



# Cycle of Violence

**Tension  
Builds**



**Abuse takes  
place**

**Honeymoon Phase**

Generally, battering does not occur constantly, but rather in a cycle.

The cycle consists of three phases:

- 1) The tension building phase
- 2) The acute battering incident
- 3) The “honeymoon” stage

**Tension-building Phase:** During this phase of the cycle, tension builds in the relationship. There may be verbal, emotional, or physical abuse during this phase. This abuse can increase and escalate in frequency and severity over time. The person being abused may attempt to control the abuse through various coping techniques such as avoidance, placating, or “giving in,” but these methods do not work for long, if at all. Once the tension reaches and unbearable level, the acute battering incident occurs.

**Acute Battering Incident:** This is an uncontrollable discharge of built-up tension; the process has stopped responding to any control. The “trigger” for moving into this phase is rarely the victim’s behavior; rather it is usually an external stressor or the internal state of the abuser. The type of battering that occurs is usually much more serious and intense than in the Tension-building phase and the victim may be severely injured.

**Honeymoon Phase** (apologies, excuses, promises of reform): The abuser realizes they have gone too far. They typically exhibit loving, kind behavior while apologizing and promising it will never happen again. Both the abuser and the victim want to believe it won’t happen again.

But, it does and the cycle repeats itself.