

CREATING A SAFETY PLAN



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If you are planning to leave an abusive situation, it is best to be as prepared as possible. Leaving is the most dangerous time for abuse survivors, and because of that, I want you to be as safe and ready as possible. Your safety and well-being is of the highest priority. So this Safety Plan should serve as an easy, safe and efficient exit strategy.

STEP 1: Safety during a violent incident. *Survivors cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, abuse survivors may use a variety of strategies.*

A. If I decide to leave, I will

(Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes would you use?)

B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (*location*) _____ in order to leave quickly.

C. I can tell _____ about the plan and request that she or he call the police if she or he hears suspicious noises coming from my house.

D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police, the fire department, and any other emergency contact.

E. I will use _____ as my code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.

F. If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____.

(Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.)

G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some or all of my children.

H. When I expect we're going to have an argument, I'll try to move to a place that is low risk, such as _____.
(Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)

I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we have a safe opportunity to escape.

STEP 2: Safety when preparing to leave. *Abuse survivors frequently leave the residence they share with the abusive partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Abusers often get violent when they believe that they are losing control, or their partner is leaving.*

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.

B. I will keep copies of important documents or keys at _____.

C. I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.

D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

E. I can contact my cell phone provider and change my account and phone number, or close that line and start a new phone plan.

F. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them, or have them help me find a place to go - like a local shelter.

G. I will call _____ and _____ to see if their shelters have space, or if they can advocate for me somewhere safe.

H. I can leave extra clothes or money (with or in a safe place)

_____.

I. I will commit to changing all of my known appointments to different days in order to avoid my abuser finding me by _____ date.

J. I will start shopping and spending time in _____, _____, and _____, because my abuser knows that I spend time in those places.

K. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence.
_____ (domestic violence advocate or friend's name) has agreed to help me review this plan.

L. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

M. I will start keeping documentation of abusive situations and incidents, and will take pictures of bruises, and screenshots of texts, and save them in a safe place _____.

STEP 3: Safety in my own residence. *There are many things that a survivor can do to increase their safety in their own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.*

Safety measures I can use:

A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.

B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.

C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.

D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.

E. I can install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers for each floor of my house/apartment.

F. I can install an outside lighting system that activates when a person is close to the house.

G. I will teach my children how to call me, 911, and to _____ (name of friend, etc.) in the event that my partner takes the children.

H. I will tell the people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:

_____ (name of school)

_____ (name of babysitter)

_____ (name of teacher)

_____ (name of Sunday-school)

teacher)

_____ (name[s] of others)

_____ (name[s] of others)

_____ (name[s] of others)

I. I can inform _____ (neighbor) and
_____ (friend) that my partner no longer resides
with me and that they should call the police if they are observed near my
residence.

STEP 4: Safety with an Order of Protection. *Many abusers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protective orders.* I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protective order.

The following are some steps I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

A. I will keep my protection order _____
(location). *Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses/bags/backpacks, that's the first thing that should go in the new place.*

B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I visit friends or family, my neighbor and in the community where I live.

C. *There should be county and state registries of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order.* I can check to make sure that my order is on the registry. The telephone numbers for the county and state registries of protection orders are:
_____ (county) and _____
(state).

D. I will inform my employer; my minister, rabbi, etc.; my closest friend; and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.

E. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the clerk's office.

F. If the police do not help, I can contact an advocate or an attorney and file a complaint with the chief of the police department or the sheriff.

G. If my partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report the violation, contact _____.

STEP 5: Safety on the job and in public. *Each survivor must decide if and when they will tell others that their partner has abused them and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help to protect survivors. Each survivor should carefully consider which people to invite to help secure their safety.*

I might do any or all of the following:

A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and _____ at work.

B. I can ask _____ to help me screen my telephone calls at work.

C. When leaving work, I can _____.

D. If I have a problem while driving home, I can _____.

E. If I use public transit, I can _____.

F. I will go to different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different from those I kept when residing with my abuser.

G. I can use a different bank and go at hours that are different from those kept when residing with my abuser.

STEP 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use. *Most people in this situation use alcohol or drugs to cope with their trauma. Much of this is legal, although some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on survivors, may negatively their relationship with their children, and can put them at a disadvantage in other legal actions with their abuser. Therefore, survivors should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. Beyond this, the use of alcohol or other drugs can reduce a persons awareness and ability to act quickly to protect themselves from their abuser. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the abuser may give them an excuse to use violence. Specific safety plans must be made concerning drugs or alcohol use.*

If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with my abuser, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:

A. If my partner is using, I can

and/or

B. To safeguard my children I might

STEP 7: Safety and my emotional health. *The experience of being manipulated and verbally and psychologically abused by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life takes a ton courage and incredible energy.*

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

A. If I feel down and am returning to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____

_____.

B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can _____

_____.

C. I will try to use “I can ... ” statements with myself and be assertive with others. Here are 5 of my strengths

I can... _____.

I can... _____.

I can... _____.

I can... _____.

I can... _____.

D. I can tell myself, “ _____ ”
whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

E. I can read _____
to help me feel stronger.

F. I can call _____ and
_____ for support.

G. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence
program or _____ to gain
support and strengthen relationships.

(Within Your Reach, Inc., MarissaFayeCohen.com, local nonprofits, etc.)

STEP 8: Items to take when leaving. *When survivors leave partners, it is important to take certain items. Beyond this, survivors sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend, family member or neighbor just in case they have to leave quickly.*

Money: Even if I never worked, I can take money from jointly held savings and checking accounts. If I do not take this money, my abuser can legally take the money and close the accounts.

Items on the checklist below with asterisks by them are the most important to take with you. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location, so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly. When I leave, I should take:

Checklist:

Identification

- * Driver's license
- * Birth certificate and children's birth certificates
- * Social security cards
- Financial information
- * Money and/or credit cards (in your name)
- * Checking and/or savings account books

Legal Papers

- * Protective order
- Copies of any lease or rental agreements, or the deed to your home
- Car registration and insurance papers
- Health and life insurance papers
- * Medical records for you and your children
- * School records
- * Work permits/green Card/visa

- Passport
- * Divorce and custody papers
- Marriage license

Emergency Numbers

- Your local police and/or sheriff’s department
- Your local domestic violence program or shelter
- Friends, relatives and family members
- Your local doctor’s office and hospital
- County and/or District Attorney’s Office

Other

- * Medications
- * Extra set of house and car keys
- Valuable jewelry
- Pay-as-you-go cell phone
- Address book
- Pictures and sentimental items
- Several changes of clothes for you and your children
- Emergency money
- Clothes, blankets, small toys for children.
- Hygiene items/necessities — They will have these at shelters.

Telephone numbers I need to know:

Police/sheriff’s department (local) - 911 or _____

Police/sheriff’s department (work) _____

Police/sheriff’s department (school) _____

Prosecutor’s office _____

Domestic Violence program (local) _____

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)
800-787-3224 (TTY)

www.ndvh.org
County registry of protection orders

State registry of protection orders

Work number

Supervisor's home number

I will keep this document in a safe place and out of the reach of my potential attacker. Review date: _____

STEP 9: Staying safe after you leave.

A. I will change my locks, install safety measures at my apartment or house, and _____, in order to keep myself safe.

B. I will call my telephone company to request a new phone number, or change my account so my abuser cannot track my calls or find me.

C. I will discuss my situation and safety with my coworkers and/or boss, and request my hours be changed.

D. I will tell my children school administration and teacher about the situation, to avoid my abuser taking the children from school. Or, I will consider changing my children's school.

E. I will change my route to work, school and any other routine in order to avoid my abuser finding me/us.

F. I will keep copies of my restraining order _____ and _____, and give copies to my child's school, work, and _____, so they know not to divulge any of my information to my abuser.

G. I will alert _____, _____, and my neighbor _____ about the situation so they know to contact the police if they feel that I might be in danger.

H. I will consider renting a P.O. Box or forwarding my mail to _____ or _____ in order to keep my location safe.

I. I will reschedule standing appointment in order for my abuser to be unaware of my obligations.

J. If I have shared custody with my abuser, I will contact a police department in the next town _____ to organize a a drop off and pick up situation with officers present.

K. I will change the passwords on my emails and any accounts that my abuser has access to.