

IF IT HURTS, IT'S NOT LOVE

Toxic cycles exist in many aspects of life. Some people find themselves trapped in addiction, unable to break free from drugs or alcohol. Others experience toxic friendships that manipulate and drain them. Even seemingly healthy habits, like sports or dieting, can become obsessive and harmful. One of the most damaging cycles is gender violence, a repetitive pattern of abuse where control and fear dominate the relationship, making it incredibly difficult for victims to escape. What makes it so difficult for victims to escape these cycles, and what is the hardest part of enduring such situations? To fully understand this issue, it is important to examine both perspectives: the aggressor, who perpetuates the abuse, and the victim, who becomes trapped in a cycle of control. Let's analyze the issue.

On the one hand, aggressors often struggle to recognize that their actions are abusive, and in some cases, they believe that everything they do is out of love. Many must grow up in environments where violence is normalized, believing dominance is a natural part of relationships. Emotional regulation problems and societal pressure to be strong and dominant reinforce these behaviors. Manipulation tactics, such as financial control and emotional blackmail, further trap victims. The abuse follows a predictable cycle: tension builds, leading to an explosion of violence. Afterward, the aggressor expresses remorse, followed by a honeymoon phase where they promise change. This temporary relief gives victims hope, keeping them in the cycle.

On the other hand, victims often fail to recognize the abuse, and when they finally do, they think that it's too late to escape. They hold onto the hope that their partner will change, remembering the good moments shared. Manipulation, humiliation, and psychological threats wear them down, making them feel guilty and powerless. Isolation increases their dependence, leaving them emotionally and physically drained. Many stay due to financial struggles or fear of losing their children, reinforcing the idea that escape is impossible. In most cases, the aggressor isolates the victim from society, and they don't have the support of their families or friends to break free.

For me, the worst part of these cycles is isolation. Victims become prisoners under their abuser's rules, cut off from the outside world. They stop socializing, lose touch with loved ones, and forget what a healthy relationship looks like. Without different perspectives, they no longer know what is normal and what is not. Breaking this cycle requires courage and determination, but also strong support. In my opinion, we should receive more education on this subject from different perspectives: preventing aggressors through therapy, providing information on how to help someone close to us who is suffering from abuse, and, most importantly, offering better support to victims so they can escape. Gender violence is not just a personal issue; it is a societal one, and only together can we create a safer world to live in.

By Mar Gallego