



Cycle of Violence



A common question many people have is “why would anyone get involved or stay with an abuser?” The simple answer is that abusive individuals don’t start out being abusive. In the beginning, the abuser is charming, sweet, and kind. At some point, the courtship period ends, and the violence begins.

The cycle of violence is graphically depicted above. As you can see, tension builds up. Eventually, there is an event that triggers an explosive outburst of violence, which may be emotional, verbal, physical, or sexual abuse. Soon after that outburst, the abuser becomes remorseful, apologizing and promising that the abuse will “never happen again.” Inevitably, the honeymoon period ends again, and the tension once again builds. Thus beginning the cycle all over again.

Often as the abusive relationship continues, the cycle of violence will become more and more extreme, with the abusive behaviors becoming worse each time through the cycle. As the abuse gets worse, the partner’s life is more at risk.

Image courtesy of <http://ohcm.usfc.nasa.gov/family/domestic/cycle.gif>, retrieved June 2006; Information adapted from Project for Victims of Family Violence, Fayetteville, Arkansas