The Cycle of Violence
Cycle of Violence
Lenore Walker’s Theory

ABUSE

TRIGGERING EVENT

TENSIONS BUILD

REMORSE

FORGIVENESS
Cycle of Violence

• Phase One – Step One

  ▶ Minor battering

  ▶ Victim’s denial of anger helps them to cope with a situation they desperately believe will change

  ▶ Victim blames outside factors; takes guilt for battering incident; apparent passive acceptance spurs on the abusive behavior and batterer doesn’t have to find control
Cycle of Violence

• Phase One – Step Two
  ▶ Batterers don’t want behavior made public, causing fear in them the victim will tell, thus increasing the oppression
  ▶ Batterer’s brutality keeps victim captive
  ▶ Learned helplessness syndrome
Cycle of Violence

• Phase One – Step Three
  ‣ As Phase 1 progresses, batter incidents increase, anger escalates, victim realizes Phase 2 is coming and works hard to control external situations: keeping children quiet, no phone calls
  ‣ Soon coping techniques fail
Cycle of Violence

• Phase One – Step Four
  ▶ Batterer increases possessive smothering and brutality; victim less able to defend herself against the pain and hurt
  ▶ Victim withdraws; batterer moves in more oppressively
  ▶ Unbearable tension builds up
  ▶ Victim sometimes triggers Phase 2 in order to break the unbearable tension, to just “get it over with”
Cycle of Violence

• Phase Two
  ▶ lack of control
  ▶ lack of predictability
    • acute battering with major destructiveness
    • lasts usually from 2 to 24 hours, with some reports of a week or more of terror
    • only batterers can end Phase 2
    • there’s an element of overkill and victims express extreme futility of trying to escape
    • victims suffer emotional collapse 22 to 48 hours after acute battering; they seek isolation; thus doctors often do not see them until a natural healing time has passed
    • extreme sexual abuse also during this time
Cycle of Violence

• Phase Three
  ▸ Unusual period of calm
    • batterer is extremely loving and kind and contrite
    • they are sorry and promise to never do it again
    • they believe they can maintain control
    • also believe they have taught victim a lesson so that they won’t have to beat them again
    • promises to give up drinking
    • convinces victim they’re needed, makes them feel guilty for leaving; makes victim feel the responsibility
    • promises they will get help if victim just stays