

FOCUS ON PHYSICAL ABUSE



Physical abuse is the most visible form of domestic abuse. It includes such behaviour as slapping, burning, beating, kicking, biting, stabbing and can lead to permanent injuries and sometimes death. The perpetrator's aim is to intimidate and cause fear. If someone in your family or an intimate partner is acting in this way, regardless of scale, this is physical abuse.



WHAT IS PHYSICAL ABUSE?

Physical abuse is any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person through bodily contact. It is a deliberate act of force that results in harm, injury, or trauma to the victim's body. It might include behaviors such as hitting, kicking, shoving, slapping, choking or otherwise hurting you, your children or your pets.

Perpetrators of physical abuse may be very sorry after an attack. They may be tearful and apologetic. Or they may insist that the victim started or caused the violence. They might say that they didn't mean it, but that they 'lost control'. They might blame it on drink or drugs. These excuses often leave the victim confused and aim to enable the perpetrator to maintain control over the victim. Whatever happens, it is NEVER the fault of the victim, and the excuses will NEVER excuse violent behaviour in the home.

PHYSICAL ABUSE USUALLY ESCALATES

Assaults often start small, maybe a little shove during an argument, or forcefully grabbing your wrist, but over time usually become more frequent and more severe. It may be preceded by other abusive behaviours, such as verbal or emotional abuse. Abuse might happen only once in a while at first, but it almost always gets more intense and happens more often over time

You deserve to be safe, and live free from violence.

Nobody ever deserves to be abused.

Abuse is always the abuser's fault.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL ABUSE

1

Get to a safe place.

2

Seek medical attention to treat injuries, and preserve evidence. You don't have to report to the police at this time.

3

Talk to someone you trust: a friend, family member, or an organisation like Women's Aid.

5

Consider reporting the assault. This is entirely your choice, and you can change your mind later.

4

Record details about what happened, including dates, times, locations. This can be helpful if you decide to report it but not essential.

6

Seek help from a professional who specialises in domestic abuse to help you through the healing process.

PHYSICAL ABUSE STATISTICS

- 38% of female homicide victims in Scotland were killed by a partner or ex-partner.¹
- The British Crime Survey figures highlight that in a year victims experience an average of 20 incidents of domestic violence which increase in severity over time.²
- Common assault accounted for around one-third of all crimes for incidents of domestic abuse that involved a crime in Scotland in 2023-2024.³
- One study found co-occurrence of domestic abuse and child abuse in 40% of cases.⁴
- When women threatened by domestic violence were able to access support services and leave an abusive partner, the risk of further assaults was reduced by 80%.⁵

Damaging
personal
property

Hitting

Strangling

Coercing
you into
substance
abuse

Kicking

WHAT IS PHYSICAL ABUSE?

Physical abuse is defined as any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person through bodily contact. It is a deliberate act of force that results in harm, injury, or trauma to the victim's body.

Punching

Pulling or
dragging

Stabbing, or
cutting with a
blade

Shoving or
pushing

Hurting your
children or
your pets

Over- or
under-medicating,
or changing a
medication without
consent

Slapping or
pinching

Use of weapons

Burning or using
heat to hurt you

An abuser threatens violence.

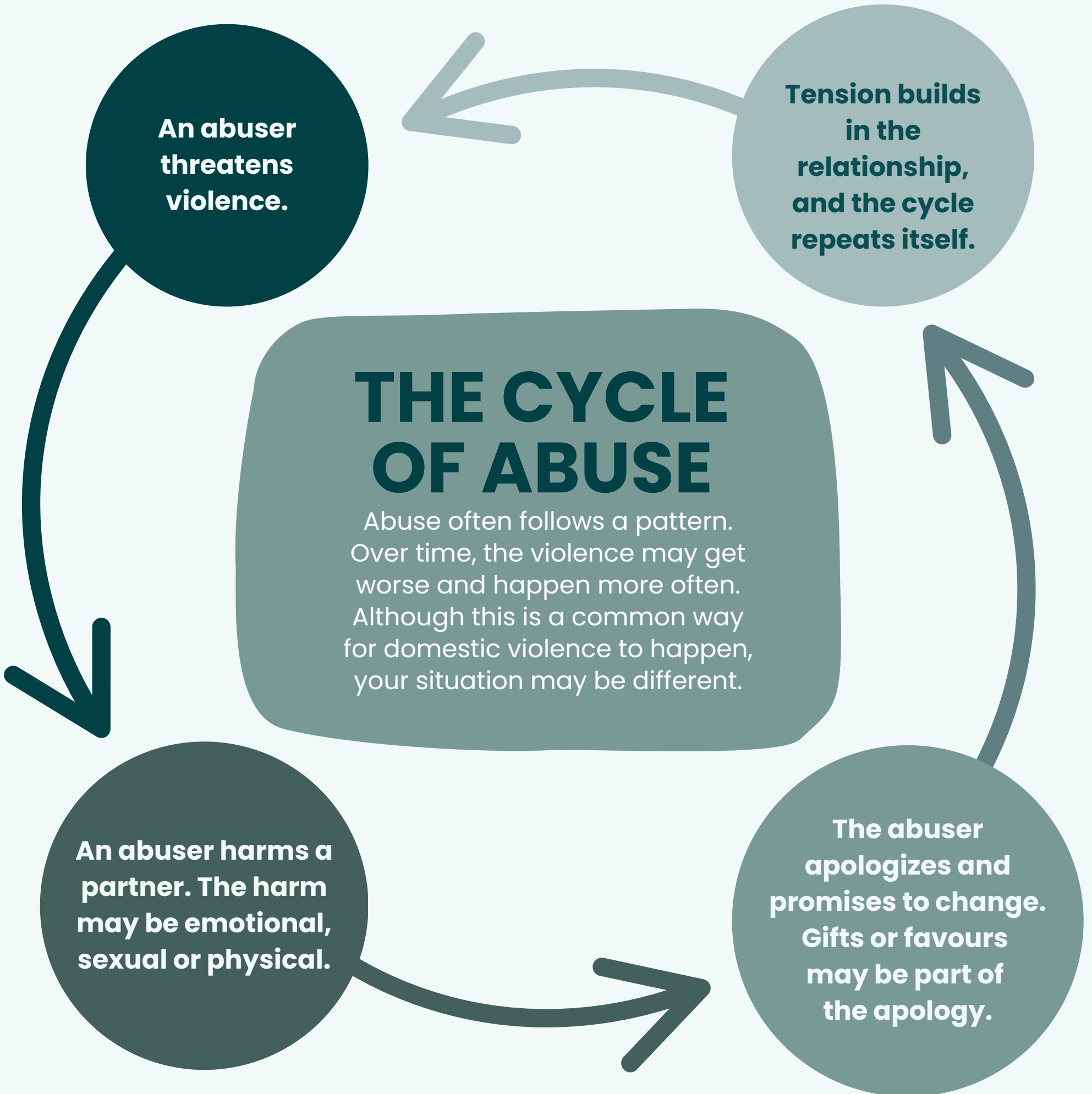
Tension builds in the relationship, and the cycle repeats itself.

THE CYCLE OF ABUSE

Abuse often follows a pattern. Over time, the violence may get worse and happen more often. Although this is a common way for domestic violence to happen, your situation may be different.

An abuser harms a partner. The harm may be emotional, sexual or physical.

The abuser apologizes and promises to change. Gifts or favours may be part of the apology.



WHO CAN HELP WOMEN EXPERIENCING ABUSE?

In an emergency, always call 999.

There are lots of organizations to help women in Scotland who have experienced physical abuse. Your GP is a good place to start if you can visit alone.

North Ayrshire Women's Aid

A specialist local service that provides emotional and practical support to women affected by domestic abuse.

01294 602 424

nawomensaid.com

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Free 24-hour helpline for women who have experienced domestic abuse and violence, with all female advisors.

0808 2000 247

nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Scottish Women's Rights Centre

Free and confidential legal information affected by gender based violence such as domestic abuse.

08088 010 789

scottishwomensrightscentre.org.uk

Refuge

Support, information and advocacy for women who have experienced domestic violence and abuse.

0808 2000 247

refuge.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland

Information, advice and support on debt, money matters, housing and benefits, etc.

0800 028 1456

www.cas.org.uk

Victim Support Scotland

Provides information, practical help, emotional support and guidance through the criminal justice system.

0800 160 1985

victimsupport.scot