

Cycle of Violence

From a domestic or intimate partner perspective, the cycle of violence often feels confusing and destabilizing because harm is not constant; it comes in waves. Tension builds through control, fear, or walking on eggshells, followed by an incident of abuse that may be physical, emotional, or sexual. Afterward, reconciliation and calm can bring apologies, affection, promises to change, and brief relief, which can make the relationship feel safe again and deepen emotional attachment. This return to calm can create hope and self-doubt for the person experiencing harm, making it harder to recognize the pattern and leave, even as the cycle repeats and often escalates over time.



If You Are Worried

Name what you're experiencing without minimizing it. Pay attention to patterns, not just single incidents: how you feel before, during, and after conflict; whether fear, control, or confusion are present; and whether your needs are shrinking to keep the peace. Writing things down privately can help you see situations more clearly when emotions or apologies blur things.

You don't have to decide everything at once, but having someone safe to talk to (a friend, counselor, advocate, or campus support office) reduces isolation and self-doubt. Learn what resources are available to you and consider a simple safety plan, even if you're unsure what you want to do long-term. Getting support is not a commitment to leave; it's a way to take care of yourself and keep choices open.

How to Help

Abuse often thrives on isolation and confusion, so checking in, keeping boundaries, and reminding them they're not alone can be powerful even if nothing changes immediately. Leaving is often the most dangerous and complex moment, and progress may look like increased awareness, safety planning, or accepting support, rather than an immediate exit.