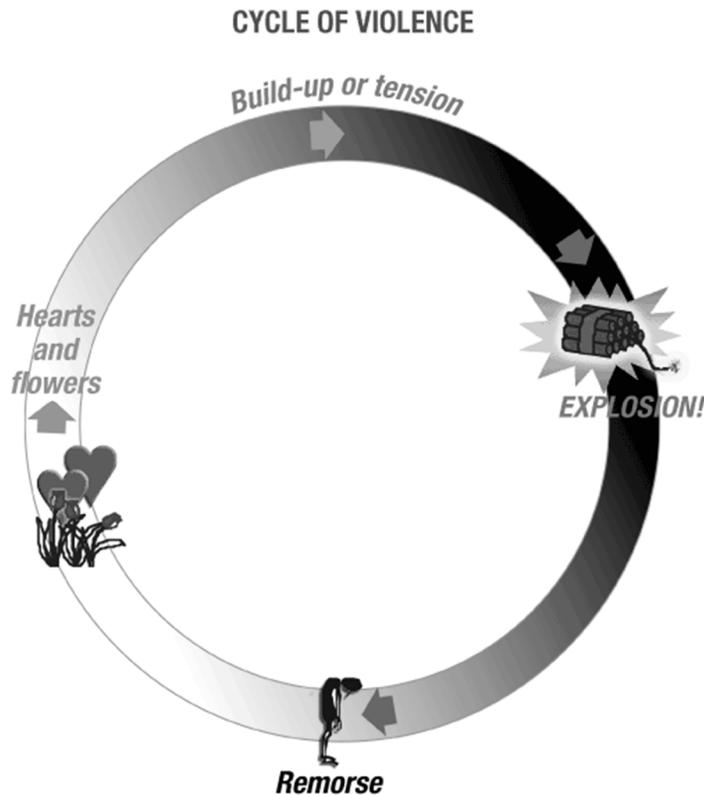


Question. #5 “Everyone tells me to end my relationship because of the lying, cheating, betrayal and abuse. But I am in love, what should I do?”

Pat, age 42

Answer. People often shop for cars with more logic than choosing relationships. If a car ran efficiently and effectively for 50% of the time but the other 50% it broke down, rolled into a ditch or burst into flames, would you place your children in that car? Would you keep driving, seek a repair shop or look for a new ride?

Relationships built on a pattern of conflict, deception or violence create emotional wounds and broken trust. The relationship described in this question is referred to as “Cycle of Violence”



developed in the 1970s by Lenore Walker to explain patterns of behavior in abusive relationships.

Each person in this relationship participates in the cycle. Each has a role. Here are typical examples:

“I know she loves me. It’s not her fault when she gets violent. I always say or do something to set her off.”

“He says he won’t cheat on me again. He only lied to protect me.”

“We only hit each other when we drink too much, so I wouldn’t call that violence.”

“He is so sorry afterwards. Each time he promises to change. He cries and begs me to stay. I don’t want to make him mad by leaving.”

Continuing to tolerate the cycle reinforces the behavior. Upon further inspection, you may begin to understand that “lying, cheating, betrayal and abuse” are not compatible with “respect, trust, loyalty and love”. Rather than asking “Do you love your partner?” Ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Do I respect my partner? Do I feel respected?*
2. *Do I trust my partner? Do I feel trusted?*
3. *Do I have confidence in my partner? Do I feel confident?*
4. *Am I confident with myself as a relationship role-model?*
5. *Would I want my son, daughter, sibling or best friend to be in a relationship exactly like mine?*

Breaking the cycle of violence requires learning healthier responses to stress, conflict and anger. Review chapter 2 for additional insight into the patterns of aggressive and passive personality styles. Chapter 10 will also offer more insights in “Dealing with difficult people.”

Relationships: When to stay, when to walk away, and when to run!

“In my last relationship I realized that my partner was self-centered, self-serving, arrogant, ignorant, unfaithful, hypercritical, abusive, an under-achiever and an alcoholic. I was devastated when he broke up with me.” Tigress Luv www.TigressLuv.com

How do you know when it’s time to end a relationship?

Never betray your own better judgment or your values. End a relationship before you compromise your self-respect or physical safety. There are four conditions when most psychologists and clergy agree that ending a relationship may be the right action. The four conditions are known as the “Four A’s”:

1. Abandonment (The partner left and is not coming back).
2. Addiction (Especially if children need protection).
3. Abuse (Especially physical abuse or if children need protection).
4. Adultery (Ending the relationship is an option, not a requirement).

Relationship problems unrelated to the “4 A’s” require deeper investigation. Ending committed relationships simply because one or both partners’ “fell out of love,” “got bored” or “grew apart” leaves each partner at risk of repeating the same mistakes in future relationships.

Before you walk away, answer the following 8 questions:

- *Yes No** 1. Is this relationship harmful or dangerous to me or to my children?
- Yes No.** 2. If I had a son or daughter in a relationship exactly like mine, would I advise ending the relationship?
- Yes No.** 3. Have I treated my partner as I wish to be treated?
- Yes No.** 4. Have I maintained my sense of independence and encouraged my partner to do the same?
- Yes No.** 5. Have I continued to live true to my values and beliefs during this relationship?
- Yes No.** 6. Have I exhausted all options to communicate openly in this relationship?
- Yes No.** 7. Have I exhausted all options to negotiate conflict?
- Yes No.** 8. Could I respect myself for walking away from this commitment?

***Scoring: Answering “Yes” to question #1** indicates the need for immediate legal action and professional intervention.

“Yes” to questions #2 through #8 indicates that your values are aligned with ending the relationship.

“No” to questions #3 through #8 indicates a need to seek additional resources or professional help to improve problem solving and communication skills.