

Understanding Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence Is:

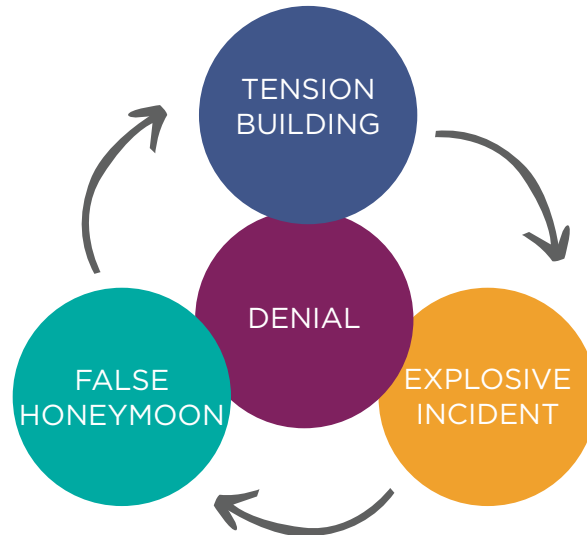
Willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. Domestic violence can take place in many forms: You may think of the person who is doing harm as your spouse, partner, significant other, etc, but for the purposes of clarity in the information here, we will be using the word “abuser.”

- Physical abuse can include hitting, biting, slapping, battering, shoving, punching, pulling hair, burning, cutting, pinching, etc. (any type of violent behavior inflicted on the victim). Physical abuse also includes denying someone medical treatment and forcing drug/alcohol use on someone.
- Sexual abuse occurs when the abuser coerces or attempts to coerce the victim into having sexual contact or sexual behavior without the victim’s consent. This often takes the form of rape, attacking sexual body parts, physical violence that is followed by forcing sex, sexually demeaning the victim, or even telling sexual jokes at the victim’s expense.
- Emotional abuse involves invalidating or deflating the victims sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem. Emotional abuse often takes the form of constant criticism, name-calling, injuring the victim’s relationship with his/her children, or interfering with the victim’s freedom to make choices.
- Economic abuse takes place when the abuser makes or tries to make the victim financially reliant. Economic abusers often seek to maintain total control over financial resources, withhold the victim’s access to funds, secure credit or a lease in the victim’s name, or prohibit the victim from going to school or work.
- Psychological abuse involves the abuser invoking fear through intimidation; threatening to physically hurt himself/herself, the victim, children, the victim’s family, friends, or the pets; destroying property; injuring the pets; isolating the victim from loved ones; and prohibiting the victim from going to school or work.
- Stalking can include following the victim, spying, watching, harassing, showing up at the victim’s home or work, sending gifts, collecting information, making phone calls, leaving written messages.. These acts individually are typically legal, but any of these behaviors, when done continually, result in a stalking crime.
- Cyberstalking refers to online action such as spying through social media, installing spyware on the victim’s devices, or repeatedly emailing and/or posting social media messages that inflict substantial emotional distress on the recipient.

Definition of domestic violence, retrieved in part from <https://ncadv.org/learn-more>

Types of violence, retrieved in part from <https://courageconnection.org/domestic-violence-services/>

Cycle of Violence



Tension Building Phase

During the first and usually the longest phase of the overall cycle, tension escalates between the couple. Excessive drinking, illness, jealousy, and other factors may lead to name calling, hostility, and friction.

During the tension building phase, a victim may sense that the abuser is on edge and reacts heatedly to any trivial frustration. Many victims recognize these signs of impending violence and become more nurturing or compliant or just stay out of the way. The victim internalizes what they perceive as their responsibility to keep the situation from exploding. In their mind, if the victim does their job well, the abuser will remain calm.

Explosion Phase

The second phase of the cycle is the explosion of violence. The abuse is triggered by anything or nothing at all. The batterer uses that as an excuse to justify their abusive behavior. The abuser is NOT “losing control.”

Honeymoon Phase

The third phase of the cycle is a period of calm, loving, contrite behavior on the part of the batterer. The abuser may apologize for the abuse and may promise it will never happen again. The abuser may blame the victim for causing the abuse, deny the abuse took place, or say it was not as bad as the victim claims. The abuser may buy gifts or flowers for the victim to apologize.

Denial

Denial may include minimizing the abuse or acting as if it did not happen. Denial keeps the cycle going. Perpetrators, victims, and society at large minimize violence in relationships.

For more information on how to help our domestic violence survivors you may contact our 24-hour Helpline at 1-800-575-5352.

