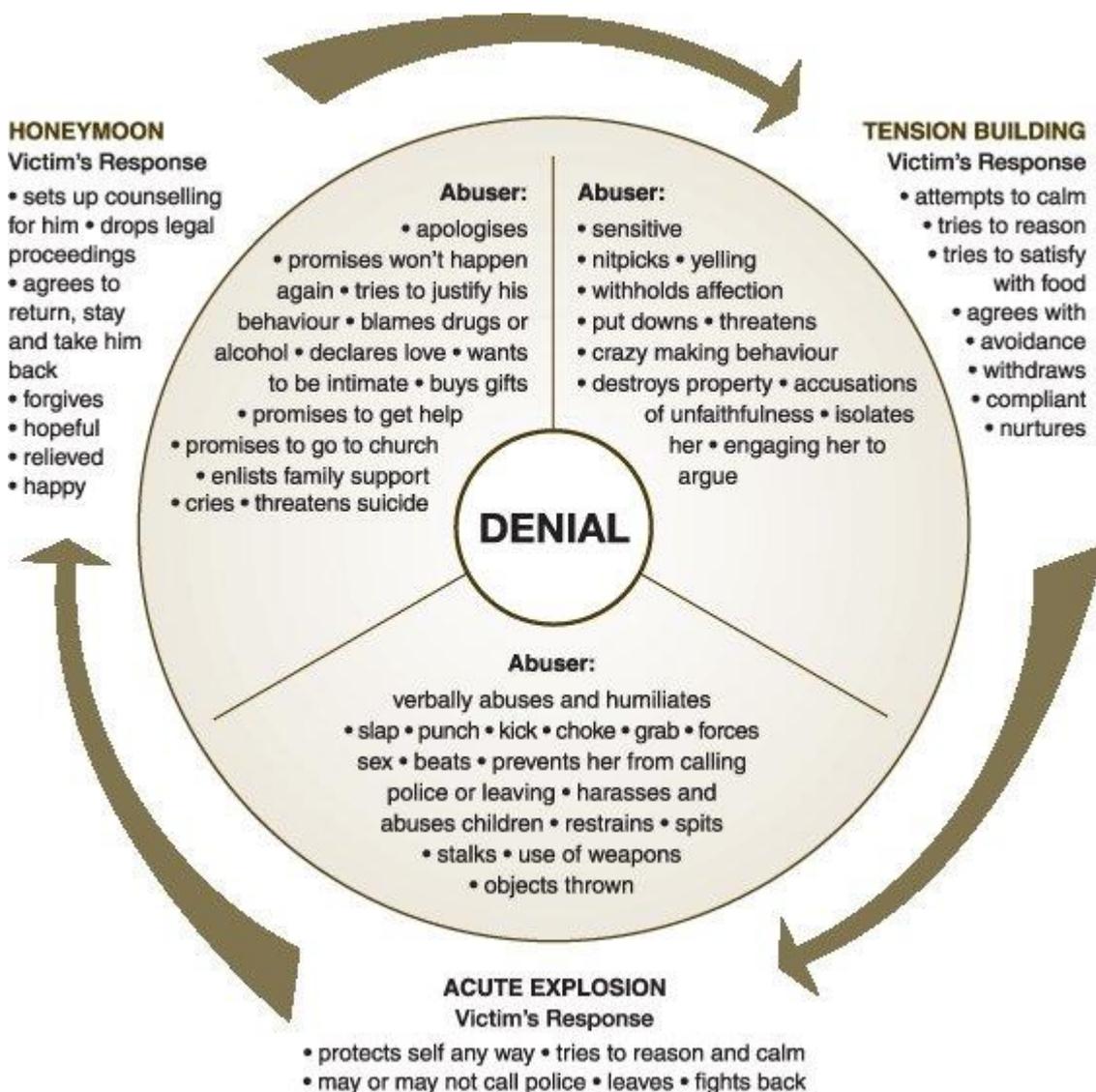


Tools to Build African-Australian & CaLD Men as Leaders in the Prevention of Domestic Violence Project

[https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/understand-domestic-violence/What is the cycle of violence?](https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/understand-domestic-violence/What%20is%20the%20cycle%20of%20violence?)

The cycle of violence looks at the repetitive nature of perpetrator’s actions that hinder a victim’s ability to leave an abusive relationship. The cycle of violence theory provides an insight into this by illustrating how the behaviour of a perpetrator can change very dramatically, making it difficult for the woman to leave. Women who have experienced violence may recognise this cycle.

The cycle of violence theory was developed in **1979 by Dr Lenore Walker**. It describes the phases an abusive relationship moves through in the lead up to a violent event and its follow-up.



What are the three stages of the cycle of violence?

Phase 1: Tension-building Phase

- Build Up: Tension between the people in the relationship starts to increase and verbal, emotional or financial abuse occurs.
- Stand-over: This phase can be very frightening for people experiencing abuse. They feel as though the situation will explode if they do anything wrong. The behaviour of the abuser intensifies and reaches a point where a release of tension is inevitable.

Phase 2: Acute Explosion

The peak of the violence is reached in this phase. The perpetrator experiences a release of tension. This feeling can become addictive, and the perpetrator may become unable to deal with anger in any other way.

Phase 3: Honeymoon Stage

- Remorse: At this point, the perpetrator starts to feel ashamed. They may become withdrawn and try to justify their actions to themselves and others. For example, they may say: “You know it makes me angry when you say that.”
- Pursuit: During the pursuit phase, the perpetrator promises never to be violent again. They may try to explain the violence by blaming other factors such as alcohol or stress at work. The perpetrator may be very attentive to the person experiencing violence, including buying gifts and helping around the house. It could seem as though the perpetrator has changed. At this point, the person experiencing the violence will feel confused and hurt but also relieved that the violence is over.
- Denial phase: Both people in the relationship may be in denial about the severity of the abuse and violence. Intimacy increases and both people feel happy and want the relationship to continue, so they ignore the possibility that the violence could happen again.

Over time, this phase passes and the cycle may begin again.

Visit [signs of an abusive relationship](#) and [controlling relationships](#) for more information about domestic violence and abusive relationships. ^[1]

^[1] **Brisbane Domestic Violence Service, *The cycle of violence*. Micah Projects, Brisbane.**

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/understand-domestic-violence/what-is-domestic-violence/signs-abusive-relationship/>

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