



Assessing Dangerousness & Lethality in Domestic Violence

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Learning Objectives

- **Will be able to identify major causes of family violence**
- **Will be able to identify lethality risk factors in domestic violence**
- **Will gain understanding of importance for proactive intervention**

What is Domestic Violence?

- **Domestic Violence and Abuse** – Physical injury, sexual abuse, assault, or the infliction of fear of imminent physical injury, serious physical injury, sexual abuse, or assault between family members or members of an unmarried couple. (a substantial complaint of pain is physical injury)
- **Who does Domestic Violence apply to?**

- **Family Member:** Spouse, former spouse, grandparent, parent, child, stepchild, or other person (ie: live-in) that is living in the same household as a child if the child is the alleged victim
- **Unmarried Couple:** A member of an unmarried couple allegedly having a child in common, any children of that couple, or an unmarried couple who are living together or have formerly lived together – including **same sex couples**
- **Dating relationships** – established, romantic expectations, not intimate

Dynamics of Domestic Violence

Factors that often explain why victims remain in an abusive relationship:

Love

Economic Dependence

Isolation

Fear

Religious beliefs

Age

Lack of alternatives

Children

Family

No support

Embarrassed

Guilt

Self blame

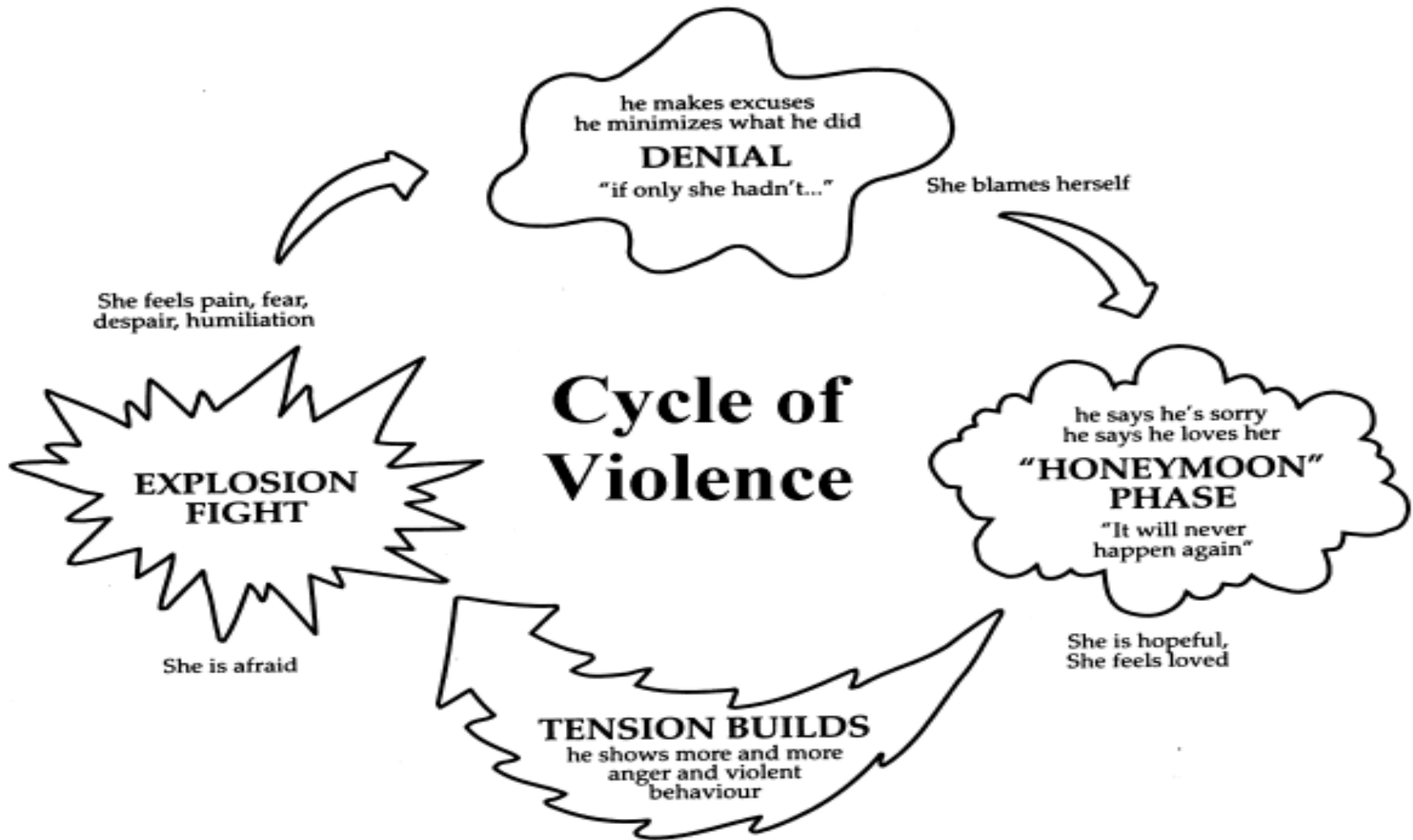
Denial

Low Self Esteem

Contributing Factors to Domestic Violence:

- Stress – job, family expectations, financial problems
- Frustration
- Alcohol / Drug Abuse (most batterers are alcoholics or drug abusers)
- Learned behavior- previous generations engaged in spousal abuse
- Sadistic personalities – such as killing or being cruel to pets and children
- Violence – certain ethnic groups are more tolerant or approving of intimate violence based on cultural expectations
- Cultural beliefs about women's roles

WHY DO VICTIMS STAY????



* The cycle can cover a long or short period of time

* The violence usually gets worse

* The "honeymoon" phase, then the denial phase, will eventually disappear

Injuries...

- Injuries – Batterers injure their victims where injuries will not be easily detected:
 - Head injuries
 - Injuries in a bathing suit pattern
 - Victims of strangulation – typically no visible injuries (may have serious internal injuries)

Injuries...

- **Strangulation**
- ***under reported and most lethal***
- Often not taken seriously by victims, no visible injury
- A felony assault has occurred if the victim answers yes to any of these questions:
- Did Victim lose bladder control? Did the victim lose consciousness/pass out?
- Does the Victim describe or say “I couldn’t breathe”, “everything was going dark”
- Is the victim having difficulty breathing or speaking, raspy voice, hoarse, trouble swallowing, neck pain, nauseous, hurts to swallow??
- Explain seriousness of strangulation...36 hours later the victim may be dead!!

Lethality Risk Factors

- *Used or threatened you with a gun?*
- *Threatened to kill you or other family members?*
- *Do you think he/she might try to kill you?*
- *Have a weapon or easy access to a weapon?*
- *Ever tried to choke you?*
- *Violent, jealous, try to control your every move?*
- *Have you left or separated after living together or married?*
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Lethality Risk Factors

- *Unemployed?*
- *Ever tried to kill themselves?*
- *Child that is not theirs?*
- *Follow you or spy on you?*
- *Leave threatening messages or texts?*
- *Have you been told how he/she will kill you?*
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What can you do if you are a victim....

- **Tell someone you trust** – support
- **Safety Planning** – have a plan of where to go and what to do in case of a violent incident
- **Protection Orders** – enables the police to take action against a perpetrator
- **Seek counseling** – you are not to blame
- **Seek shelter** – if you are in fear for your safety, go somewhere, to a friend, family, neighbor or to a women's shelter
- **Call the police** – can't help if they don't know
- **Break the silence**

What can you do if someone you know is a DV victim

- Know available resources
- Tell them you care
- Do not judge or criticize

POWER & CONTROL

VIOLENCE

SEXUAL

EMOTIONAL

PHYSICAL

VIOLENCE

PHYSICAL

EMOTIONAL

SEXUAL

COERCION & THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her

- threatening to commit suicide or report her to selfare
- making her drop charges
- making her do illegal things

INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions and gestures

- smashing things
- destroying her property
- abusing pets
- displaying weapons

EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down

- making her feel bad about herself
- calling her names
- making her think she's crazy
- playing mindgames
- humiliating her
- making her feel guilty

ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads and where she goes

- limiting her outside involvement
- using jealousy to justify actions

HONEYMOON
Acts remorseful/romantic

- persistent, loving affection
- gifts and affection
- lots of loving phone calls
- he controls with love

MINIMIZING, DENYING & BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously

- saying the abuse didn't happen
- shifting responsibility for abusive behavior
- saying she caused it

USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty by telling her she is a bad parent

- threatening to hurt the children
- using visitation to harass her
- threatening to take the children

ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income

MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the "master of the castle" • being the one to define men's and women's roles

POWER AND CONTROL

