

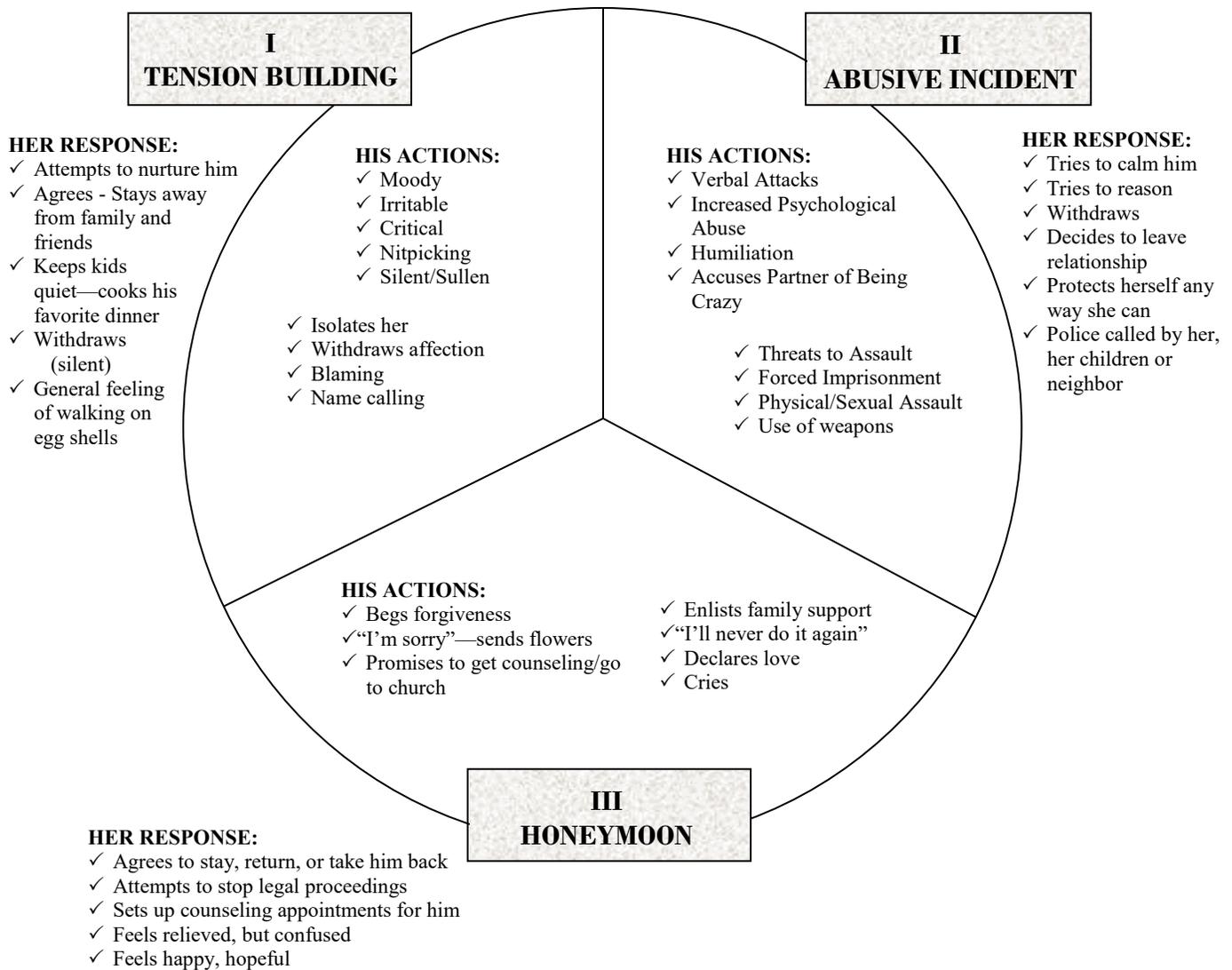


The Cycle of Abuse

Originally published as the Cycle of Violence in “The Battered Woman, by Lenore Walker, 1980.

Domestic abuse typically follows a pattern consisting of three phases that are repeated, with some variations, over and over. The first phase is the tension building phase: a time when the abuser is becoming more irritable, moody, and impatient and his partner is “walking on eggshells” trying to prevent an increase or outburst of abusive behavior. Phase two is the “acute battering” or “abusive phase.” This phase is characterized by an increase in the severity of abuse that may or

may not include physical or sexual violence. During an acute phase a partner may flee, seek medical attention or tell someone about the abuse. The third phase is usually called the “honeymoon” phase. It is characterized by relative calm, apologies and promises by the abuser to change. His partner may feel both relief and confusion. She often believes him, not recognizing that the “honeymoon” phase is also intended to control her and keep her in the relationship.



Learning to Recognize Abuse

The important thing to understand about identifying abuse is not just learning to watch for particular behaviors, but being aware of how behavior is functioning. The core component of abuse is the misuse of power to control another person. This dynamic manifests itself in many ways from the very extreme and obvious to the very subtle. The behaviors vary, but the goal remains the same: to gain, maintain, or regain control. Consider the varieties of abusive behaviors in this “power and control wheel.”

