

Coercive Control – A Hostage in the home

“Not only is coercive control the most common context in which women are abused, it is also the most dangerous.”

(Evan Stark)



Love is the only true, everlasting thing we all live for....

The power of love.

- People have individual definitions of love; often including a desire to be accepted, understood, respected and connected. The connection creates a sense of companionship (**being on the same team/ working towards common goals**)
- Coercive Control uses a person's feelings of love, trust and connection to diminish a person's freedom and creating a trauma bond. (**there is only the abuser's team/ working toward their goal only**)



Biderman's Chart of Coercion

- Researched to understand why American prisoners of war openly decided to cooperate with their enemy, make false confessions and defect upon release from POW camps following the Korean war.
- 3 major elements behind the tactics used in psychological torture – **'dependency, debility and dread'**
- In 1973 Amnesty international stated the tactics used in the chart of coercion 'universal tools of torture and coercion'.
- **'Intimate Partner Terrorism'**



Isolation

'Love is a perception, it's just your point of view. Just because you see it, doesn't mean it's true'

(Cory Powell)

- Also known as '**Gaslighting**' - The perpetrator **brainwashes** the victim/survivor to understand that the only view that counts – is their own.
- They can use the reaction/ action of the supportive network (friends, family, practitioners) to reinforce this perception.
- They can reinforce this perception through **punishment for resistance, victim blaming**.
- The victim begins to **join the team** – they begin to believe everything is their fault/ they can not trust their own decision-making skills or memory.
- Abuser's behaviour is highly unpredictable with no accountability– this maintains a belief that the victim/survivor can not trust their own perception.



Monopolisation of perception

Isolation

—
‘Being in Love is an exhausting business.’

(Iris Murdoch)

- Purposefully making the victim/survivor **weaker** – constant monitoring, seeking explanations for each word or action taken, specific boundaries and expectations (often impossible to meet), preventing access to essentials – food, medicine, nappies for a child – forcing the person to **prove whose team they are on**.
- **Limited sleep** due to a need to ensure nothing triggers further abuse and/ or being harmed while asleep.
- The victim/survivor feels **constantly exhausted** having to be aware of another person’s feelings and how their actions maybe perceived.
- Continually considering safety and what might be coming - **walking on eggshells**



Induced debilitation and exhaustion

Monopolisation of perception

Isolation

‘True love is love that causes us pain that hurts, and yet brings us joy.’

(Mother Teresa)

- The power of the other tactics is reinforced by the complexity of rewards (This is often under-estimated)
- The perpetrator being kind, appearing loving, caring, concerned - convinces the victim/ survivor that the perpetrator could be the only one that truly cares – if they **remain part of the team.**
- The reward tactic encourages **false hope** that the abuser will change (If the victim/ survivor can just figure out the combination).
- Isolation and other tactics are likely to have already made this reward mechanism even more powerful.
- This combination of abuse tactics can create an addiction with people getting a **dopamine spike** through seeking/ craving the indulgence.

Occasional indulgences

Threats

Induced debilitation and exhaustion

Monopolisation of perception

Isolation

'Love has the power to change everything.'

(Anthony Williams)

- Omnipotence – The power of having unlimited or very great power:
- The perpetrator uses the belief that they have more power in the world than anyone else – so resistance is futile.
- This can be reinforced by monitoring, stalking behaviours (including after separation).
- Often reinforced by police powers, criminal courts and other professional agencies – including our own.
- The victim/ survivor learns that the goal is to remain inferior and vulnerable; otherwise, they will be further punished or killed.

Omnipotence

Occasional indulgences

Threats

Induced debilitation and exhaustion

Monopolisation of perception

Isolation

'We accept the love we think we deserve'

(Stephen Chbosky)

Causing someone to feel degraded or to lose self-respect:

- Using the nuanced information gained in the role of an interrogator or groomer – specific tactics can be used to **shame** that person, **destroy their self-esteem** and further **disempower** them.
- This adds to thoughts of **'I am not good enough'**.

Degradation

Omnipotence

Occasional indulgences

Threats

Induced debilitation and exhaustion

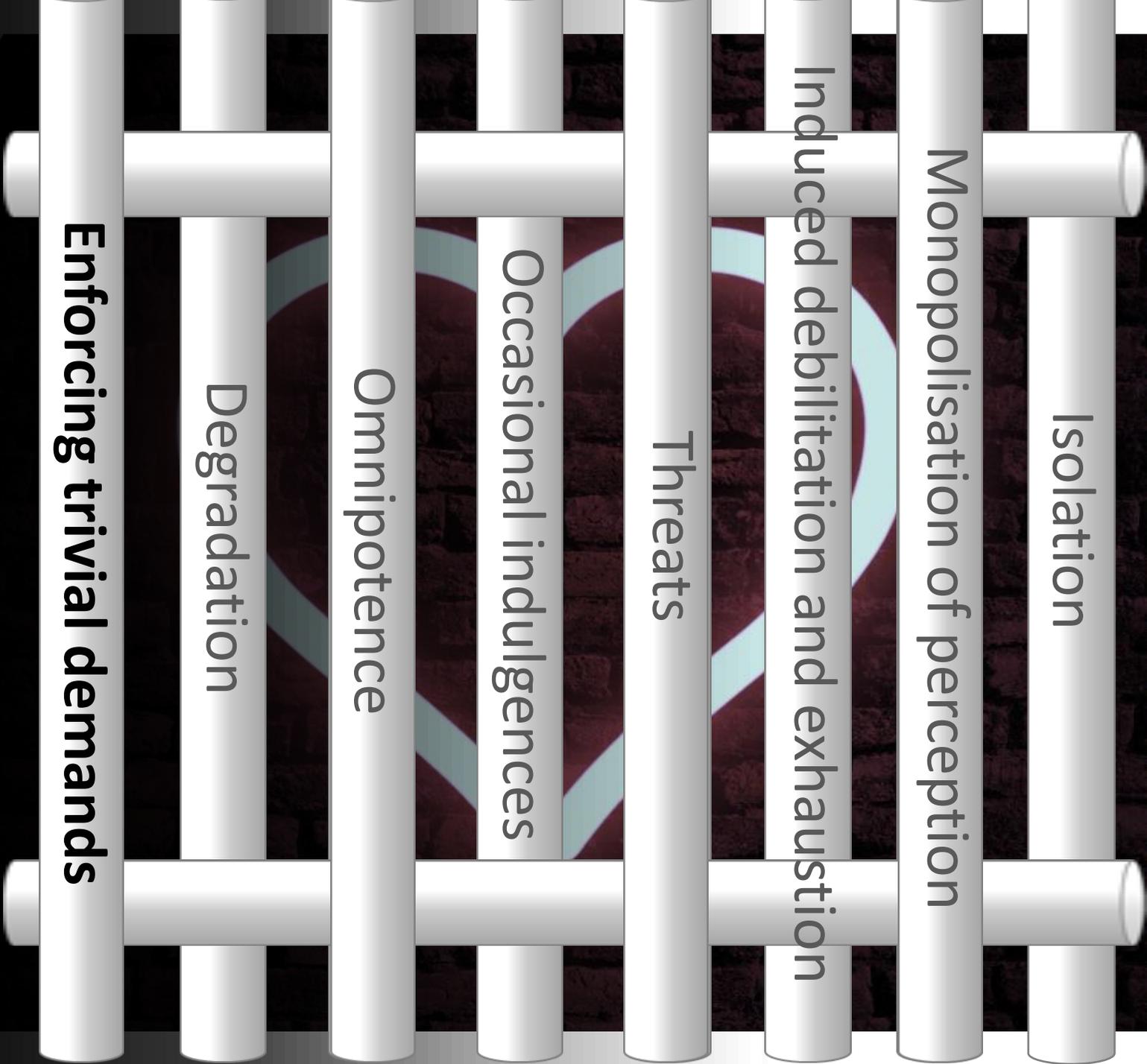
Monopolisation of perception

Isolation

'Love should be given not demanded.'

(Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar)

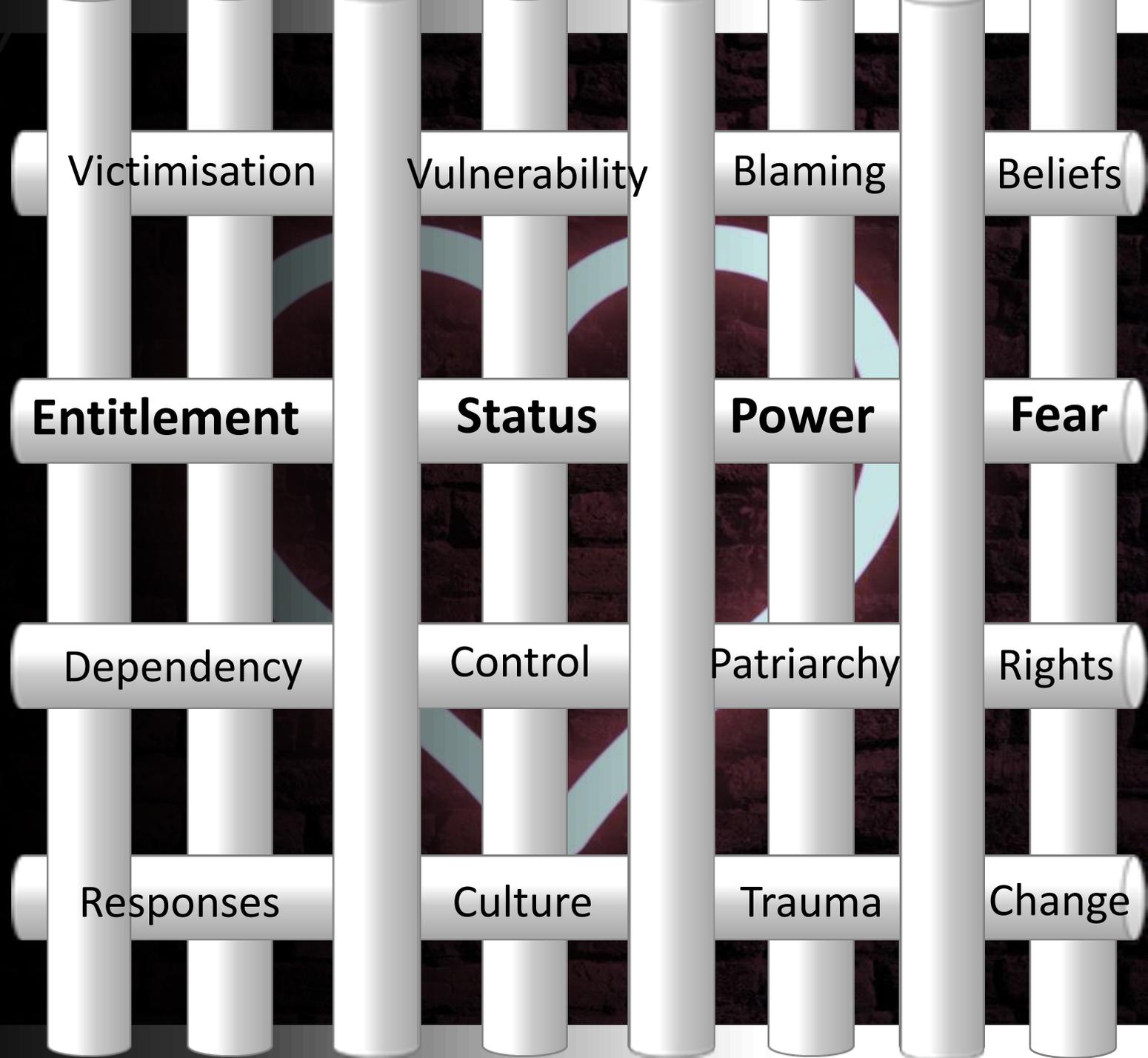
- Petty rules are disproportionately enforced to encourage regression and fear that ultimately encourages compliance.
- Rules are inflexible and unrealistic but often change and contradict making it impossible for the victim to 'comply' consistently.



'I am trapped in your love and my escape button is not working.'
(Shaad Warsi)

~~Why don't they leave?~~

What is keeping them feeling trapped?



Operation - Destroy Maslow's:
*Reversing the motivation to have an
identity*

Self-actualization

desire to become the most that one can be

Esteem

respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom

Love / Belonging

friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection

Safety needs

personal security, employment, resources, health, property

Physiological needs

air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction

‘Abuse is a control tactic. Its aim is to break you and make you submit.’

(M. Wakefield)

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“The victim becomes captive in an unreal world created by the abuser, entrapped in a world of confusion, contradiction and fear.”

(Evan Stark)

Love / Belonging

friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection

Safety needs

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Physiological needs

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'Coercive control is a pattern of behaviour which is more than merely unpleasant, it is strongly linked to the most serious harm and homicide'
(Dr Monckton-Smith)



Safety needs

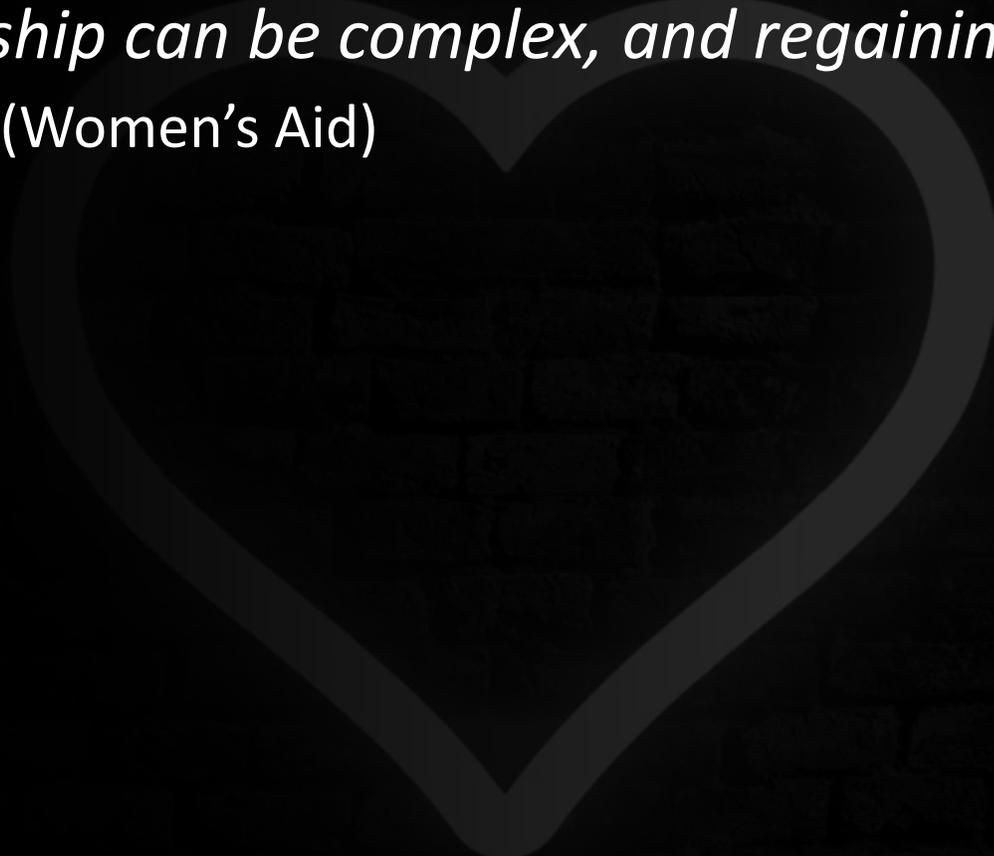
personal security, employment, resources, health, property

Physiological needs

air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction



“It can also lead the victim to feel that they are somehow responsible for the abuse. Recovering after such a relationship can be complex, and regaining self-esteem and trust is key to this process” (Women’s Aid)

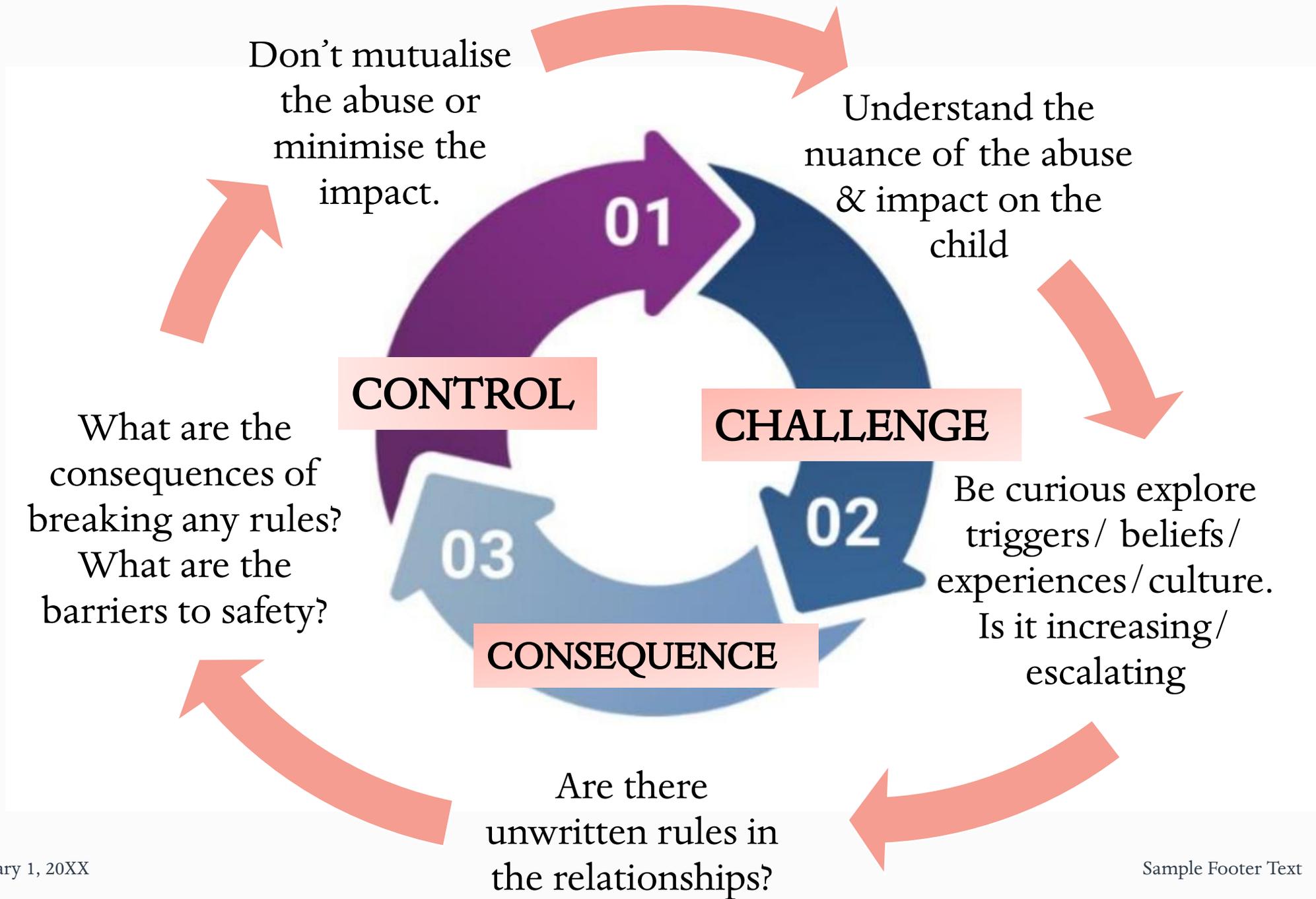


Physiological needs

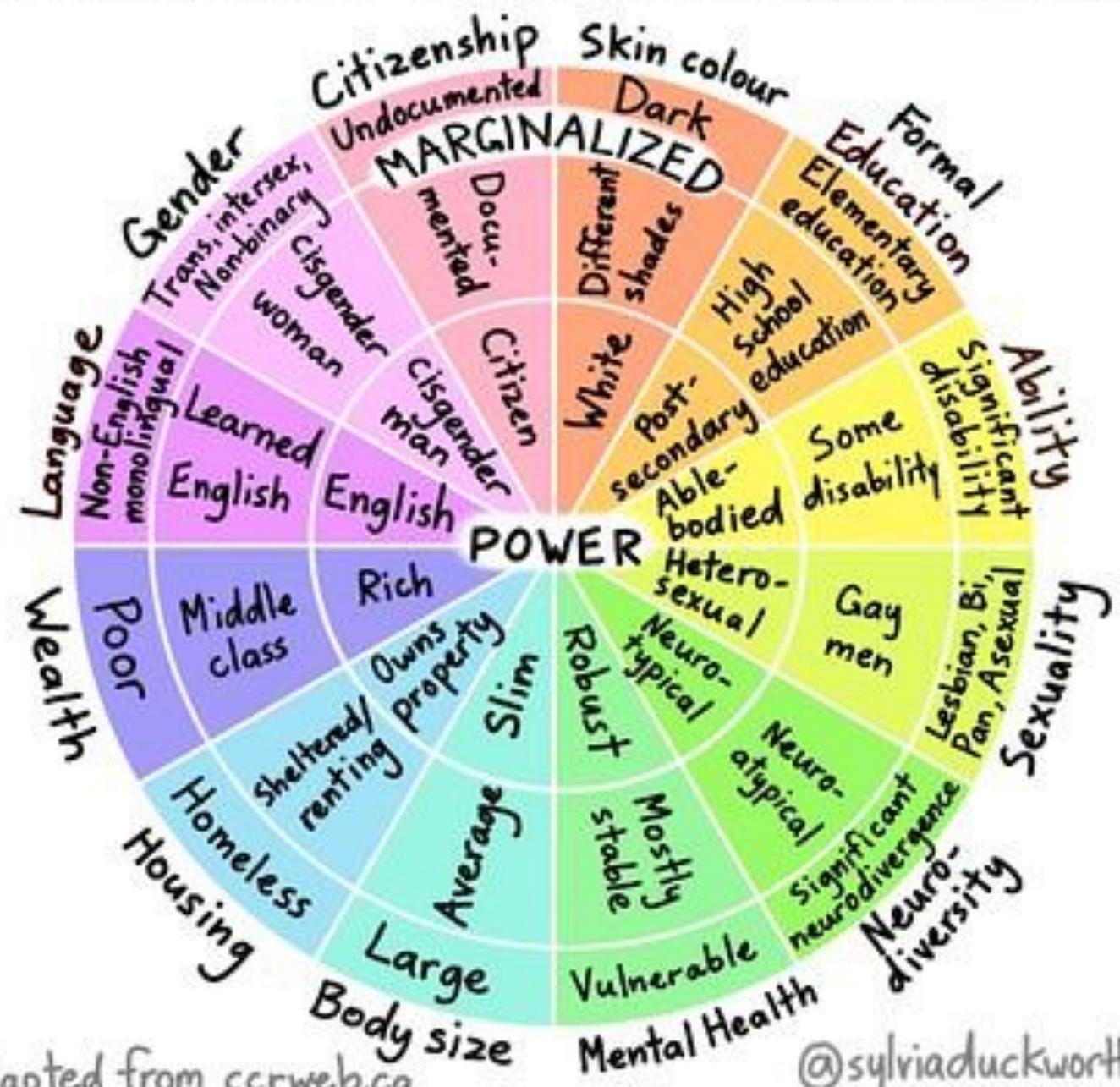
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The Three Cs allow us to start to understand what is happening in Coercive Control.





WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

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7 stages of Trauma Bonding:

1. Love Bombing

Excessively flatters and praises partner

2. Trust and Dependency

Does anything to gain the partner's trust and dependence

3. Criticism

Blames and criticizes partner to make them feel bad about themselves

4. Gaslighting

Manipulates the partner into thinking, "I am the crazy one"



5. Addiction

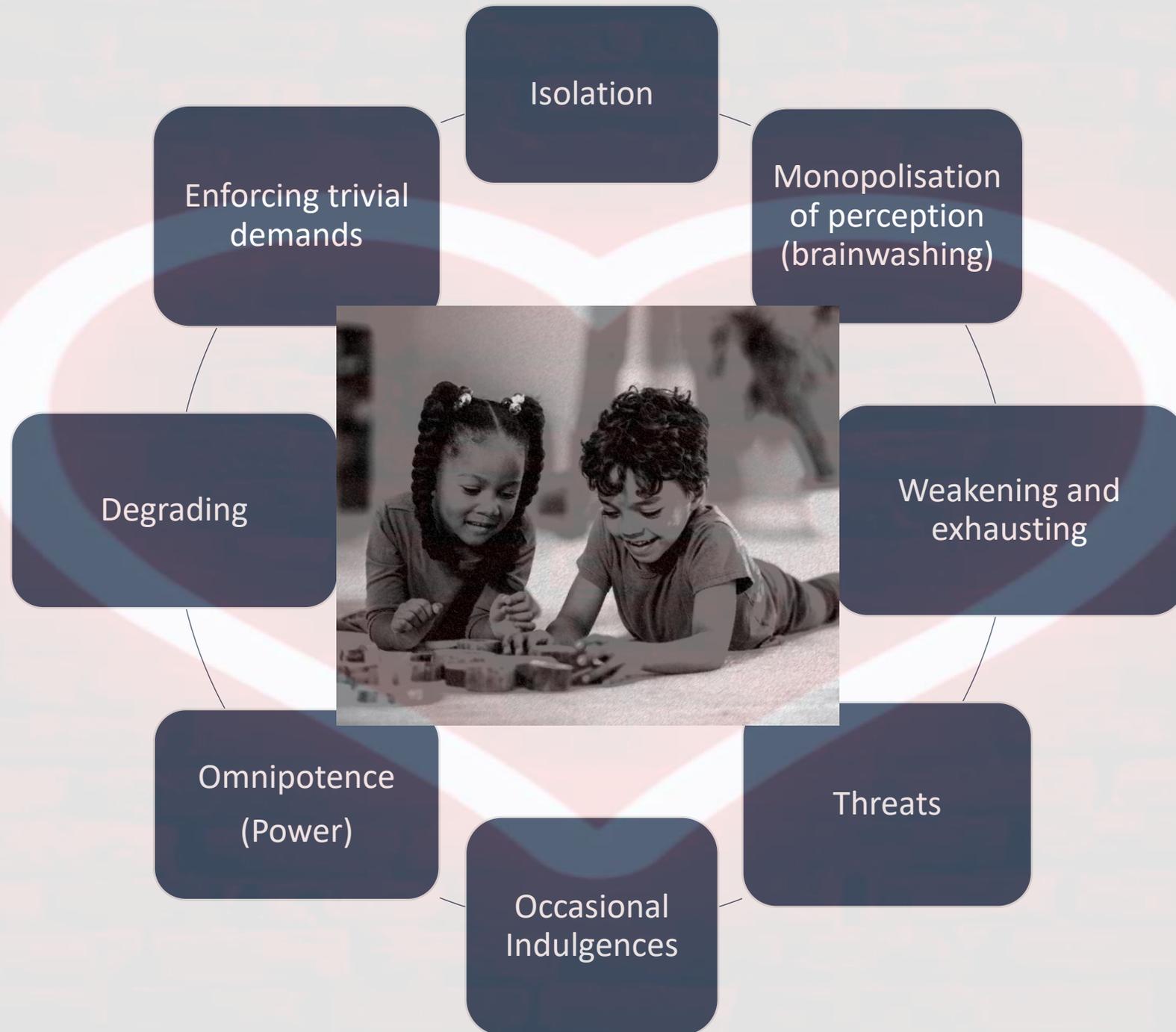
The partner gets emotionally addicted to the positive reinforcement that comes after abuse

6. Loss of Self

The partner loses their sense of self

7. Resignation & Submission

The partner gives in to avoid conflict and please their abuser



Expectations/Unwritten
rules & Consequences.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GICsBX8Goqw>