

SAFETY PLANNING – REDUCING YOUR RISK

No battered woman has control over her partner's violence, but women can and do find ways to reduce their risk of harm. This safety plan is a tool to assist you in identifying options, evaluating those options and committing to a plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or with actual harm.

There's no right or wrong way to develop a safety plan. Use what applies. Change it or add to it to reflect your particular situation. Make it your own, then review it regularly and make changes as needed.

If you can't find a safe place to keep a written safety plan where your partner won't find it, maybe you can ask a friend to keep a copy for you. If not, you can ask your local domestic violence program to keep your plan for you. Whether it's safe to *write down* your plan or not, it's still important to *make* one.

**You don't have to figure it all out on your own.
You can ask a domestic violence advocate for help.**

During an Explosive Incident

- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to stay in a room or area with an exit, and try to stay out of the bathroom, kitchen or anywhere near dangerous instruments, utensils or weapons.
- Practice how to get out of the home safely. Identify which windows, elevators or stairs would be best to use in a bad situation.

Being ready for a crisis:

I can get help

- I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear noises coming from my house.
- I can teach my children how to contact the police. I will make sure they know our address and telephone number. If I had a programmable phone, I can program emergency numbers and teach my children how to use the auto dial.
- If it is not possible to use the phone, I can teach my children how to go to a _____ (eg., neighbor, business, etc.) for help

I can use my judgment

- When I expect my partner and I are going to argue, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without an outside exit.)
- I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children, as appropriate.

Planning to Leave

- 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 and car keys ready and put them _____ so I can leave quickly.
- I will leave money and an extra set of keys _____ so I can leave quickly.
- I will keep copies of important documents or clothes _____.
- The domestic violence hotline number is _____. I can call it if I need shelter or information.
- If it's not safe to talk openly, I will use _____ as the code word/signal to my children that we are leaving, or to my family or friends that we are coming.
- I will use _____ as my code word with my children or my friends so they will call for help.
- I will keep important numbers and change for phone calls with me at all times. Since my partner can learn who I've been talking to by looking at phone bills, I can see if friends will let me use their phones and/or their phone credit cards.
- I can leave my pets with _____.
- I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can increase my independence by opening a bank account and getting credit cards in my own name; taking classes or getting job skills; getting copies of all the important papers and documents I might need and keeping them with _____.
- I can rehearse my escape plan and, if appropriate, practice it with my children.
- Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

_____.

After I Leave

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows.
- 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 system, etc.

- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and put fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.
- I will teach my children how to use the phone to make a collect call to me if they are concerned about their safety.
- I can tell people who take care of my children, including their school, which people have permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.
- I will give the people who take care of my children, including their school, copies of custody and protective orders, and emergency numbers.

At Work and in Public

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and/or Employee Assistance Program about my situation.
- My workplace security office phone number is _____.
- I can ask my coworkers to screen my calls at work.
- When leaving work, I can _____.
- When traveling to and from work, I can vary my route.
- I can change my patterns— avoid stores, banks, doctor's appointments, Laundromats, _____, and places where my partner might find me.
- I can tell _____ and _____ that I am no longer with my partner and ask them to call the police if they believe my children or I are in danger.

With an Order of Protection

- I will keep my order of protection _____. (Always keep it on or near your person, purse, car, home, workplace, children's school/daycare, supportive family, close friends, religious advisor)
- I will give copies of my order of protection to police departments in the community in which I live and those where I visit friends and family.
- If my partner destroys my order of protection or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.
- If my partner violates the order of protection, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- I can call a domestic violence program if I have questions about how to enforce a court order or if I have problems getting it enforced.

Items to Take When Leaving (safety is the most important aspect when leaving but if you can gather important paperwork, it will make it easier for you)

- Identification for myself
- Birth certificates (self and children)
- Social Security cards
- School/vaccination records
- Money, checkbook, bank books, ATM cards, tax returns, credit cards
- Medication
- Keys - house, car, office
- Cell phone and charger
- Driver's license/car registration
- Insurance papers
- Public Assistance ID/Medicaid Cards
- Passports, green cards, work permits
- Divorce or separation papers
- Lease, rental agreement or house deed
- Car/mortgage payment book
- Children's toys, security blankets, stuffed animals
- Sentimental items, photos

My Emotional Health

- If I am feeling down, lonely or confused, I can call _____.
- I can take care of my physical health needs by getting a checkup with my doctor, gynecologist and dentist. If I don't have a doctor, I will call the local clinic.
- If I have concerns about my children's health and well-being, I can call _____.
- If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call or spend time with _____ before I make a decision.
- I will remind myself daily of my best qualities. They are:

_____.
- I can attend support groups, workshops, or classes at the local domestic violence program in order to build a support system, learn skills and get information.
- I will look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I need help around my drinking or drug use, I can call _____.
- I can read a book about domestic violence that was written for battered women.
- Other things I can do to feel stronger are:

_____.

Adapted from the *Personalized Safety Plan* developed by Office of the City Attorney, City of San Diego, CA, April 1990.

Cyber/Electronic Stalking: An Abuser Can Discover Your Internet Activities

Many browsers have features that display recently visited sites. If you don't want anyone to know which Internet sites you have visited, consider using a computer at a local library, a friend's house or at work. Also, you can learn how to hide or delete the sites you visited from the computer history/cache file.

E-Mail: If an abuser has access to your e-mail account, he/she may be able to read your incoming and outgoing mail. If you believe your account is secure, make sure you choose a password that your abuser will not be able to guess.

If your abuser sends you threatening or harassing e-mail messages, they may be printed and saved as evidence of the abuse.

Cell Phones: Be aware that cell phones track incoming and outgoing calls, so you may want to constantly delete those records from your phone if you don't want anyone to know whom you've been in contact with. The cell phone bills also have detailed records of all calls made and received.