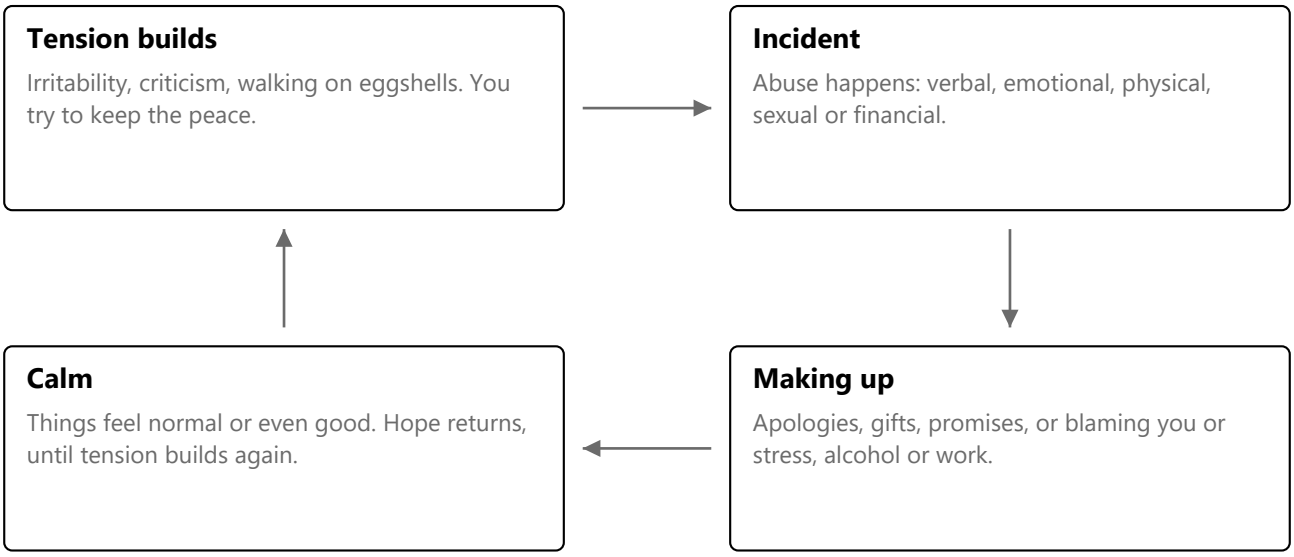
The Cycle of Abuse

Why it's so hard to leave

What this is

Many abusive relationships follow a repeating cycle. Knowing the cycle can explain why it's so hard to leave: the loving times are real, and they create hope that things will change. Understanding the pattern is not your fault, and neither is the abuse.



Good to know

- Over time, the calm and making-up phases often get **shorter**, and incidents more frequent or severe.
- Not all abuse follows a cycle. In coercive control, the control can be constant, with no clear incidents.
- Leaving is often the most dangerous time. Plan for safety with support (see T&W-BND-11).
- Love, children, money, faith, culture and fear are all real reasons people stay. You deserve support whatever you decide.

Based on the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979).

My reflection

Only fill this in if it feels safe. If someone checks your phone or belongings, keep this somewhere private or talk it through in session instead.

Do I recognise this cycle in my relationship (or one I've seen)?

What happens in each phase for me?

What keeps me hoping, or makes it hard to leave?

Who knows what's happening, or who could I tell?

Help is available, 24 hours, free: GBV Command Centre 0800 428 428 (or dial *120*7867# for a call back) · Stop Gender Violence Helpline 0800 150 150 · Police 10111 · Emergency from a cellphone 112. You can apply for a free **protection order** at any magistrate's court; urgent applications can be heard after hours.

Based on the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979).