

NOTES

Horizontal lines for taking notes.

- **What You Can Do:** If you want company, don't hesitate to ask people you trust to be with you day and night. You may want to make your physical environment feel safer (for example, moving, making your home more secure and/or getting to know your neighbors better). Safety planning is a good way to prepare. If possible, check out the main CARE brochure for some tips and talk to your CARE advocate for more information.

VULNERABILITY, DISTRUST

- **How You May Feel:** That you're at the mercy of your own emotions or the actions of others; unsure of who to trust or how to trust yourself; suspicious and cautious.
- **What You Can Do:** Trust your instincts in regards to who you want to talk with about what happened to you. Try to talk with people whom you have found to be the most dependable in the past, select those who have been good listeners and non-judgmental. Feelings of general suspicion may subside as you begin to find people you can trust.

SEXUAL FEARS

- **How You May Feel:** That you don't want to have sexual relations; wondering whether you will ever want or enjoy sexual relationships again; fearful that being sexually intimate will not be consensual.
- **What You Can Do:** Try to tell your partner what your limits are. Let your partner know if the situation reminds you of the assault and may bring up painful memories. Let your partner know that it's the situation, not them, that's bringing up the painful memories. Let your partner know what level of intimacy feels comfortable for you, you may feel more comfortable with gentle physical affection.

ANGER

- **How You May Feel:** Angry at the abuser and/or stalker; thinking about retaliation; angry at the world since you no longer feel safe.
- **What You Can Do:** Be accepting of your anger. Feeling angry toward the person who harmed you doesn't mean that you're a violent or bad person — you have the right to feel angry about the violation(s) you have experienced. You may want to talk to people who understand these feelings.

DISRUPTION OF DAILY ACTIVITIES

- **How You May Feel:** Preoccupied with intrusive thoughts about the unhealthy and/or abusive behavior; unable to concentrate; having nightmares, sleep disturbances and/or changes in appetite; experiencing "startle reactions," phobias, general anxiety or depression; triggering of memories of a prior crisis or trauma.
- **What You Can Do:** Although these are common reactions, they can be quite disturbing. Take things very slowly. Some people find it helpful to keep a notebook on hand to write down feelings, thoughts, ideas or details of what occurred or is occurring. Keeping your thoughts and feelings in one place may make them feel more manageable.

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COMMON FEELINGS WHEN EXPERIENCING INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE & STALKING

SHOCK AND NUMBNESS

- **How You May Feel:** Confused, easily overwhelmed, unsure of how to feel or what to do, spacey or out of it.
- **What You Can Do:** Be aware that these are normal reactions to trauma and abuse. Each person handles crisis differently, so think of things that helped you get through crises in the past. Get help to sort out what you would like to do and how you may want to organize your time, thoughts and decisions. Be compassionate toward yourself and give yourself time to heal from past and/or ongoing abuse.

LOSS OF CONTROL

- **How You May Feel:** Like your whole life has been turned upside down and that you will never have control of your life again; like your thoughts and feelings are out of control.
- **What You Can Do:** Ask how other people have handled similar situations. Try to make as many of your own decisions as possible, even over small things such as where you want eat, a book you want to read or music you want to listen to. This may help you gradually regain a sense of control over your life.

GUILT AND SELF-BLAME

- **How You May Feel:** Like you could have or should have done something to avoid or prevent the abuse and unhealthy behaviors; doubtful of your ability to make good judgments.
- **What You Can Do:** No matter what the situation was, you did not ask to be hurt or violated. Blaming yourself is sometimes a way to feel control over the situation, thinking that if you avoid similar circumstances, it will not happen to you again. Talk to someone about the situation and remind yourself that it wasn't your fault.

ISOLATION

- **How You May Feel:** That this experience has set you apart from other people; that other people can tell you are or have been in an unhealthy relationship, or are experiencing stalking just by looking at you; not wanting to burden other people with your experience.
- **What You Can Do:** Healing from intimate partner violence or stalking can be a very lonely experience, however, you are not alone in what you are feeling. You may find it reassuring to talk to others who have experienced this or to a CARE advocate who has worked with other relationship violence and stalking survivors.

FEAR

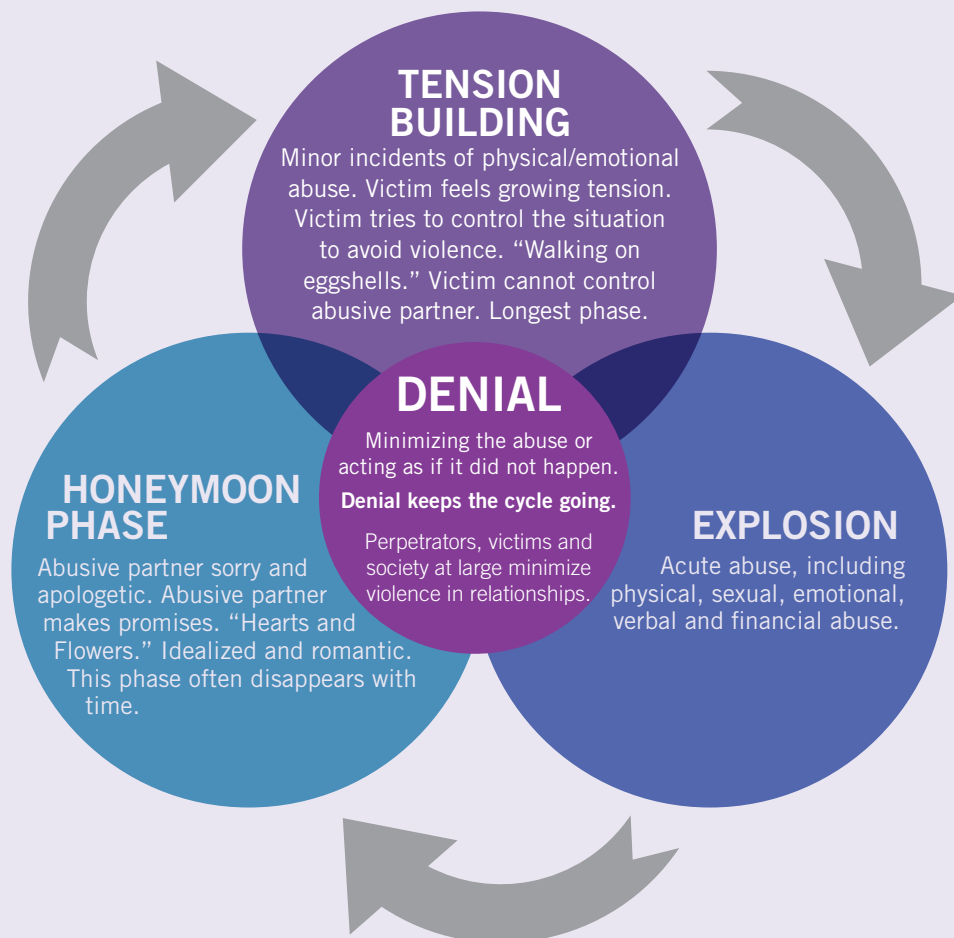
- **How You May Feel:** Fear that the abuser and/or stalker may return; fear for your general physical safety; fear of being alone; fear of other people or situations that may remind you of the assault.

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CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The Cycle of Violence is used to describe a cyclical pattern of behavior that may occur in unhealthy and/or abusive relationships. The more that someone experiences the cycle in a relationship, the more “normal” an unhealthy relationship can feel and leaving can become difficult. The cycle can occur several times and can be one of the many reasons why someone may stay in an unhealthy relationship. Many individuals feel there’s hope that their partner will change or that the relationship will get better. Regardless of the reason, understanding how the cycle works can help in processing and understanding what someone may be experiencing.

It is important to be aware that many relationships do not begin abusive and/or unhealthy. Experiencing the happy “honeymoon” phase is quite common when first getting to know someone. As a relationship progresses, “red flags” (as seen in the Power & Control Wheel in our general CARE brochure) can gradually increase as the relationship gets more serious.



TENSION-BUILDING PHASE

This might start with dismissing “little things” that you feel may be unimportant. As the abusive partner tries to control aspects of your life (what to do, what to wear, etc.), there is a sense that you can avoid getting them really mad if you just do what they want you to do.

Victims may experience:

- Minor incidents of physical/emotional abuse (refer to the Power & Control Wheel in the CARE brochure)
- Growing tension within the relationship
- Feelings of wanting to control the situation in order to avoid escalated argument or violence
- A feeling of “walking on eggshells” often

This may feel like longest phase in the cycle and will more than likely always move into the Explosion Phase.

EXPLOSION PHASE

The Explosion Phase describes when the tension that has built up in the Tension-Building Phase breaks. The “first” explosion might look like a partner name-calling, yelling, threatening to hurt you, throwing an object across the room, threatening to break up if you don’t agree, pushing you in anger or more severe expressions of physical violence. Some individuals might experience being kicked, strangled, slapped, burned, pinched and/or scratched. These explosions by the abusive partner will more than likely escalate over time, eventually moving from “only” verbal comments to physical violence.

HONEYMOON PHASE

In order to apologize and regain trust, power and control over the situation, the abusive partner will want to make up for what occurred in the Explosion Phase. Many times the partner may apologize profusely, state that they promise to change and never “explode” again. During this phase the abusive partner may want the relationship to become “normal” again by doing things including buying gifts, flowers and/or items that were meaningful. For some, stating things such as, “I can’t live without you” or “We promised to work on things together” becomes the reason why some might choose to stay. Acknowledging that you may feel closer to someone after “working through” these explosions is important, it’s also important to know that after the first couple of incidents, the Honeymoon Phase gradually disappears.

WHY PEOPLE STAY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Individuals, families and people who use power and control can minimize violence in relationships. And the whole cycle can continue again and again until the individual who is experiencing violence makes the decision to leave. Leaving can be a difficult process and can take up to six to eight attempts before a complete break-up. There are several reasons why it may be hard to leave an unhealthy or abusive relationship:

- **Optimism/Commitment:** The belief that things can and will get better over time; wanting the violence to end and not the relationship.
- **Internalized-self-blame & guilt:** Survivors may feel sorry for the abusive partner and believe they can “help” the abusive partner access support; Survivors may have low self-esteem and be isolated from friends and family and may feel responsible for the violence.
- **Traumatic bonding:** love; the result of ongoing cycles of abuse in which the intermittent reinforcement of reward and punishment creates powerful emotional bonds that are resistant to change.
- **Fear:** Survivors may fear for their own physical safety and or abusive partners have threatened to disclose sensitive information.
- **Cycles:** Intergenerational, familial and historical cycles of trauma and abuse.
- **Expectations:** Religious, societal and or cultural beliefs and expectations around relationships and break-ups; Survivors may feel they need to stay in an unhealthy relationship to please their families or friends.
- **Economic Dependence:** Survivors may feel like they have minimal work skills, may not have transportation available to them, they may have little to no access to money and or no place to live

It’s important to note that leaving can be a dangerous time in a relationship. Reach out to a CARE advocate in order to safety plan and be prepared to leave safely when and if you choose to.

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