

# Safety Planning

It's important to know what to do if you are in or planning to leave an abusive relationship. Often the abuse becomes more violent when an abuser suspects their partner is leaving and after they have left. Planning ahead may help reduce the risk of violence.

## If you are living with an abusive partner:

- Avoid rooms with no exits, or rooms with potential weapons (like the kitchen) when in an argument. Consider how you can create physical distance between you and the abuser within your living space.
- Be aware that your partner may attempt to track you electronically (checking web history, calls, text messages, etc.).
- Hide documentation of abuse in a safe place. Consider storing with a friend, relative, or in a place the abuser can't access.
- If you have contact with law enforcement, get the name and badge number of the officer(s).

## If you are planning to leave:

- Know how to get into a shelter before you go.
- Go to a hospital or police station if a family member's home or shelter is not an option.
- Collect important phone numbers you'll need.
- Keep an extra set of car keys.
- Safely store medical records, pictures, journals or police reports that document the abuse.
- Try to put aside emergency money.
- Pack a bag of clothes to take with you.
- Teach your children about escape routes. Practice getting out safely when you can.
- Open a bank account in your name only.
- Keep a phone hidden inside a room in your home that locks from the inside.
- Program emergency numbers into your phone(s).

- Make arrangements with a family member or friend to call them at a certain time each day.
- You may want to consider leaving all the things you want to take with someone you trust. Do this a few days before you plan to go.

## Items you may want to bring:

### Identification:

- Driver's license/passport
- Social security card/birth certificate
- Insurance information

### Financial information

- Credit/ATM cards
- Checking/savings account information
- Partner's employer information

### Legal documents

- Copies of protective order, if you have one
- Records of prior abuse
- Medical/school records
- Separation/custody records
- Marriage license
- Rental agreement/deed to home
- Power of attorney/will

### Other

- Medications/prescriptions
- Keys to home and vehicles
- Pictures, clothes, toys and valuables

## Considerations for safety after you leave:

Other precautions may help ensure the safety of you and your family after you leave. You may want to:

- Try to change your routines.
- Get advice from professionals to plan on how you will handle a confrontation with the abuser.
- Contact your wireless carrier to disable tracking and blocked calls.
- Give the post office your change of address.
- Get an unlisted phone number and/or a new phone.
- Change the locks on your doors. Add dead bolts or a security system.
- Look into getting protection order. If you have one, file charges if the order is violated.
- If the abuser doesn't have legal rights to see your children, you may want to:
  - Give copies of legal documentation to your children's caregivers and/or school.
  - Give school/caregivers pictures of the abuser.
  - Educate children on what to do if the abuser shows up at their daycare, home, or school.

## In the workplace

If you are being abused by your partner or ex-partner, you may be in danger even at work. A workplace safety plan is wise. You may decide who will be involved and what information will be shared. Consider including a supervisor, human resource manager, company and/or building security and/or an employee assistance counselor.

Every situation is different. Consider what might be helpful and possible at your workplace. None of these steps can guarantee safety, but they may help:

- Ask your leadership the best steps to take to ensure your safety. Loop in security.
- If you are threatened at work, bring it immediately to the attention of your manager.
- Give your security department a description of the abuser's vehicle and license plate number. A photo of your partner or ex-partner is also helpful.
- Park in a space that is well-lit, out in the open and close to the entrance door(s).

- Look for your abuser before leaving the building and before parking or turning off the car.
- Arrange for someone, preferably a security guard, to walk with you to and from your car.
- If possible, arrange your work hours so that you are arriving and leaving work at different times.
- Try to change up your routines as best you can.
- Keep all threatening e-mails, voicemails, letters, and texts. They may be proof a protection order is being disobeyed.
- If possible, ask to move your workspace to a less visible spot. Try not to be in an area where you can be seen from the street or parking lot.
- Transfer any calls from your partner or ex-partner to security, if you can. Ask if your number can be changed or routed differently. Find out if your workplace can screen your calls.
- Make sure your workplace is listed on any protection order if you have one. Your employer, security and receptionist should all have copies.
- Contact your Employee Assistance Program for confidential resources and referrals.

## Emotional safety planning

Emotional safety planning is about helping you accept your emotions and feel comfortable with your decisions. Ways to do this include:

- **Identify support people** who can help you process your emotions. They can also help talk through your decisions.
- **Create a peaceful space just for you**, somewhere you can sit calmly, clear your mind, and think through the situation. Maybe it's a quiet corner or a spot outside.
- **Formulate small goals and work towards achieving them.** Maybe it's calling a local resource just to learn more. You do not have to commit to something you are not ready for. Just small steps are enough.
- **Be kind to yourself.** Remind yourself that you have value, that you deserve respect and happiness. Affirm it with self-statements like, "I am worthy" or "I am a good parent".

**References:** National Domestic Violence Hotline. (n.d.). *What is a safety plan?* <https://www.thehotline.org/what-is-a-safety-plan/>  
The Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness. (n.d.). *Workplace safety plan.* <https://stoprelationshipabuse.org/help/develop-a-safety-plan/workplace-safety-plan/>

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