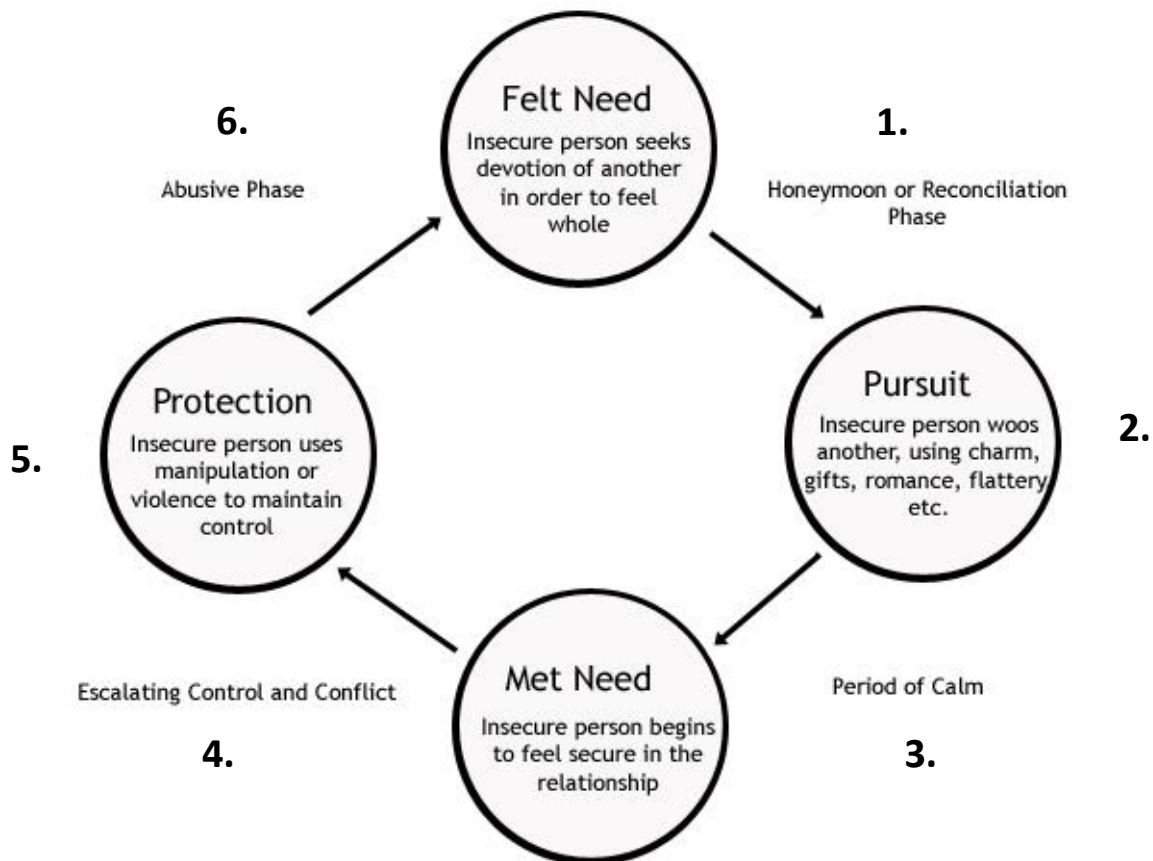


# The Abuse Cycle

*The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble. Proverbs 4:19*

Many otherwise competent and rational people have found themselves caught up in a cycle of abuse which they do not quite understand. The truth of the matter is that the person committing the abuse doesn't understand it either. Most instances of relational abuse are driven by deep insecurities in the heart of the dominant person who feels unworthy and incomplete without the love and submissive devotion of the other person in the cycle. They will work very hard to get that need met – and to fight any perceived threat to the status quo.



**1.** The beginning of an abusive relationship generally looks just like the beginning of any relationship except that the dominant person may try a bit harder than your average Joe.

**2.** The insecure but dominant partner will use whatever tools he/she can to win the devotion of the other person. This does not mean that those gestures are insincere, but they are driven by insecurity and a desire to possess rather than genuine appreciation of the other.

**3.** Once the insecure partner feels that the relationship has been established, that the other person 'belongs' to them, a period of calm may ensue.

4. In order to solidify a warped sense of unity in the relationship, the dominant person may become increasingly jealous or controlling or demanding. This represents an attempt to absorb the other person, to have them solely and always devoted. It can be thought of like the increasing need of an addict for more of the substance which has brought him/her relief.

5. If the victimized partner attempts to assert their independence, or if the dominant partner merely perceives that they are, violence (physical, emotional or sexual) may be the result. Paranoia, unreasonable jealousy or attempts to control the appearance, finances, friendships or activities of one's partner may be warning signs of impending violence.

6. Once the situation escalates to the point where the abuser is forced to recognize his/her own actions as abusive, there will typically be some expression of remorse coupled with attempts to win back the love of the person who has been victimized. While this may seem insincere to an outsider, it does represent the insecure person's real desire to restore the relationship – but the motivation is personal need rather than remorse over the pain or desire for the well-being of the other person.

If the victimized partner does not recognize this cycle, which is hard from the inside, they may become so beaten down, so used to the cycle, that they accept this as 'normal.' They may believe that their love can change the other person permanently or they may even believe that they deserve the abuse they receive. If they recognize the manipulation, they may be willing to trade control and abuse on one side of the diagram for the passionate love they perceive from their partner in the calmer phases of the relationship – or for some other reward like financial stability or a parent for their child.

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Is there anything in this diagram or description which reminds you of your own life?

If you feel caught in this pattern, what is holding you there?

If you see yourself in this handout, tell someone you trust: a pastor, counselor or friend who can help you change the cycle. No matter who or where you are inside this diagram, there is hope and freedom for you *outside* the cycle of abuse. Whatever part you play, it is not a kindness to allow yourself or anyone else to maintain this sinful, self-perpetuating pattern. If you are a victim of violence, call the police. If you are afraid, there are shelters where you can go for protection. If you live in Florida, call the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-500-1119** for more information about your options. Elsewhere in the US you may call the National Domestic Abuse Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE(7233).

*There is no fear in love. 1 John 4:18*