

The Hurting Woman Characteristics of an Abusive Relationship

This article was written by Jacque Truitt and is adapted from a chapter in *Transformed Lives: Taking Women's Ministry to the Next Level*. /www.lifeway.com

Pain can arise from a number of sources, so it's best to equip yourself to minister in a number of ways. One source of trauma in a woman's life may be an abusive relationship.

Abuse rarely begins with physical violence. Abuse follows an identifiable cycle – which both partners usually deny.

Phase One - Tension-building phase

Yelling, name-calling, put-downs, throwing things, accusations

Phase Two - Violent episode

Hitting, punching, degrading, more verbal abuse

Phase Three - Honeymoon phase

"I'm sorry," promises to change, "It won't ever happen again," flowers, gifts

Learn to recognize the signs of a victimized woman.

She...

- is afraid of her partner.
- cannot express her own opinion or feelings without being fearful of her partner's reaction.
- must ask her partner's permission to see family or friends, spend money or make purchases.
- sometimes feels as if she is living with two different people.
- tries to please her partner, only to be criticized repeatedly.
- constantly attempts to mold her children, her environment and herself into what pleases her partner.
- stays confused about the difference in the way her partner perceives the relationship and the way she perceives it.
- eventually believes all the terrible things her partner accuses her of and says about her; is unsure of reality.

If you are ministering to a woman and you observe that these actions are occurring or she shares information related to them, encourage her to seek professional help from a licensed Christian counselor. The cycle of abuse continues and worsens without treatment.

Remember: safety takes precedence over confidentiality. If the woman refuses or hesitates to seek help, enlist a qualified professional to assist you. Do not attempt intervention alone.

*If you'd like to read more details on sources of trauma such as domestic abuse, depression, and other topics related to ministering to women in crisis, see *Transformed Lives* or *Women Reaching Women in Crisis*.*