

Chapter 4

Questions to Ponder

1. After looking over the examples provided below, list the evidence you observe of the cycle of abuse in your relationship. (Keep in mind that this pattern can quickly cycle through the tension-building, explosion, and honeymoon phases. Or it can take months or even more than a year to fully cycle. The important thing is not how long the pattern takes to come full circle but the fact that it's happening. Please refer to appendix E for a more detailed overview of this cycle.)

Tension-Building Phase	Triggering Incident	Explosion Phase	Honeymoon Phase
<u>Example:</u> I've had a knot in my stomach for weeks. I'm making every effort to keep the kids quiet and not upset him. I avoided talking about bills because I know he will throw a fit.	<u>Example:</u> I had to buy school clothes for the kids and spent more than usual.	<u>Example:</u> He found the receipts in the desk drawer. In a rage, he swiped everything off the top of the desk, including my laptop. He then proceeded to call me a stupid idiot and accuse me of being irresponsible with money. He canceled our dinner plans with friends as well.	<u>Example:</u> I cleaned up the mess in our office. He approached me the next day with a cup of coffee and asked if I wanted to spend the day with my best friend, Lori. He was pleasant and even cut the lawn without me having to ask him.

Why the Pain Outlasts the Bruises

Tension- Building Phase	Triggering Incident	Explosion Phase	Honeymoon Phase

2. Reread the symptoms of PTSD. What symptoms are you experiencing that may be a direct result of the trauma you have experienced or are continuing to experience?
3. To what extent have your outlook on life, the goals and dreams you once held so dear, and even perhaps the core of who you really are been altered as a result of this trauma?

Prayer of Reflection

For so long, Jesus, I have walked around with this pain inside. I've been hiding my pain from the world and trying even more desperately to hide it from myself. I can no longer carry this pain. The abuse has clearly left its marks on my life. I have changed in many ways, and these changes frighten me. I need Your help. Acknowledging this is difficult for me. Sometimes it feels easier to pretend the changes aren't there. But I feel them. Long after the bruises have faded, the residual effects linger on. The horrible names I've been called, the threats, the assaults have mounted to proportions that I can no longer bear. I know You see it all. You see the bruises that no one sees. You see my tears, both those I have cried and those that are still buried inside. Hold me, Jesus. Hold my heart. It feels broken beyond repair. But You tell me that You are the mender of the brokenhearted. So I come to You. I place my bruised heart and tired body into Your hands. I know that in Your hands is the safest place for me to be. Help me to stay there while You heal the broken places within me that only You can see. Amen.

God's Enduring Promises

You keep track of all my sorrows.

You have collected all my tears in your bottle.

You have recorded each one in your book. (Psalm 56:8 NLT)

The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart. And He saves those who are broken in spirit. (Psalm 34:18 NLV)

Unless the LORD had given me help,

I would soon have dwelt in the silence of death.

When I said, "My foot is slipping,"

your unfailing love, LORD, supported me.

When anxiety was great within me,

your consolation brought me joy. (Psalm 94:17-19)