



## Safety Planning

This plan contains suggestions for safety. Following these suggestions is not a guarantee of safety, but applying them to your own situation could improve your level of safety in an abusive relationship. You may be able to complete a more detailed, specific safety plan with a local domestic violence advocate.

### Safety While in an Abusive Relationship

- If weapons are kept in your home, try to hide guns, ammunition, knives, and any other weapons, unless hiding the weapons would further jeopardize your safety. If this isn't possible, try to make them inaccessible.
- Think about your home; identify the areas that are easiest to escape from and are free of potential weapons. Try to move to those areas during an argument. Avoid going to rooms like the kitchen where there are knives and other potential weapons and the bathroom that has hard surfaces and most likely doesn't have a second exit.
- Try to have a phone accessible at all times. Consider hiding a prepaid cell phone to use in emergencies.
- Create a code word with friends and family in order to communicate to them that you need help.
- If an abusive incident seems imminent, trust your judgment. Sometimes it is best to leave; sometimes it is best to placate the abuser.
- Make a habit of backing your car into the driveway. Try to always have some gas. Keep the driver's door unlocked and lock all other doors. Have a copy of the car key made and hide one in the car.
- If leaving is not possible:
  - Try to move into safe areas of your home.
  - Make yourself physically smaller by curling into a ball and covering your head and face with your hands.

### Safety While Preparing to Leave an Abusive Relationship

- Be aware that cellular phones can contain GPS tracking devices. If possible, plan to get a new phone and new service plan when you leave, and leave your original phone behind.
- Know that leaving an abusive relationship can be the most dangerous time for you.
- Try to set aside money, even in small amounts. Start your own savings or checking account. Use the address of a trusted friend or family member when setting up the account.
- Keep a written list of important phone numbers with you.
- Have a packed bag ready. Keep it hidden in your home or leave the bag with friends, family, or at work if possible.
- Items and documents to take:
  - Birth and marriage certificates
  - ID and Social Security Cards
  - Keys
  - School and Medical Records

- Passports, green cards, work permits
- Protective order, divorce papers, custody orders
- Bank papers and credit cards
- Medicine
- Talk to your local domestic violence agency to find out about help they may be able to offer. In an emergency, call 911 first.

### **After Leaving an Abusive Relationship**

- If you have a protective order, always carry a copy with you. Make and keep copies for work, your car, and your home. Call the police and document when the protective order is broken.
- Consider letting friends, neighbors, and co-workers know about your situation and how they can help you stay safe.
- Try to carry a cell phone with you, and program it to dial 911.
- Change your regular travel habits. Try not to frequent the same stores or businesses you did when with your abuser.
- If you are moving:
  - Consider talking to your local shelter program about temporary shelter or other services they could provide.
  - If you need to conceal your new location, consider an address confidentiality program.
- If you are staying in your home:
  - Consider changing your locks or installing stronger doors.
  - If the exchange of children is necessary, arrange a safe, neutral place to do the exchange.
  - If your abuser comes to your home, you do not have to let him in. Keep the doors closed and locked, and call the police.

### **Safety and Technology**

- Know that your computer activity can be monitored or checked without your knowledge. It is not possible to delete or clear all of the "footprints" from your computer or online activities. If you are being monitored, it may be dangerous to change your computer behaviors such as suddenly deleting your entire Internet history if that is not your regular habit.
- If you think you may be monitored on your home computer, be careful how you use your computer since an abuser might become suspicious. You may want to keep using the monitored computer for non-personal activities, like looking up the weather or reading the news. Use a safer computer to research an escape plan, look for new jobs or apartments, bus tickets, or ask for help.
- Consider opening a free email account that your abuser doesn't know about. Only check it from public or otherwise safe computers (libraries, schools, a friend's home).
- If you use have a cell phone, be aware that even calls that are toll-free will likely show up on your phone bill. If you are on a joint plan or access your phone bill online, others may have access to it. Consider making calls to shelters, lawyers, or other confidential services from a payphone or prepaid cell phone.
- Call your local domestic violence program and ask them about free cell phone programs. Usually these phones will allow you dial 911.

**Please call the 24-Hour National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or TTY 1-800-787-3224 to discuss your concerns and questions.**