



Abuse is Not Age Related

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled "All Psyched Up" for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of "Life is An Adventure...every step of the way" and "Open for Business Success" is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

Published

July 11th, 2007

There are a number of different types of abuse which are evidenced in all cultures across all age groups. Emotional, physical, sexual, mental or social abuses unfortunately are prevalent across North America.

Imagine two circles, one inside the other, in a manner that would be similar to a wheel. Within the hub are the words "Power and Control". Each person needs to have the power to do things in life and the ability to control his or her environment to a certain degree. When a person begins to steal the power and control belonging to another person, however, an abusive cycle can result.

Divide the outer circle into four sections. The first can be labeled "Tension Building". During this period of time, the senior, partner or child is afraid of the abusive person and tends to "walk on eggshells". Tension in the relationship can be felt as triggers appear. For example, some people who abuse are upset when a cheque doesn't arrive as expected, company comes to visit, or s/he has problems at work. The result is that anyone close to that person is affected and tries to alter behaviours in order to prevent the upset person from inappropriately taking these problems out on the family.

The second section of the circle is called "Explosive Event" and can include threats, yelling, swearing, hurting pets, destroying property and/or physical violence. These are the worst times in the relationship and can be severe enough for police or medical intervention at times. The emotional scars that result from accusations and name-calling, however, can be as damaging as physical assaults and more difficult to overcome.

The third section is usually called "Remorse" and can be a most confusing time because victims want to believe that the person who has done the abusing is truly sorry for the harm that has occurred. It is important, however, to distinguish between "Repentance" and "Remorse". Repentance is a 180-degree change of heart AND behaviour. The person who has been abusive cries because s/he is truly sorry to the point that they stop the abuse. Remorse, on the other hand, describes a person who cries because s/he is "caught". For example, if police are at the door, a person may be crying but that does not guarantee that the behaviours will change.

The fourth section of the cycle is called "Honeymoon" and represents the best of times in the relationship. Often promises to go for counseling, gift giving, sending flowers, planning trips or other attentive behaviours can "hook" the victim back into the relationship only to start the cycle again.

Over time, in some relationships, the Honeymoon period shortens or disappears altogether, and the individuals go from Tension Building to Explosive Event to Remorse and then around again.

Abuse can be stopped but it requires change on the part of the abuser and of the target.

Every person, regardless of age or situation deserves respect - from self and from others. If this is not occurring, education and support will be helpful. Usually, the person who is hurt needs to decide that things **MUST** change and then reach out to get help for him or herself.

In the many years that I have worked with families, I don't believe that I have ever heard of a person who is doing the abusing to be the first one to ask for help. They think that the other person is the problem, and their actions are therefore justified!

Child Welfare, Phoenix Safe House and Palliser Health are some of the organizations with programs to assist those who are being abused.

If you are afraid or worried about your situation or relationship with someone, don't try to convince the other person to change. Find someone who is trustworthy to help you stop the cycle! You'll be glad you did because you deserve better.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.