Tension Building
Minor incidents of physical / emotional abuse.
Victim feels growing tension.
Victim tries to control situation to avoid violence.
"Walking on eggshells." Victim cannot control abuser.
Longest phase.

Denial
Minimizing the abuse or acting as if it did not happen.
Denial keeps the cycle going.

Honeymoon Phase
Abuser sorry and apologetic.
Abuser makes promises.
"Hearts and flowers."
Idealized and romantic.
This phase often disappears with time.

Explosion
The actual abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, verbal, financial, ...