Six Stages

**Stage 1: Abuse**

The abuse stage signifies the abuse is taking place, but the individual has not necessarily identified their self as abused. Consistent abuse may lead to the next stage of denial or loss of self. At this stage, the abuse has modified the individual’s personality and view of self. *Friends and family will make comments that you don’t seem like yourself, you’re jumpy and possible irritable.*

**Stage 2: Denial/ Loss of self**

Denial and/or loss of self explains the defence mechanism used toward the abuse occurring in the relationship. During this stage, many victims describe feeling as though they have lost control, have no identity, apologetic, quiet, scared and have low self-esteem. It is not uncommon for a victim in this stage not to have identified with being in an abusive relationship. *You are likely to be depressed, cry more often and sometimes close yourself off from others.*

**Stage 3: Validation and Acknowledgment of being abused**

Victims are likely to acknowledge being in a violent relationship when it is identified by an outside source( family, friends, and co-workers), experiencing severe physical, emotion and/or emotional trauma, or a combination of all. More specifically, an outside source recognized the abusive situation and the victim received reinforcement through an abusive episode. At this stage, female victims of partner abuse may begin to see themselves as “abused”. *Someone confronts you about your abusive relationship and you know they are right.*

**Stage 4: Emotional Response**

Once an individual confronts the idea of being a victim of partner abuse, there is likely an emotional struggle to follow. The emotional response is different from person to person, but may resemble the grieving process for a lost loved one. It is unknown how long someone will remain in this stage, but it enables an individual to gain motivation toward leaving the abusive relationship. *One last time, you try to make the relationship right, but realize that you can’t do this alone.*

**Stage 5: Motivation**

This stage represents an individual’s need to regain control of their life. Other motivations may involve fear for their life, and available help. *You can’t take the abuse anymore and nothing you do has made any difference; it only gets worse.*

**Stage 6: Triggering Event**

Once the victim is motivated to leave, there is most likely an event that takes place triggering the actual leaving of the relationship. This event is most likely to be a severe physical episode or fear of imminent severe harm. In some cases, the identification of being in an abusive relationship is motivation enough to leave. *No more! He really hurt you this time and there are no more excuses.*