

THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

A person who abuses someone else uses the abuse to feel power and control.

In a violent relationship, the perpetrator operates in a system of *power and control* by manipulating others with abuse and threats. They try to compensate for the loss of control in their personal lives by controlling another person.

In a system of *freedom*, individuals operate in a system of honesty, responsibility for personal needs and actions, mutual support and respect, and acceptance and affirmation.

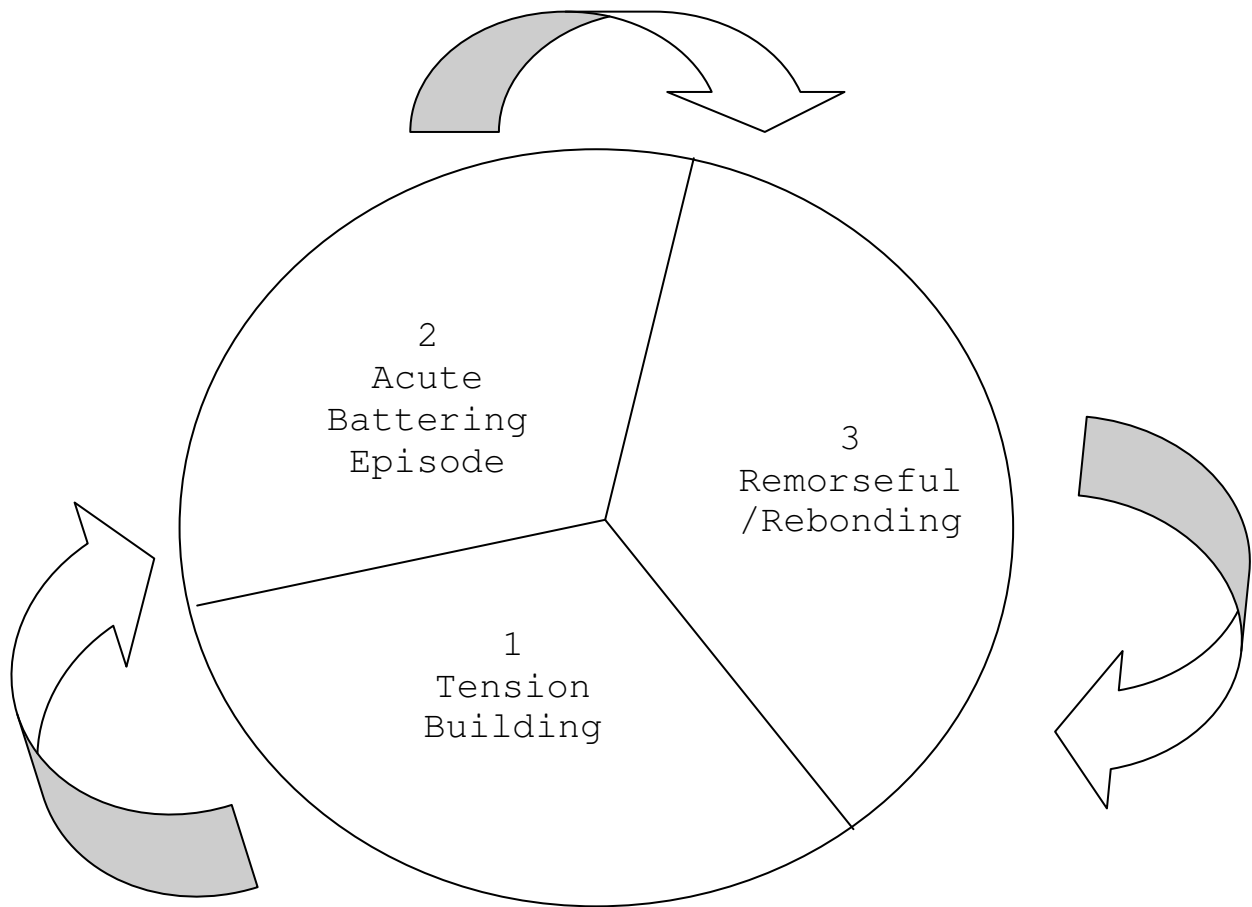
Refer to the “Power and Control” and “Freedom” Wheels for an illustration of this point.

There are various ways of obtaining and maintaining this power and control, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, economic abuse and emotional abuse. Often times a minor offense is ignored or minimized. However, over time, these minor offenses can slowly erode the empowerment of the victim. All techniques used to control someone can be found on the Continuum of Violence.

The Cycle of Violence has three primary phases where the

- 1) *tension mounts*, then
- 2) *the acute incident occurs*, and
- 3) *a period of re-engagement*, “*the hook*,” follows.

The cycle continues to develop throughout the relationship and gradually speeds up while becoming more and more violent.



Phase 1: Tension Builds

Victim may be nurturing and compliant. May cover up for batterer's behavior, accept full blame for many problems, compromise and manipulate to keep batterer non-violent. Batterer becomes increasingly jealous, and verbally or physically abusive.

Phase 2: Acute Battering

Tension increases rapidly. Batterer's rage escalates. Abuse can happen to mind, body, and/or spirit. If the victim can no longer tolerate own terror, anxiety or anger, may trigger the event to get it over with. Batterer may abuse victim even after victim is severely injured. The victim may simply endure the abuse or disassociate from body.

Phase 3: Re-Engagement, Hook (formerly the "Loving, Remorseful, Hearts and Flowers Stage")

The batterer will try a variety of behaviors to encourage the victim to re-engage in the relationship, or get "hooked in." Examples of these hooks include: telling the victim "You're my only friend. Only you understand me;" giving gifts; saying "Don't give up on me;" behaving as if what occurred is only a minor incident; promising to go into counseling but never following through with it; promising the victim everything they ever asked for. Both welcome this stage. The batterer may be loving and kind, may beg for forgiveness and promise to change. The batterer convinces the victim and everyone else of these intentions. The victim wants to and may believe this. At the same time, the batterer believes the victim has been taught a lesson.