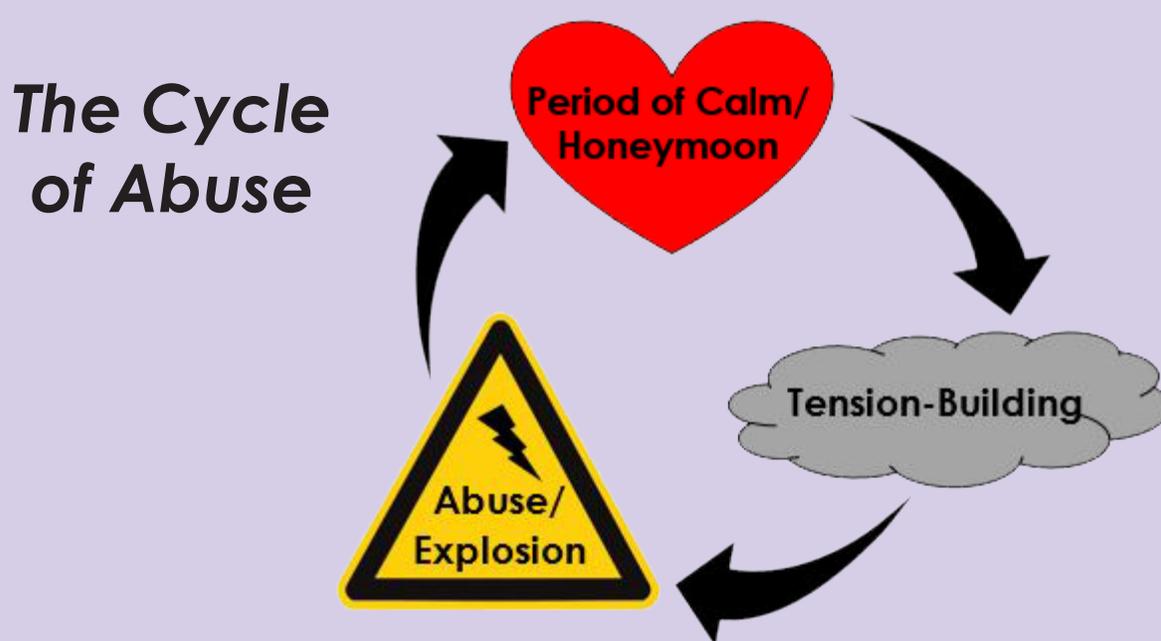


You Chose Option A...

You have a colleague at work who's got basketball posters all over his office, so you ask him if he'd like to see the next home basketball game. He says yes, but tells you to hold the tickets for him until next week after payday. Your coworker gets your number out of the company directory and sends you a text over the weekend reminding you to bring the tickets and says that he's excited about going to the game. Your husband sees the text while you're in the shower and assumes that you are going to the game with your co-worker. When you get out of the shower, he accuses you of cheating and hits you so hard that you fall to the ground. He then demands that you quit your job or he'll divorce you and take away the children. You panic – even though you weren't actually cheating and you're hurt, your husband may never believe you and you worry that a family dispute like this could have a negative impact on your children. You write a letter of resignation and promise to turn it in at work the next day.

A Follow Up from Emerge:

Lorraine and David's relationship didn't seem to indicate patterns of abuse in the beginning, but overtime Lorraine felt the tension and uncertainty about David's behavior. Though not all abusive relationships will fit this pattern, the diagram below illustrates the reoccurring cycle of behavior that's frequently seen in abusive relationships.



The Cycle of Abuse diagram is a helpful tool in understanding how difficult it can be for survivors like Lorraine to make sense of what's happening in their relationship and the decisions they make to calm the relationship back to being "normal" or "okay." The Honeymoon Period is often what keeps those experiencing abuse from leaving the relationship because it can be a reminder of how good things once were and create a sense of hope that the relationship will return to being that way.

Within the cycle, the partner using abusive behavior may be affectionate, remorseful and calm in-between periods of tension that can grow into physical, sexual or emotional abuse. During the tension-building period, it's common to see the abusive person begin to exhibit controlling/abusive behaviors in a subtle way such as withdrawing affection, being short-tempered, increasing use of alcohol/drugs, or using behaviors that feel more threatening to their partner. The cycle also lends itself to an inevitable explosion that often leaves survivors feeling scared and confused. They may also feel guilty for the abuse when their partner makes excuses, minimizes their behavior and blames the survivor for what's happening.

Out of fear that the abusive behavior will begin again or as a way to create peace in the relationship, some common reactions survivors have may include working hard at supporting their partner or taking responsibility for anything that may have contributed to their partner's abusive or controlling behavior. They may also isolate themselves or withdraw from friends and family, and other support systems because of shame they have about their struggle at home. With so much energy focused on avoiding tension causing situations, survivors can sometimes lose focus of their own needs. These reactions may help with understanding why Lorraine tried to undo her choices as a way to not escalate David and avoid further conflict.