

# **THE CONTINUUM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ABUSE**

*(Adapted from presentations by Derek Marchman on Domestic Violence Training for Law Enforcement, 2002. Used with permission by Marchman Consulting, Inc. 2005)*

Abuse is a choice. It is not something that occurs because the abuser “lost control.” If this was the case, co-workers, friends, family, and the general public would witness or be victims of the violent behavior. The abuser is selective about when the behavior occurs, meaning the abuser is in control of it. The abuser will use various degrees of violence to retain or recover control. Using a broad definition of violence from extremely physical to extremely subtle forms of violence, the abuser must read what behavior will produce the desired results. These are some ways an abuser keeps control and power over a victim. The emotional roller coaster experienced by the victim is driven by the abuser’s behavior not the victim’s, contrary to what the batterer might say. The Continuum below is an example of how an abuser might move between the various types of abuse to maintain control in any given situation, keeping the victim on guard and fearful.

## **BRIEF EXPLANATION OF THE ABOVE TYPES OF ABUSE:**

### **Emotional Abuse:**

1. Isolation – from relationships the batterer believes are a threat.
2. Degradation – used to humiliate the victim by making the victim feel worthless.
3. Verbal Abuse – a form of degradation that includes violent language, tone, or threats.

### **Property Damage:**

1. Systematic - property that specifically chosen to damage that typically had meaning to the victim.
2. Pets – typically of the victim’s/child’s beloved pet.

### **Physical Abuse:**

1. Physical Control – a means to restrain a victim, usually by holding, grabbing, and shoving.
2. One Strike – typically with a hand or object.
3. Multiple Strikes – used interchangeably with the one strike method, whichever works to control the victim at the moment, this may be when law enforcement is first called.

**Sexual Abuse:**

1. Punishment – used as payback for anything the batterer believes is owed to him and/or friends.
2. Bribery – typically an overt threat is implied.

**Lethal Abuse:**

1. Stalking – following, sending letters, subtle threats, sitting outside home/work, hang up calls, peeping, or anything used to harass and/or place the victim in fear of the unknown.
2. Murder/Suicide – to take the life of the victim/self is the ultimate act of control.