parenting conflicts, or other relational challenges. The abuser may exhibit increasing irritability and hostility, while the victim often feels as though they are "walking on eggshells," attempting to appease the abuser to avoid conflict. Verbal abuse may begin during this stage, but physical violence has not yet occurred.

#### Acute battering episode

This phase represents the peak of tension where physical violence erupts. The incident can be triggered by external stressors or the abuser's emotional state rather than any direct action of the victim. The violence is often sudden and unpredictable, leaving the victim feeling helpless and trapped.

#### **Reconciliation phase**

Following an incident of violence, the abuser may express remorse and attempt to make amends through affectionate behavior, apologies, and promises that it will not happen again. This phase can create a false sense of security for the victim, who may believe that the relationship is improving and that leaving is unnecessary.

#### The calm

In this stage, the relationship appears to stabilize as tensions subside. The abuser may engage in behaviors that seem loving and caring, further convincing the victim that the abuse is a thing of the past. However, this calm is often temporary and leads back into the tension building phase as underlying issues remain unresolved.

### **Additional notes**

# References

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