

SAFETY PLANS

Safety Plans are valuable tools if you are in or are planning on leaving an abusive relationship.

Below are some ideas and suggestions for safety, that you and your advocate can decide if they will help. Please be aware that some of these options may not work for you. And always remember—you do not deserve to be hit, threatened or afraid!

What is a Safety Plan?

- Advocates can help you assess your current situation and create an individualized safety plan with you.
- A safety plan is a list of ideas that you can use to help increase your safety.
- A safety plan can be critical if you are considering taking steps to change your current situation.
- Safety plans will change as new situations arise, so they must be revised frequently.
- Use your instincts and judgment, think about what you will say to the abuser during a violent incident.

Safety When Preparing to Leave

Remember—leaving can be a dangerous time.

Batterers can become upset and more dangerous when they believe that you are leaving the relationship.

- If you choose to leave your partner, make a safety plan.
- Consult with an advocate from a local domestic violence program who can inform you of your rights and options.
- Choose a safe place to go. Choose people who might help you if you leave.
- Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents, and clothes with someone you trust.
- Purchase a calling card to use or get a 9-1-1 phone from a local battered women's shelter.
- Open a savings account in your name and have the statements sent to a relative or friend.
- If the batterer has access to weapons, has threatened homicide or suicide, has stalked you, or abuses drugs or alcohol, you may be in severe danger.
- Consult with an advocate from your local domestic violence program who can inform you of your rights, options and resources.

Safety in the Moment

You cannot always avoid a violent incident, so create a safety plan.

- Determine who you would call for help in a violent situation. Make note of friends', relatives', neighbors', police, and hotline numbers.
- Memorize emergency phone numbers or keep them on small cards in a safe place.
- If the abuser has a key to your house or apartment, change or add locks on your doors and windows as soon as possible.
- Practice getting out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevators, or stairs would be best.
- Avoid rooms with no exits, like a bathroom, and rooms with weapons, like the kitchen.
- Decide and plan where you will go if you leave your home in an emergency situation.
- Have a packed bag ready and keep it in a secret but accessible place so you can leave quickly (see checklist).
- Identify a neighbor, family member, or friend you can tell about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home. Create a signal for them to call the police—like if a certain light is on or a shade pulled down—or a code word.
- Get medical attention if you are hurt in any way.
- Speak with an advocate from the local domestic violence program who can inform you of your rights and options.

Safety with Children

- Teach children not to get in the middle of a fight—even if they think they are helping.
- When children are old enough, practice calling 911 and teach them a safe place to go during a violent incident.
- Inform your children's daycare or school about who has permission to pick-up your children.
- Talk to your children about who they can trust.
- Discuss safety strategies with children who have unsupervised visits with the abuser.

Safety with a Protective Order

- Protective orders do not guarantee complete safety, but can be a good idea to have if you fear retaliation from the batterer for leaving the abuse.
- Consult with a SAFEPLAN Advocate for help with the process of obtaining a protective order.
- Show the judge any pictures of injuries.
- Make extra copies of the protective order and keep them with you at all times. Also keep copies in a safe place like: your car, at friends' or relatives' homes, at work, and at your children's daycare or school.
- Inform family, friends, neighbors, employers, your physician or health care provider, and your children's daycare or school that you have a protective order in effect.
- Screen your calls. If necessary, keep a record of all contact a batterer makes, such as phone calls, text messages, voice mail messages, and emails.
- If you move to another town or state, remember that the protective order is still valid. It is a good idea to register the protective order in your new town.
- Call the police if your abuser does something the protective order says not to do—this is a violation.

Safety on the Job and in Public

- Change your route from and to work frequently.
- Provide your employer with a current picture of the abuser.
- Determine who can help you, while at work or in the public. Try to find a "safe" person at work, so they can look out for you. Provide a picture of the abuser if necessary.
- Have someone escort you to your car, bus or train. Create a plan for what you would do if something happened while in public.
- Have a co-worker screen incoming telephone calls, and document anything harassing.
- Make sure your employer has up-to-date emergency information
- When you are out in public, be aware of your surroundings.

Safety and Technology

It's easy to track your personal information on the internet

- Abusers may be able to track your recent history on the internet if they have access to the computer you use. Using a public computer, such as one at a local library, a friend's computer or a computer at your work may prevent your abuser from tracking your activities online. Clear your browsing history and empty your cache as frequently as possible.
- If an abuser knows the password to your email account, they may be able to read your mail. Try to change it to something no one will be able to guess or create a new email account that only you will know about.
- Since it is possible to track calls using a phone bill, consider getting a new phone if yours is provided by your abuser. Also, check your cell phone settings to see if it has an optional location service, and try to turn it off if it does.
- Do a quick search of your name in major search engines (like Google or Yahoo) since they may have links to your contact information.
- If you think you might be being stalked, it is possible that your abuser might have placed a GPS Tracking device in your car. Routinely check both inside and outside your car for any suspicious objects.

Safety and Your Emotional Health

- Find someone you can talk to freely and openly and who can help you feel supported. If you want reassurances from others who have been through similar situations, you may find this at a support group at your local domestic violence program.
- Find something you like to do for yourself. You deserve to have some happiness and fun in your life.
- If you are thinking of returning discuss your safety plan with someone you trust.
- Try to go through a third person if you need to communicate with the batterer.
- Attend a support group, if you feel that you need reassurances from others who have been through similar situations.

