

# Feelings

Being in an abusive relationship can be confusing with many mixed feelings.

When sex is used as a weapon all of these can be magnified and all are valid. How one reacts and copes can be varied. It is always about survival and everyone's feelings need to be respected.

# Support

The North Coast Rape Crisis Team is here to support anyone who is in a sexually abusive relationship. We attempt to be a safe place where that person will be heard, believed, given the space to make their own choices, and supported in their own healing.

If you know someone in this situation, you can help by believing and offering choices. It is important to remember that survivors know what may or may not be safe better than anyone else. They are the experts on their own lives, but they may need the support of a friend, a shelter, or a place like The North Coast Rape Crisis Team to find their way through what is happening.

**If you or someone you know is being sexually abused, call our 24-hour hotline at (707) 445-2881 for free and confidential support.**

Rev 7.19

# Resources

## NORTH COAST RAPE CRISIS TEAM

Collect calls are accepted

Del Norte 24-hr hotline: (707) 465-2851

TTY (M-F 8:30-5:00): (707) 465-2031

Business Office: (707) 465-6961

Humboldt 24-hr hotline: (707) 445-2881

TTY (M-F 8:30-5:00): (707) 443-2738

Business Office: (707) 443-2737



## Humboldt Domestic Violence Services

(707) 443-6042

## Humboldt County Mental Health Hotline

(707) 445-7715

## The RAVEN Project

(707) 443-7099

## Planned Parenthood

(707) 442-5700

## Two Feathers Native American Family Services

(707) 839-1933

## RAINN (Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network)

1 (800) 656-4673

Online live chat: [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)

## National Domestic Violence Hotline

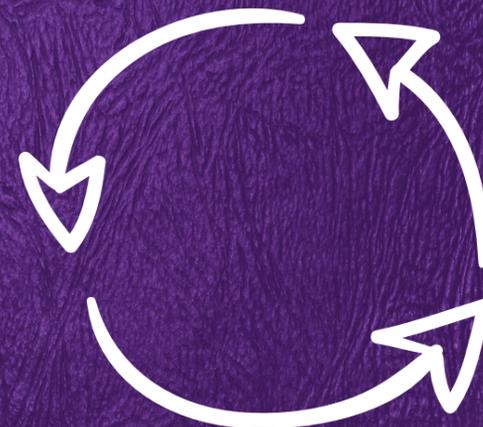
1 (800) 799-7233

## National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1 (800) 273-8255

# Domestic Violence

Sexual Abuse within the  
"Cycle of Violence"



## North Coast Rape Crisis Team

*"Imagine a world without violence"*

24-hr Hotline: (707) 445-2881

TTY (M-F 8:30-5:00): (707) 443-2738

Business Line: (707) 443-2737

[www.ncrct.org](http://www.ncrct.org)

## Strategies & Tactics

Abuse can take place in all types of relationships between people of any gender. There are many different terms that people use to talk about these types of violence including: intimate partner violence, domestic violence, dating violence, marital rape, and spousal rape. Any of these terms are correct, and each survivor gets to use the language that feels most comfortable to them. Being in any abusive relationship can be confusing, terrifying, and unfair. When sex is used as a weapon, all of these feelings can be magnified.

Abusers use many different abuse tactics to establish **power** and **control** over their partner. In order to do that, abusers use the tactics that work for them individually. Some of these tactics include:

- **Physical abuse**
- **Sexual abuse**
- **Emotional abuse and gaslighting**
- **Isolation**
- **Threats against children and/or other family members or animals**
- **Intimidation and coercion**
- **Financial abuse**

Because each situation is different, abusers target specific vulnerabilities within their partner and then exploit those vulnerabilities to assert the sense of entitlement they feel over their partner.

People who are physically abusive towards their partners are often sexually abusive as well, which is why it is important to talk about sexual abuse within domestic violence.

## Sex within the Cycle of Violence

Abuse in an intimate relationship usually occurs within a cycle. This means there is a pattern which develops where some days are better than others, but eventually the abuse occurs again. Phases of the cycle are sometimes referred to as re-bonding, tension building, and explosion phases.

### Re-bonding

In this phase, individuals may experience and/or express feeling joy, love, closeness, and satisfaction in their relationship. Sex might be consensual and/or feel safe during this phase, and could be used as a way to reconnect.

### Tension Building

When sex is happening during this phase it may be experienced and/or expressed as stressful, degrading, coerced, etc. Either person may withhold sex. Threats of infidelity or causing someone to feel unattractive may also happen. There may be threats of sexual abuse against children.

### Explosion

During this phase, if sexual acts happen they will be driven by force, fear, physical violence, and/or threat. Thus, this is **NOT SEX**, it is sexualized **VIOLENCE**. At times the threat is present simply by the abused individual knowing what happened the last time they tried to say "no." This can include sexual abuse of children and/or forcing them to watch an assault.

## Traumatic Bonding

Forming bonds with others is a biological and emotional process that makes people more important to each other. In healthy relationships, bonds are developed and maintained by spending time together, sharing interests, sharing intimacy, etc.

After undergoing something traumatic, feelings of hurt and pain are common and the desire to find relief from the situation is natural. In efforts to find relief, the abused individual might place more focus on the positive aspects of their relationship, ignoring or dismissing the negative ones. When bonds are formed through traumatic experiences in abusive relationships, the abuser takes on two roles: the tormentor and the rescuer. Ironically, trauma bonds can often times be stronger than healthy forms of bonding, making it very difficult for survivors of abuse to identify or leave dangerous situations.

## Consent

It is natural that sex is part of intimate relationships. The question is, when is it sex and when is it violence? This comes down to the issue of consent. Consent can only be present if it is given knowingly and freely. In other words, if threat, coercion, intoxication, or violence is happening, then consent is not present. Consent needs to be given on an ongoing basis, and it can be withdrawn at any time. Remember, even in a relationship including marriage, we never lose our right to say no.