



This is the cycle ABUSERS go through in order to abuse. This is how they justify abusing other people. The model is cyclical, and the level of violence escalates with time. The stages are conscious and intentional.

1. **ABUSE:** The abuser commits the act(s) of sexual assault, incest, emotional abuse, verbal abuse, isolation, murder, etc.
2. **GUILT:** The abuser experiences self-directed guilt, not normal guilt. Non-abusive people feel guilt for inflicting pain or hurting others (i.e., victim-directed guilt). Abusers feel self-directed guilt (i.e., “*I shouldn’t have done it. Now I might get caught.*”)
3. **RATIONALIZATION:** The abuser rationalizes the abusive behavior in order to reduce his feelings of self-directed guilt. He excuses the behavior by blaming the victim. Blaming the victim also allows the abuser to continue the behavior without accepting responsibility. Examples:
  - a. The abuser may rationalize beating his wife by saying, “*You shouldn’t have made me mad.*”
  - b. The abuser may rationalize rape by saying, “*She was acting provocatively.*”
4. **NORMAL BEHAVIOR:** The abuser engages in seemingly normal, or better than normal, behavior. He may bring flowers to his wife or act in a thoughtful, kind manner.
5. **FANTASY:** The abuser fantasizes about past and future abuse. Rapists typically have very vivid, step-by-step fantasies, but batterers also fantasize about their abuse. Both types of abusers have sexual and non-sexual fantasies. Fantasizing feeds their criminal thinking and moves them to the next step in the cycle.
6. **PLANNING (Cognitive):** The abuser thinks about what he will need to have to do so he can abuse again. Examples:
  - a. The abuser may drink to excuse assaulting his wife.
  - b. A rapist knows he will have to identify a victim and location to commit his crime.
7. **SETTING UP:** The abuser sets up the conditions so the abuse can occur. Example:
  - a. A batterer may buy alcohol with the intent to drink it and then assault his wife.



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