

A. POWER AND CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Physical violence is the most typical form of abuse associated with domestic violence. Yet, victims suffer many types of abuse at the hands of their partners. Sexual coercion and assault are frequently part of the dynamic of a violent relationship. In addition, the power and control tactics, described below and illustrated to the right, reflect the common experiences of many victims of relationship violence. These tactics are used by perpetrators of domestic violence to maintain power and control over their partners.



*The Power and Control Wheel

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Statistics show the majority of domestic violence victims are women; however men are also victims of domestic violence

Economic Abuse

The perpetrator maintains tight control over the couple's finances and oversees what money the victim may have or spend. The perpetrator may not allow the victim to work; may sabotage any efforts the victim makes to get or keep a job and may require that the victim relinquish all earnings to the abusive partner.

Coercion And Threats

The perpetrator may threaten to harm the victim, victim's children, other family members or family pet. They may also force the victim to engage in acts against her/his will or threaten to turn the victim into the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Internal Revenue service or some other government agency. Threats of suicide by the perpetrator are also very common.

Intimidation

The perpetrator may try to intimidate the victim. This intimidation may occur through menacing looks or expressions, destroying property in front of the victim or by hurting or killing the family pets. Also, the perpetrator may display weapons in front of the victim as a means of frightening her or him.

Emotional Abuse

The perpetrator may use emotional abuse to convince the victim that they are crazy or irrational, thus causing them to doubt their own beliefs, experiences or feelings. This emotional abuse, in the form of name calling, constant criticism and insults, is much more serious than the occasional argument. To the contrary, the perpetrator often continually humiliates and degrades her/his partner, thus wearing away at the victim's self-esteem.

Isolation

The perpetrator often tries to isolate the victim from friends and family members. The victim may not be allowed to leave home without permission and may be forbidden from making telephone calls. Eventually, the victim can become completely cut off from anyone who might be able to help her/him escape from the abuse.

Minimizing, Denying, Blaming

The perpetrator is likely to minimize or even deny their actions even in cases where injury occurs. If the police were called, but did not make an arrest, the perpetrator may rely on their inaction to deny wrongdoing. Also, the abusive partner will often blame the victim for their violent behavior and all too often, the victim will accept at least some responsibility for the abuse perpetrated upon them.

Using Children

Perpetrators may use the children to maintain control over the victim of the abuse. The perpetrator may threaten to harm the children or to kidnap them and flee the jurisdiction. Also, the perpetrator may tell the victim that if they leave, they will have abandoned the children and will lose custody forever. The victim can also be made to feel guilty for breaking up the family if she/he leaves the situation.

Using Male Privilege

Perpetrators may treat the victim like a servant, making all the important decisions, acting like the "master of the castle", being the one to define men's and women's roles.

The majority of domestic violence victims experience some combination of the power and control tactics described above.

B. CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The Cycle of Violence was first described by Lenore Walker in her 1979 work, *The Battered Woman*. This model can be useful when trying to understand the complex dynamics that occur in violent or abusive relationships. The Cycle of Violence has been described as having three stages: the tension building stage; the violent episode; and the honeymoon stage. Each stage is defined by certain characteristics. During the tension building phase, the relationship is typified by increasing hostility and stress that may be accompanied by frequent arguments and perhaps limited violence. This stage may eventually escalate to a more serious incident of violent and/or abusive behavior. It is during this second phase that injury is most likely to occur. It is also at this time that the victim in an abusive relationship may seek some type of intervention or assistance. The violent episode is frequently followed by a third phase, often referred to as the honeymoon phase. This phase is characterized by remorse on the part of the perpetrator and hope for change on the part of the victim.

Although not all abusive relationships follow this cyclical pattern, the cycle of violence can help to explain what both the victim and the abusive partner are experiencing in many instances. The victim of abuse may be more interested in stopping the violence than in ending the relationship, while the perpetrator may be afraid his/her partner will want to leave. The honeymoon phase represents their efforts to repair and normalize the relationship and may provide the victim with hope that the batterer's behavior will change. In addition, the difficulties involved in ending a violent relationship may seem overwhelming for the victim of domestic violence. Unfortunately, in many abusive relationships the violence will continue and may escalate over time without intervention.

C. WHY VICTIMS STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

A frequently asked question regarding victims in abusive relationships is "why don't they just leave?" While it seems a simple enough way to end the abuse, the reality is that leaving a violent/abusive relationship is anything but simple.

Leaving an abusive relationship does not guarantee an end to the abuse; rather, the abuse often escalates at the time of separation. The majority of domestic violence murder-suicides occur after the victim has tried to leave the relationship. The fact that many victims do leave or seek help is truly remarkable in light of the many barriers they face. Some of these include:

- lack of awareness of services
- fear of retaliation by the batterer
- lack of financial resources fear of losing custody of the children *fear of
- not being believed

- religious, family and societal pressures
- shame
- denial of seriousness of abuse
- belief that the batterer will change
- lack of support network
- cultural and ethnic/racial barriers

Despite the many obstacles faced by victims, people continue to ask "why don't they just leave?" It is time for us to change the dialogue. Instead of placing the burden on the victim to get out of the abusive relationship, it is time that we shift the focus to the person responsible - the abusive partner. Instead of asking why the victims will not leave, it is time that we ask instead, "why do people abuse and why is it allowed to continue?"

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