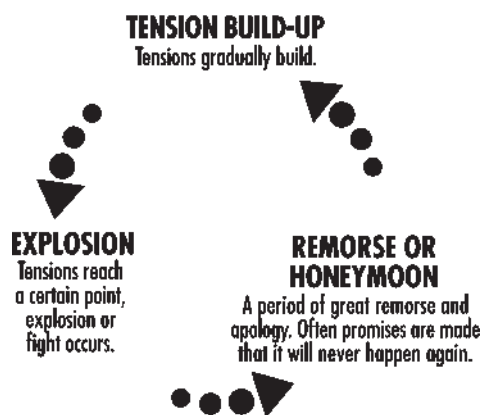


# The Cycle of Violence – and how you can break it



## You're not alone.

A victim of domestic violence will often feel like the only one being abused. That isn't true. Abuse happens to people from all backgrounds and all neighbourhoods. Rich or poor, educated or not – domestic violence is a reality countless people face on a daily basis.



## Understanding the cycle of violence is the first step towards breaking it.

Most of the time, abuse doesn't occur continually, but rather in a cycle. The cycle of violence is made up of three phases:

### Tension Build-up Phase

- Tension builds gradually beginning with verbal abuse; name-calling, insults and accusations. Minor battering incidents occur.
- As the tension builds, the victim tries to calm the abuser and anticipate the abuser's every need.

- The tension between the two becomes unbearable...like "walking on egg shells".

### Explosion Phase

This phase is shorter than the others, usually lasting from two to 48 hours. There is no escape once the battering has begun – only the abuser can end the incident.

- The tension that builds up leads to severe verbal abuse, violent physical or sexual attack.
- The violence is usually triggered by an outside event that causes the abuser stress (e.g. problems at work, a flat tire, etc.)

The victim will often deny the seriousness of the injuries to soothe the abuser, and to be assured that the violence is over.

### Remorse or Honeymoon Phase

- After the attack takes place, there is a return to some sense of calmness. The abuser may promise it will never happen again, act apologetic and loving and beg for forgiveness.
- Since their relationship has been deteriorating, the abuser's loving behaviour is very important to

the victim. It reinforces the victim's hope that the abuser can change.

- Guilt also plays a role. The victim feels responsible for her abuser's behaviour and the abuser's future welfare. For example, she may feel that if she leaves, she'll be breaking up the home.

The victim is **least likely** to leave during the honeymoon phase. If the victim stays, it's not long before the loving behaviour gives way to small battering incidents.

### **A NEW CYCLE OF VIOLENCE BEGINS.**

***It doesn't get better – it only gets worse. The cycle cannot be broken without outside help.***

The cycle can cover a long or short period of time. Often, as the pattern continues, the honeymoon phases get shorter and the violence increases. The assaults can also become more serious.

Often, a victim caught up in this cycle becomes isolated from family and friends. The victim is either ashamed to see them, or the abuser tells her not to communicate with them. In this way, the victim becomes more dependent on the abuser, and has few or no other people to help.

For more information contact:

Manitoba Justice  
Victim Services Branch  
**1-866-484-2846**

Toll-Free Province-Wide Domestic Abuse Crisis Line  
**(24 hours) 1-877-977-0007**