

CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The theory of the cycle of violence was developed by Dr. Lenore Walker. It has three distinct phases which are generally present in a violent relationship:

1. Tension Building Phase
2. Violent Episode Phase
3. Kind and Loving Phase



Outlined below are typical feelings and behaviors exhibited by family members in the various phases of the cycle of violence.

PHASE 1: TENSION BUILDING

- **Women Feel:** Angry, unfairly treated, hopeless, tense, afraid, embarrassed, humiliated, disgusted, depressed
Behavior: Nurturing, compliant, accepting, works to diffuse partner's anger and frustration, may verbally express own anger, may use alcohol and/or drugs to avoid situation
- **Partner Feels:** Tense, frustrated, disgusted, self-righteous, jealous
Behavior: Verbally abusive, fits of anger, silent, oppressive, drug and alcohol usage, possessive, demanding, irritable
- **Children Feel:** Afraid, tense, angry at Mom for not "fixing" partner, confused
Behavior: Side with one or the other parent, hide, deny, try to distract

PHASE 2: VIOLENCE EPISODE

- **Women Feel:** Frightened, trapped, helpless, numb
Behavior: May try to protect self, hit back or submit helplessly, may try to get away or seek help, may feign unconsciousness or exaggerate extent of injuries to get beating to stop
- **Partner Feels:** Angry, enraged, disgusted, self-righteous, jealous, frustrated
Behavior: Dangerously violent, deliberate desire to hurt or kill, out of control, irrational

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- **Children Feel:** Frightened, trapped, helpless
Behavior: May watch helplessly, hide an attempt to stop fighting, may attempt to help women or may join in beating her, may kill batterer

PHASE 3 – KIND AND LOVING

- **Women Feel:** Relieved, angry over incident, guilty, hopeful
Behavior: Offers excuses for batterer, talks, tries to settle, solve or prevent future incidents, hopes and believes change will last
- **Partner Feels:** Apologetic, remorseful, forgetful about degree of violence
Behavior: Makes promises to change, blames others and her for life situation and actions, especially alcohol
- **Children Feel:** Embarrassed, humiliated, relieved, guiltily, angry
Behavior: Try to please, distract self to forget, stress behaviors, nervousness, tics

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