



## *Safe Dating/Healthy Relationships*

**Advisory Goal:** Students will increase awareness of ethical and moral behavior and explore ways to incorporate those behaviors in their lives.

**Purpose:** Students will identify and apply positive relationship and safe dating practices and resources to get help when concerns arise.

**Time:** One advisory period

**Materials:** Handout 1 – Violence Cycle  
Handout 2 – Violence Wheel  
Handout 3 – Personal Plan  
Handout 4 – I think I may be abusive...what can I do?  
Handout 5 – Dating Bill of Rights

**Preparation:** Photocopy handouts you wish to provide your students for lesson (handouts at end of this lesson). Use Handouts 1 and 2 to identify the indicators of violence in a relationship. Students will develop a plan of action when concerns arise. Have students complete Handout 3. Handout 4 will be used as a resource to help themselves or others over abusive tendencies.

**Activity:** Divide students into small groups and ask them to answer the following questions, then discuss as a class.

- What behaviors might indicate that you are engaged in an unhealthy relationship?
- How would you know if the relationship has a problem?
- If you notice one or more of these indicators in your relationship, what should you do?
- Where could you go to get help in dealing with a problem?
- Is possessiveness about control or love? Why or why not?
- What is the major cause of domestic violence?
- Name some of your personal rights in a dating relationship
- Name some of your responsibilities in a relationship
- What are some rights and responsibilities that weren't listed?

**Reflection:** Ask the students:

Did you enjoy this activity?

Would you like to see more activities such as this one?

**Reflection:** Ask the teacher:

Was the time appropriate for the activity?

Did you have all the materials you needed, should other be listed?

Did the students take part?



# Handout One

## Violence Wheel

The chart below is a way of looking at the behaviors abusers use to get and keep control in their relationships. Battering is a choice. It is used to gain power and control over another person. Physical abuse is only one part of a system of abusive behaviors.

**Abuse is never a one-time event.**

This chart uses the wheel to show the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. Each part shows a way to control or gain power.



**DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT**

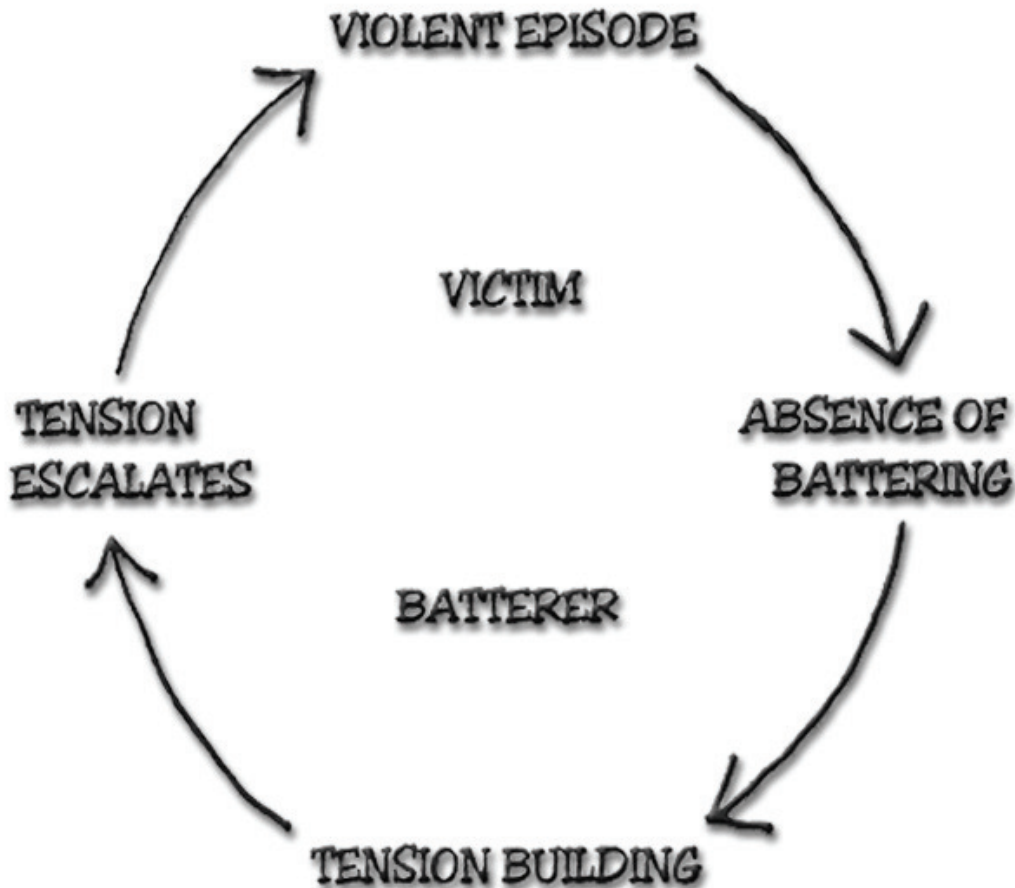
202 East Superior Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802  
218-722-2781  
www.duluth-model.org





## Hand Out Two

# THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE



The Cycle of Violence includes 3 stages:

- The Tension Building Stage
  - The Violent Episode
- The Absence of Violence Stage

Domestic violence increases in frequency and severity. It is never an isolated incident or a one-time occurrence.



## The Cycle of Violence

Domestic violence usually follows a cycle that repeats itself continually. This cycle consists of the following three stages.

- **Tension or Build Up (Phase 1)**  
Increased tension, anger, blaming and arguing. This phase may last a week, months, or years. However, it usually becomes more frequent as the cycle is repeated. It typically involves an increase in verbal and minor physical abuse. Sometimes this is enough to frighten the victim into submission. The victim knows what will happen if he/she does not comply. At this point the victim may be amenable to sources of help.
- **Battering Incident (Phase 2)**  
Battering-hitting, slapping, kicking, choking, use of objects or weapons. Sexual abuse. Verbal threats and abuse. During this phase the batterer loses the desire or ability to control his/her anger and violence. The batterer learns that this type of action helps to "relieve stress" and "change behavior." Just following this episode the batterer and the partner are most likely to seek help. The partner is hurt and scared, and the batterer is feeling ashamed, guilty and humiliated.
- **Calm or Honeymoon Stage (Phase 3)**  
This stage may decrease over time. The batterer may deny violence; say he/she was drunk, say sorry and promise that it will never happen again. The victim is least amenable to help at this point. However, the batterer may be most open to help at the start of this phase because typically, he/she is remorseful and wishes to please (keep) the partner. At the peak of this stage both parties may deny or distort what has occurred.

Then, Phase 1 begins again... The truth is that change is unlikely unless you get help. The victims want to believe the abuser when they promise it will never happen again, but in most cases it does. It not only recurs, but escalates each time. Studies indicate that most abusers who seek professional help do so only after their partners have left. Otherwise, they have no incentive to change.





## Domestic abuse falls into a common pattern, or cycle of violence:

This represents a six stage cycle...

**Abuse** — The abuser lashes out with aggressive or violent behavior. The abuse is a power play designed to show the victim "who is boss."

**Guilt** — After the abusive episode, the abuser feels guilt, but not over what he's done to the victim. The guilt is over the possibility of being caught and facing consequences.

**Rationalization or excuses** — The abuser rationalizes what he's done. He may come up with a string of excuses or blame the victim for his own abusive behavior—anything to shift responsibility from himself.

**"Normal" behavior** — The abuser does everything he can to regain control and keep the victim in the relationship. He may act as if nothing has happened, or he may turn on the charm. This peaceful honeymoon phase may give the victim hope that the abuser has really changed this time.

**Fantasy and planning** — The abuser begins to fantasize about abusing his victim again, spending a lot of time thinking about what she's done wrong and how he'll make her pay. Then he makes a plan for turning the fantasy of abuse into reality.

**Set-up** — The abuser sets up the victim and puts his plan in motion, creating a situation where he can justify abusing her.

## The Full Cycle of Domestic Violence

A man **abuses** his partner. After he hits her, he experiences self-directed **guilt**. He says, "I'm sorry for hurting you." What he does not say is, "Because I might get caught." He then **rationalizes** his behavior by saying that his partner is having an affair with someone. He tells her "If you weren't such a worthless whore I wouldn't have to hit you." He then **acts contrite**, reassuring her that he will not hurt her again. He then **fantasizes** and reflects on past abuse and how he will hurt her again. He **plans** on telling her to go to the store to get some groceries. What he withholds from her is that she has a certain amount of time to do the shopping. When she is held up in traffic and is a few minutes late, he feels completely justified in assaulting her because "you're having an affair with the store clerk." He has just **set her up**.



## Handout Three

### Personal Plan for Dealing with Unhealthy Relationships

1. How would I know if I am involved in an unhealthy relationship?
2. If I have a concern with an action or behavior in a relationship, what would be the first step?
3. Where would I go for help with the problem?
4. What would I do to protect myself from unhealthy behaviors?

## Handout Four

### **I think I may be abusive ... what can I do?**

#### **Am I abusive?**

If you are not quite sure whether your actions could be considered abusive or not, read through the [Warning Signs of an Abusive Personality](#) and search your heart. Are any of those actions or attitudes ones you tend towards? You may also find it helpful to read the article by John Stibbs on healthy and unhealthy relationships: [Emotional Boundaries](#). Does your relationship tend more towards a healthy or an unhealthy one?

Maybe you could ask yourself some of the following questions:

- Would you treat your boss, mate or next-door-neighbor the same way as you do your partner?
- If someone else were treating your daughter, son, brother, sister or friend the same way as you treat your partner, would you consider it okay or not?
- Has your partner told you that your behavior is unreasonable or abusive?
- Has your partner either left you or threatened to leave you if you don't stop being nasty to her/him?
- Have previous relationships gone to the wall due to your behavior?

If you have answered NO to either of the first questions, and YES to any of the last three, then the chances are pretty high that you are abusive towards your partner.



## On taking Responsibility

First of all, if you have realized that some of your actions and attitudes towards your partner may be abusive, you have already made a very important step toward change and being able to enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship. Well done! It is difficult and painful to realize that you may be hurting someone you love, but it is the first step towards change.

The only person who can make a difference is YOU! One of the main problems with repeat abusers and perpetrators is denial of the abusive nature of their actions and attitudes, and denial of any 'real' effect on their victims. Acknowledging to ourselves that we have a problem, or that we are hurting someone we love is very, very difficult and painful, and many people can never quite admit it to themselves.

A lot of abusive behaviors are ingrained, they may have been part of your personality and coping mechanism since childhood, and they are difficult not just to recognize, but also to crack. Nobody else can do that for you, you have to take responsibility for your actions yourself - fully. This means recognizing when you are saying something hurtful or doing something harmful to your partner; learning to recognize your reactions within yourself, how you feel when you get wound up, how you feel after an abusive episode; the thoughts and excuses you make to yourself to allow you to deny you are really doing anything wrong. Ask yourself some of these questions:

- Do you regularly vent your frustration on your partner?
- Do you tell yourself that your partner is overreacting to 'being told off'?
- Do you tell your partner they are 'making a fuss about nothing' or 'making a mountain out of molehill'?
- Do you tell yourself what you do is not that bad and that so-and-so would be far worse?
- Do you think that if your partner just didn't 'wind you up on purpose' then the abuse would not happen?
- Do you tell yourself that your partner deserved the abuse, because they are not perfect either?
- Do you tell yourself that because you only get nasty when you are drunk it isn't really the same as if you were really abusive?

If you answered YES to any of the above, you may still not be taking full responsibility for your actions. It may be a good idea to discuss the abuse, your feelings about it and attitudes towards your partner with a third person, preferably someone not involved with either of you, such as a counselor or helpline volunteer.

**Where can I get help?** There are several Perpetrator Programs available and many of these accept self-referrals. To my knowledge, there are none at present that cater for female perpetrators of Domestic Abuse, but there are several counselors and other





professionals who are qualified to do so. RESPECT can provide you with a full list of either programs or professionals in your area.

To find out what these Perpetrator Programs entail, please check out [CHANGE Perpetrator Programs](#) , and the BBC website Hitting Home also has some details and some personal stories and impressions from men and women who have been involved in such programs The Freedom Program© also runs courses for men across the UK which look at the underlying beliefs and attitudes which create an environment in which domestic abuse can occur together with the tactics employed to control or abuse. The courses usually run over a 2-day period and accept self-referrals. Please see the link below for more details.

If you are facing prosecution for violence towards your partner, the Court has got the option of referring you to such programs, and there are further programs organized and run by the Probation service - though these do not usually take self-referrals. Attendance at one of these will often be included if you are on probation.

Several of our contacts have tried accessing help via their local GP or NHS service. Generally these have proven inadequate to their needs, and there is the usual problem of waiting lists. However, it is always worth checking with either you local GP or Health Center whether there are any local charities or organizations they can recommend or even refer you to. In a similar fashion, your local Social Services should have details of any perpetrator programs or related services in your area, and are also able to refer.

### **Things which are not recommended**

If violence has been, and especially if it currently still is an issue in your relationship, then **Couples Counseling** is not recommended nor is **Mediation**. Basically the abuse itself has to be dealt with BEFORE any form of joint counseling or mediation can be effective

In the past **Anger Management** courses have been recommended for abusers, especially men who have been violent towards their female partners. However, more and more research seems to be indicating that such courses are not effective in dealing with abusive behavior as such, as abuse is less about being able to control anger, **and more about basic attitudes and control issues**. In short, anger management may be part of the problem, but is usually not either the main problem or the root cause of Domestic Abuse.

### **Will getting help 'save' my relationship?**

It may, or it may not. Often by the time the perpetrator realizes he or she has a problem, too much has already happened and the trust cannot be rebuilt. Sadly a lot of men will refer themselves to perpetrator programs in a bid to stop their partner from





leaving or even in a bid to persuade her to come back and give it another try. If you are seeking help with the sole intention of keeping or regaining a partner who has decided to leave due to your abuse, then you are probably approaching it with the wrong motives - more as a tool to get or keep what you want than as a necessary change in yourself.

Perpetrator programs or counseling can really only help if YOU want to change. You may have to accept that due to your behavior you have lost the person you love, but at the very least you can try to ensure that you do not cause more pain and hurt to the next person you get involved in.

Resource: [http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk/Abuser/abusive\\_help.htm](http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk/Abuser/abusive_help.htm)

### **Personal Plan**

I have the following tendencies towards domestic violence.

I will stop the following behaviors:

I will use the following resources to help me.

Who can I turn to for help when things aren't going well?

## **Handout Five-Dating Bill of Rights**

### **I have the right...**

- ❖ To ask for or refuse a date
- ❖ To be treated with respect ALWAYS
- ❖ To be in a healthy relationship
- ❖ To be treated as an equal
- ❖ To keep my body, feelings, beliefs and property to myself
- ❖ To set my own limits and stick to my values
- ❖ To suggest activities on a date
- ❖ To have my own friends and activities apart from my boyfriend or girlfriend
- ❖ To have my own feelings and to be able to express them without fear



- ❖ To say I think my date's information is wrong or their actions are unfair or inappropriate.
- ❖ To ask someone not to interrupt me
- ❖ To have my limits and values respected
- ❖ To tell my date when I need affection
- ❖ To refuse affection
- ❖ To be heard
- ❖ To refuse to lend money
- ❖ To refuse sex with anyone just because they took me out on an expensive date
- ❖ To refuse sex at any time for any reason
- ❖ To say no for any reason
- ❖ To leave a relationship

### **I have the responsibility...**

- To communicate clearly and honestly
- To ask for help when I need it
- To be considerate of others
- To check my actions & decisions and determine whether they are good for me or bad for me
- To set high goals

**Resources:** Domestic Violence Advocacy Program of Family Resources, Inc.

<http://www.chooserrespect.org/scripts/teens/rights.asp>