

Creating A Safety Plan

What is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan is a plan that helps you to reduce the risks that you and your children face.

There is no right or wrong way to do a safety plan. Check off and fill in the things that work for you. Make it your plan. Review it often. Make changes as you need to.

There is help for you to develop a safety plan. You can ask your social worker, family violence worker or some other person in the community to work with you on this.

Safety Plans will help you be as safe as you can be from future abuse. They are used by people who:

- Want to leave, but it is not safe
- Are not sure about leaving, but need help in case the abuser gets violent
- Have left and the threat of violence is still there

Safety Plans Can Help You:

- Get help in an emergency
- Get away safely
- Keep children safe
- Safely get your clothes, pets or other personal items

Personalized Safety Plan

The following steps are my plan for increasing my safety and preparing for possible further violence. Although I do not have control over my (ex) partner's violence, I do have a choice about how I respond and how to get myself and my children to safety.

STEP 1: SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT.

It is always possible to avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, battered women may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- If I decide to leave, I will _____
_____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- I can keep my purse/wallet and vehicle keys ready and put them (place) in order to leave more quickly.
- I can tell _____ about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- I can also tell _____ about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and fire department.
- I will use _____ as my code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- 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.)
- If I cannot go to the place above, then I can go to _____
or _____.
- When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, by the telephone, garage, kitchens, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I will use my judgment, experience and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner whatever is necessary to maintain my own and my children's safety.

- I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

STEP 2: SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE.

Battered women frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done strategically in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a battered woman is leaving a relationship.

I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:

- I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.
- I will keep copies of important documents or keys at _____.
- I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- I can get legal advice from a lawyer who understands domestic abuse.

Other things I can do to increase my independence are:

- The local shelter number is _____. I can seek shelter and support by calling this help line.
- I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill could tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. If I use a cell phone, the following month's bill could tell my batterer the numbers that I have called. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to let me use her telephone credit card for a while when I first leave.
- I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____ (women's advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

STEP 3: SAFETY IN MY OWN HOME.

There are many things that a woman can do to increase her safety in her own residence. It may not be possible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use include:

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic alarm system, etc.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to (friend/helper/other) in the event that my (ex)partner abducts them.
- I can install the “call blocking” option on my telephone. This will allow me to make telephone calls, even to the batterer, without my number being identified on another telephone’s display mechanism.
- I will tell all the people who provide child care for my children about who has permission to pick up my children and who does not. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:
 - School _____
 - Day Care Staff _____
 - Babysitter _____
 - Sunday School Teacher _____
 - Teacher _____
 - Other _____
- I can tell _____ (neighbor), _____ (clergy), and _____ (friend) that I am separated and they should call the police if my (ex)partner is seen near my residence.

STEP 4: SAFETY WITH A PROTECTION ORDER.

Protection orders are legal restrictions on movement and actions that come in different forms: peace bonds, restraining orders, bail conditions, parole conditions, child custody/access orders, etc. Many batterers do obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate probation orders. It is often necessary to ask the police and the courts to enforce a protection order.

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

- I will keep my protection order document(s) (original if possible) in _____ (location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that you should check).
- I will inform my employer, my clergy support, my friend and _____ and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
- If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse, my lawyer, or _____.
- If my (ex)partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report the violation, contact my (ex)partner's parole officer, contact my lawyer and/or my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation. (Report every violation of the order.)
- If the police do not help, I can contact my support worker, my (ex)partner's parole officer, or my lawyer as well as filing a complaint with the RCMP.
- I can also file a private criminal complaint with the Justice of the Peace in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred. I can charge the batterer with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes committed in violation of that order. I can call the local shelter to help me with this.

STEP 5: SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC.

Each battered woman must decide if and when she will tell others that her partner has battered her and that she may be at ongoing risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect women. Each woman should think carefully about who to ask to help her.

I might do any or all of the following:

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ at work of my situation.
- I can ask _____ to help screen my calls at work.
- When leaving work, I can _____.
- When going home if problems occur, I can _____.
- If I use the bus/taxi, I can _____.
- I can use different grocery stores/shopping malls and shop at different times than I did before to reduce the risk of contact with my (ex)partner.
- I can also _____

_____.

STEP 6: SAFETY AND DRUG OR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION.

Most people in North America drink alcohol. Many take mood-altering drugs. Much of this consumption is legal and some is not. The legal consequences of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a battered woman, may hurt her relationship with her children and put her at a disadvantage in other legal actions with her abusive partner. Therefore, women should think carefully about the potential cost of using illegal drugs. But beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a woman's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself from her abusive partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the batterer may be used as an excuse for violence. A woman needs to make specific safety plans for when she drinks or takes drugs.

If drug or alcohol consumption has occurred in my relationship with the abusive partner, I can increase my safety by some or all of the following:

If I am going to use alcohol or drugs, I can do it in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and care about my safety.

- I can also _____.
- If my partner is consuming, I can _____.

- To safeguard my children, I might _____
and _____.

STEP 7: SAFETY AND MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH.

The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life requires much courage and incredible energy.

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

- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can

- When I have to talk with my partner in person or by telephone, I can

- I can try to use “I can...” statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- I can tell myself - “ _____ ” - whenever I
feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- I can call, _____,
and _____ as other resources to support me.
- I can find out about and attend workshops and support groups in the community by calling the local
shelter for information.

STEP 8. ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING.

When women leave abusive partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, women can sometimes give extra copies of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

Items with asterisks on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. Keeping them all together in one location makes it easier if a woman needs to leave in a hurry.

When I leave, I should take:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identification for myself | <input type="checkbox"/> Children's birth certificates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protection Order papers/documents | <input type="checkbox"/> My birth certificate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social insurance cards | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School and vaccination records | <input type="checkbox"/> Money |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Checkbook, bankcards | <input type="checkbox"/> Credit cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keys - house/vehicle/office | <input type="checkbox"/> Driver's license and ownership |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medications | <input type="checkbox"/> Passport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce/separation papers | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical records |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lease/rental agreement, deed, mortgage | <input type="checkbox"/> Bank books |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance papers | <input type="checkbox"/> Small saleable objects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Address book | <input type="checkbox"/> Pictures/photos |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Items of special sentimental value | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewellery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's favourite toys and/or blankets | |

Telephone numbers I need to know:

RCMP: _____

Counsellor: _____

Battered Women's Program: _____

Wife Assault Help line (24 hours): _____

Lawyer: _____

Work number: _____

Supervisor's home number: _____

Minister/Rabbi/Priest/Elder: _____

Other: _____