



\*Adapted from Lenore Walker’s cycle of violence

#### CYCLE OF ABUSE

At the beginning of the relationship, the **Honeymoon Stage**, the victim is swept off their feet by all the compliments, gifts, and attention. The abuser comes on strong and pressures for a commitment. After awhile, the abuse starts slowly and insidiously, unrecognizable to the victim. And if they do recognize that something might not be right, they make excuses for the abuser’s behavior, as the abuser is quick to apologize and offer explanations that the victim believes. As the victim tolerates the abuse, the abuse escalates slowly and continues through the **Tension Building Stage** and then the **Acute Battering Stage**. This is followed by the **Honeymoon Stage** wherein the abuser apologizes, offers gifts, attention, etc. and once again, the victim, who wants to believe the abuser is capable of change, and/or that they can change him, continues in the relationship. This then becomes a self-perpetuating, vicious, and dangerous cycle.

Make no mistake, all the while the abuser is isolating the victim from family and friends by convincing them friends and family no longer care about them or can be trusted. And at the same time, the abuser is humiliating the victim, leading them to believe they are worthless, they are not a good person, no one else will ever be interested in them, and that everything is their fault. As the abuse and resulting psychological damage to the victim continues, the victim is “walking on eggshells” or trying everything in their power to maintain the status quo. Upsetting the status quo means that they probably will incur more abuse. They learn to change their behavior to avoid the abuser’s wrath.

There is a magnetism, a controlling force, brainwashing, fear, and many other factors, such as shame, embarrassment, lack of money, and lack of support that keep the victim from attempting to leave the abusive situation, or free themselves from this cycle. Sometimes, what is known (the abuse), is easier to deal with than the unknown (leaving), because at some level the victim knows that their life might be in even greater danger should they leave. In fact, the number one reason why victims tend not to leave abusive relationships is that they fear for their lives.

**This cycle becomes a powerful force destroying the victim psychologically, making it even more difficult for them to escape the cycle. In fact, victims leave and return to a relationship an average of seven times, before leaving for good. And many victims never leave, remaining in the relationship and enduring years of abuse.**