



SAFETY PLANNING

Preparing for and planning your safety is often an overwhelming and frightening task. The guidelines below are meant to assist you in doing what is best for your particular situation.

There are two key components in planning for the safety of you and your children:

1. First, **PRACTICE**. Together with your children, plan and practice escape routes, whether that means opening the windows, removing the screens and climbing out, or if that means having the children get their favorite toy and meet you in the car. **PRACTICE**.
2. Second, pay attention to your emotional health. You and your children are or have been in a stressful situation and it is important to acknowledge that and take care of your emotional selves. Here are some things you can do:
 - Contact a local shelter or the National DV Support Hotline about support groups in your area. You do not have to be free of your batterer to attend support groups and learn more about yourself and your situation, and receive guidance and care from others.
 - Read books and articles to help you feel stronger.
 - **TALK** about what you are going through with someone you trust. If that means calling a crisis line every few days, then do that. If you have a friend, religious leader, or relative you can talk to, do that.
 - Think positively about yourself. You are **NOT** to blame for the batterer's behavior.
 - Be assertive with others about your needs.
 - If you have left your batterer but must communicate with him or her, think about the safest way to do that. Put yourself first.
 - Arrange for emotional support for your children. There are many free programs that will offer counseling and assistance to minors who witness domestic violence.

Safety At Home (When the Abuser has Moved Out)

- Change the locks on your doors.
- Buy locks for your windows.
- Talk to a neighbor about the violence, and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.



Safety Planning With Your Children

- Plan and rehearse an escape route out of your home.
- Teach them a code word, and tell them to call 911 when you use that code word.
- Teach them how to use a public telephone to dial 911. (NOTE: you do NOT need money to dial 911 from a pay phone.)
- Inform your children's school, day care provider, etc. about who has permission to pick your children up.
- If necessary, provide school/day care personnel with a photo of your abuser, with strict instructions not to release your child to that person. Make sure they have a copy of your restraining order if you have one.
- Ask school personnel not to give out your address or phone number.

Safety During an Incident With Your Abuser

- Stay out of rooms that have no exit (closets, bathrooms).
- Avoid rooms that have weapons (kitchens, bedrooms where there may be a gun).
- Select and use a code word that alerts your friends, neighbors and family members to call 911.
- Use your instincts. If the situation is dangerous, consider giving the abuser what he or she wants to calm him or her down.

Safety When Preparing to Leave Your Abuser

- Identify and practice how to get out of your home safely.
- Prepare a suitcase and leave it with a friend. See our suggested checklist for items to pack.
- Open a savings account in your name.
- Open a post office box so that you can receive mail/checks.
- Determine ahead of time where you might be able to stay temporarily. Keep in mind that you don't want your abuser to find you.
- Keep important phone numbers on you, including numbers of domestic violence shelters.
- Purchase a phone card and keep it in your wallet.
- Review your safety plan as often as possible.
- **DON'T LEAVE UNTIL YOU ARE READY.** This is often a dangerous time, and abusers sometimes become more angry or abusive.



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CHECKLIST OF ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING AN ABUSIVE SITUATION

- Identification
- Birth certificates for you and your children
- Social Security Cards
- Passport(s), Green Card(s), Work Permit(s)
- School and medical records
- Money, bankbooks, credit cards
- Keys (house, car, office)
- Driver's License and registration
- Medications for you and your children
- A change of clothes for you and your children
- Welfare Identification
- Divorce Papers
- House deed/Rental agreement
- Mortgage payment book/unpaid bills
- Insurance Papers
- Address book
- Photos, jewelry, items of sentimental value to you
- Children's favorite toys/blankets/stuffed animals

*Selected portions courtesy of Domestic Violence Council & "Domestic Violence: The Facts"
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