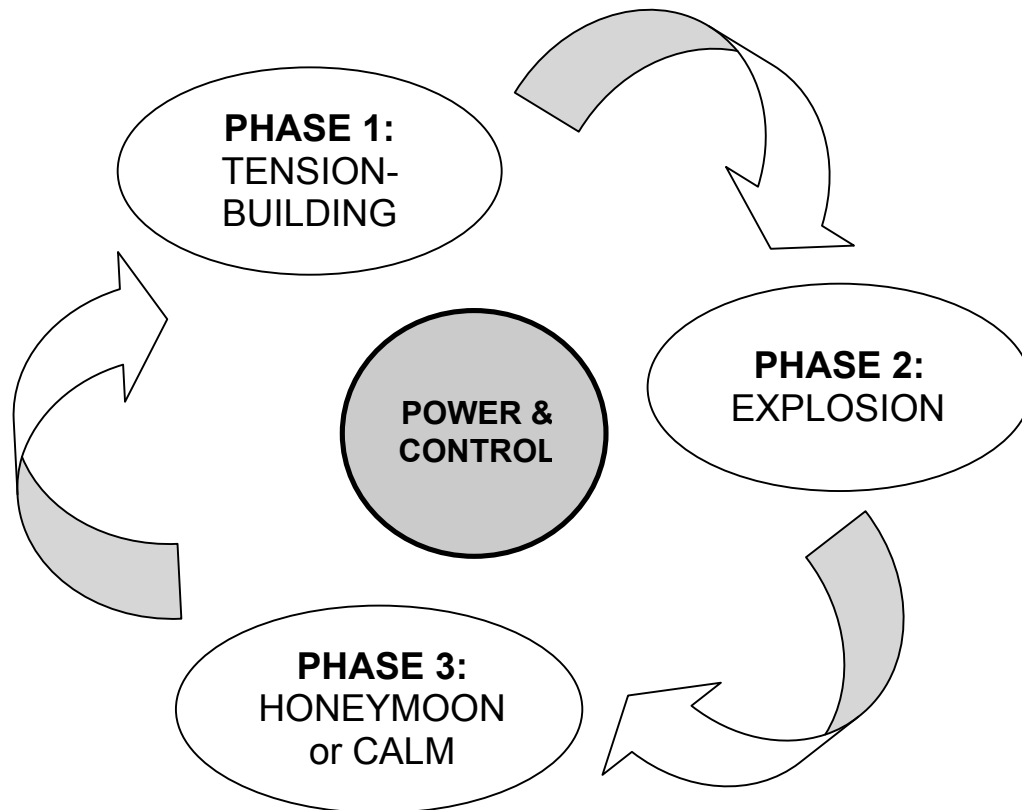


## The Cycle of Violence

Abusive relationships generally follow a three-phase cycle of violence. Without intervention, the violence tends to escalate in both frequency and severity over time.



### ***Phase 1: Tension Building***

- The abusive partner becomes increasingly irritable and angry and may engage in “minor” abusive behavior (slapping, verbal, and/or psychological abuse).
- The abused partner becomes increasingly fearful and may try to placate the abuser to defuse the situation and prevent an explosion
- The victim may make excuses for the tension, blame her/himself, and excuse or minimize the batterer’s violence.
- The victim may withdraw emotionally to escape the increasing stress.
- The victim may seek help from law enforcement only to be told nothing can be done until violence occurs.

### ***Phase 2: Explosion / Acute Battering Incident***

- The acute battering incident is an explosion of physical, sexual, or verbal abusive behavior.
- The explosion is generally the shortest phase and can last anywhere from a few minutes to a few days.
- This phase can lead to serious injury or death.
- The victim will generally do whatever s/he feels is necessary to survive, which may or may not involve seeking help from family or friends or from law enforcement.

### ***Phase 3: Calm Period or “Honeymoon”***

- The environment becomes tranquil and even pleasant.
- The batterer apologizes and promises to change. This may involve gifts, promises to seek help, reminders of the good times in the relationship, etc.
- The victim may see this side of the batterer as who they “really” are and see the violence as an aberration.
- This is usually the longest phase, although it generally gets progressively shorter over time.
- This is often the time when the victim seeks help, because there is a window of calm and safety.