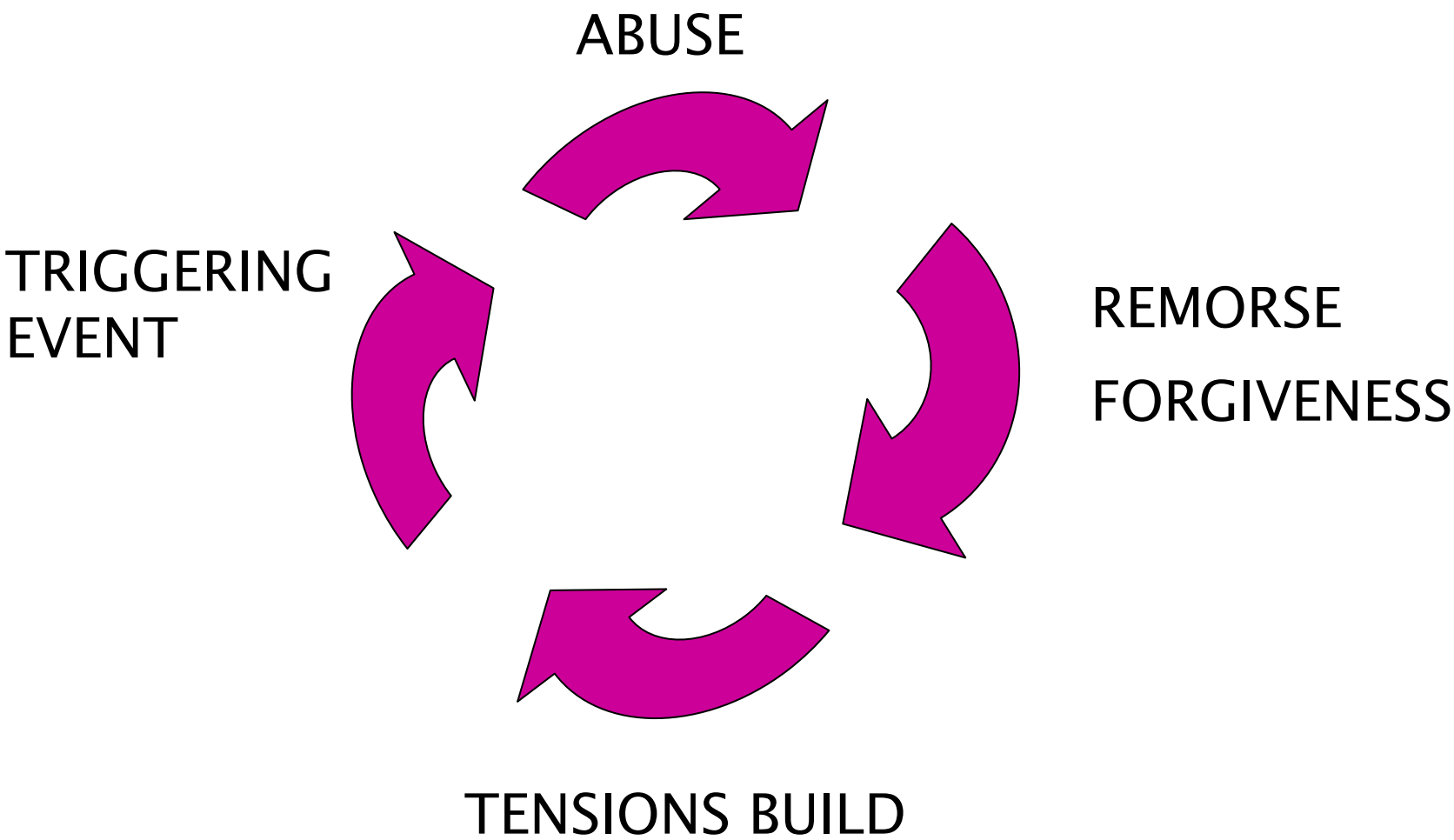
The Cycle of Violence

Cycle of Violence

Lenore Walker's Theory



Cycle of Violence

- Phase One – Step One
  - Minor battering
  - Victim's denial of anger helps them to cope with a situation they desperately believe will change
  - Victim blames outside factors; takes guilt for battering incident; apparent passive acceptance spurs on the abusive behavior and batterer doesn't have to find control

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- Phase One – Step Two
  - Batterers don't want behavior made public, causing fear in them the victim will tell, thus increasing the oppression
  - Batterer's brutality keeps victim captive
  - Learned helplessness syndrome

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- Phase One – Step Three
  - As Phase 1 progresses, batter incidents increase, anger escalates, victim realizes Phase 2 is coming and works hard to control external situations: keeping children quiet, no phone calls
  - Soon coping techniques fail

Cycle of Violence

- Phase One – Step Four
  - Batterer increases possessive smothering and brutality; victim less able to defend herself against the pain and hurt
  - Victim withdraws; batterer moves in more oppressively
  - Unbearable tension builds up
  - Victim sometimes triggers Phase 2 in order to break the unbearable tension, to just “get it over with”

Cycle of Violence

- Phase Two
  - lack of control
  - lack of predictability
    - acute battering with major destructiveness
    - lasts usually from 2 to 24 hours, with some reports of a week or more of terror
    - only batterers can end Phase 2
    - there's an element of overkill and victims express extreme futility of trying to escape
    - victims suffer emotional collapse 22 to 48 hours after acute battering; they seek isolation; thus doctors often do not see them until a natural healing time has passed
    - extreme sexual abuse also during this time

Cycle of Violence

- Phase Three
  - *Unusual period of calm*
    - batterer is extremely loving and kind and contrite
    - they are sorry and promise to never do it again
    - they believe they can maintain control
    - also believe they have taught victim a lesson so that they won't have to beat them again
    - promises to give up drinking
    - convinces victim they're needed, makes them feel guilty for leaving; makes victim feel the responsibility
    - promises they will get help if victim just stays