

# The Cycle of Verbal Abuse

*It is incredibly painful and heartbreakingly when you realize that the person you love is hostile towards you. Especially when we know that we deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. You want to help your partner understand that there is a better way to talk with you, but instead they insist on controlling and dominating everyone and everything around them. The harsh reality is that verbal abuse is a violation of our trust and emotional safety.*

## PHASE 1: KABOOM!

The cycle begins with an explosion of yelling, screaming, accusations, verbal harassment needling or threats of abandonment.

- "You're lucky I put up with you."
- "No one else would tolerate what I do."
- "If you don't shape up, I'm going to leave you!"

Hint: They are not going to leave you – **It's an empty threat** (you should be so lucky). One of the effects of emotional abuse is that you believe their nonsense.

## Phase 4

## PHASE 4: TICK, TICK, TICK...

Tension begins to build again, replacing the all too fleeting honeymoon period. Irritability surfaces. Communication deteriorates. They start making veiled accusations, blaming you for their unhappiness, frustration and anything else they can think of. They may start to emotionally withdraw and give you the cold shoulder. Eventually, this escalates into another full blown rage episode, verbal attack, humiliation party or completely shuts you out.

## PHASE 2: I'M SORRY...

Next comes a period of remorse, rationalizations and promises. They might...

- Apologize and vow it will never happen again.
- Pretend like it never happened.
- Blame you for causing them to act that way.
- Deny that the incident ever occurred.
- Minimizes and insists it wasn't that bad.

Hint: Usually, you're so relieved that the screaming and insults have stopped that you go along with however they spin the story. **You hope the recent attack was the last, but it never is.**

## Phase 2

## PHASE 3: THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

Things go back to "normal" for a time. This is referred to as the "honeymoon phase." No overt abuse is taking place. You're getting along, while simultaneously waiting for the other shoe to drop and walking on eggshells.

## Phase 3

They appear sincere in their efforts to be kind and loving, but what they are actually doing is lulling you into a false sense of security that the worst is over. **It's not.**