



Intimate Partner Violence: What Abusive Relationships Can Look Like

What is intimate partner violence?

Intimate partner violence, also called domestic violence, is when a romantic partner tries to use **power** and **control** over the other partner. Most people have used an unhealthy behavior at some point in their relationship, but when it becomes a **pattern** and one partner holds power over the other, it is intimate partner violence. Anyone can be a victim of intimate partner violence and a person does not have to be hit to be abused.

There are several models that help explain what an abusive relationship can look like. One example is the Cycle of Violence, created by Lenore Walker in 1979. She found that many violent relationships follow a common pattern or cycle. The entire cycle may happen in a day or may take weeks or months. It is different for every relationship and not all relationships follow the cycle—many victims say they experience only the “tension building” and “explosion” phases, without the calm of a “honeymoon phase”.

The Cycle of Violence



HONEYMOON PHASE

The abusive partner is loving and apologetic. They often promise they will get help or that the abuse won't happen again.



EXPLOSION / FIGHT

When tensions have reached their peak, an abusive incident occurs. This incident does not have to include physical violence.



TENSION BUILDING

There is increased stress and tension. The victim may try to please their partner but often feels like they are “walking on eggshells.”

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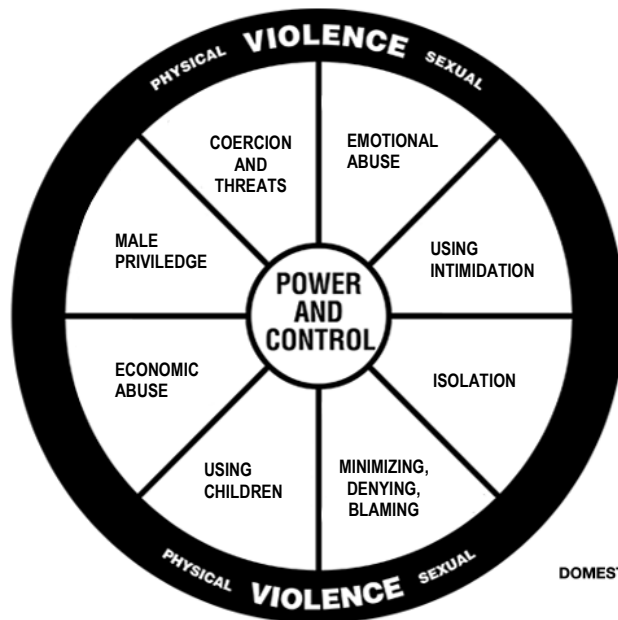
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Another example is the Power and Control Wheel and the Equality Wheel, created in 1984 by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in Duluth, Minnesota.

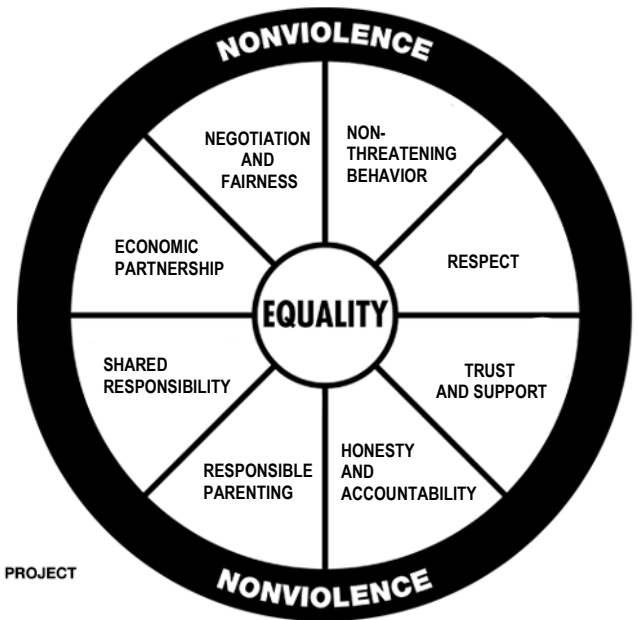
Power and Control Wheel



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Abusive partners try to gain power and control in their romantic relationships. They do this through controlling behaviors, as seen on the inside the Power and Control Wheel. When these stop working, the abusive partner may use acts of physical or sexual violence, as seen on the outside of the wheel, to keep their power and control. A relationship can be abusive without physical or sexual violence

Equality Wheel



We know abusive partners can change and the Equality Wheel shows the healthy behaviors that partners should use in their relationships instead of the controlling behaviors shown in the Power and Control Wheel. These behaviors, as seen on the inside the Equality Wheel, are reinforced through the presence of non-violence, as seen on the outside of the wheel.

There are other Power and Control wheels designed for populations such as Teens or the LGBTQ+ community, however not all of them were created with the same participating research models.