

◇ Strategies for Dealing With Domestic Violence: Safety Planning

It may help you and your children stay safer if you develop a plan for your safety ahead of time. If you need some help working out your personal safety plan, you may want to ask a trusted friend, another survivor of abuse, or call a domestic violence hotline. The design of a safety plan is an ongoing process. It is a good idea to review it periodically, so you will be prepared to use it. Keep it in a safe place where your abuser is not likely to find it.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Review Dates: _____

◇ Personalized Safety Plan

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to my partner and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

STEP 1: SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT. Women cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, abused women may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some or all of the following 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 (place) _____ in order to leave quickly.
- C. I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- D. I can teach my children how to call 911 or 0 to contact the police and the fire department.
- 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).
If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to _____
or _____.
- G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.
- H. 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 the bathroom, garage, kitchen, other rooms with weapons, or 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 is necessary to calm down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

STEP 2: SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE. Abused women frequently leave the residence they share with the abusive partner. Leaving must be done strategically in order to increase safety. Abusers often strike back when they believe their partner is leaving the relationship.

I can use some or all of the following safety 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 (date) _____ to increase my independence.
I will have statements of the account go to _____.
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include: _____

- E. The domestic violence program's hotline number is _____.
- F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the next month's bill will tell my abuser those numbers I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to let me use their telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.
- G. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- H. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I. 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) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- J. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

STEP 3: SAFETY IN MY OWN RESIDENCE. There are many things a woman can do to increase her safety in her 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 include:

- 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.
I can change the code on my old security system, or I can periodically change the code on my new one so my abuser does not learn it.
- D. I can install a new garage door opener.
- E. I can purchase rope ladders to be used to escape from second floor windows.
- F. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- G. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- H. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend/minister/family/other) in the event that my partner abducts the children.
- I. I will tell people who take care of my children who has 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:
 - School _____
 - Day Care Staff _____
 - Baby-sitter _____
 - Sunday School Teacher _____
 - Others _____
- J. I can inform (neighbor) _____ ,
(pastor) _____ and (friend) _____
that my partner no longer resides with me, and they should call the police if he is seen near my residence.

STEP 4: SAFETY WITH A PROTECTION ORDER. Many abusers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order.

The following are some steps I can take to enforce my protection order:

- A. I will keep my protection order _____ (location).
(Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in).
- B. I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live.
- C. I can call the local domestic violence program if I am not sure about B above or if I have some problem with my protection order.
- D. I will inform my employer, my minister, my closest friend, and _____
_____ and _____ that I have a protection order
in effect.
- E. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another certified copy from the courthouse by going to the Clerk of Courts located at _____.
- F. If my partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- G. If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and file a complaint with the chief of police.
- H. I can also file a criminal complaint with the prosecutor in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred. I can charge my abusive partner with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes committed in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.

STEP 5: SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC. Each abused woman must decide if and when she will tell others that her partner has abused her and that she may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help protect you. Each woman should carefully consider which people to ask to help her secure safety.

I might do any or all of the following:

- A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____
at work of my situation.
- B. I can ask _____ to help screen my phone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work, I can _____.
- D. When driving home, if problems occur I can _____.
- E. If I use public transit, I can _____.
- F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business, and I can shop at different hours than I did when living with my abuser.
- G. I can also _____.

STEP 6: SAFETY AND DRUG OR ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION. Most people in this culture consume alcohol. Many consume mood-altering drugs. Much of this consumption is legal, and some is not. The legal ramifications of using illegal drugs can be very hard on an abused woman, may hurt her relationship with her children, and may put her at a

disadvantage in other legal actions with her abusive partner. Therefore, women should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of 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 abuser. Furthermore, the abuser may use alcohol or drug consumption as an excuse to be violent. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, a woman needs to make specific safety plans.

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

- A. If I am going to consume, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.
- B. I can also _____.
- C. If my partner is consuming, I can _____.
- D. I might also _____.
- E. To safeguard my children, I might _____ and _____.

STEP 7: SAFETY AND MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH. The experience of being abused and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes 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:

- A. If I feel down and ready to return 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 can try to use "I can..." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- 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 _____ as other resources to be of support to me.
- G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____.
- H. I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program, or I can _____ or _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

STEP 8: ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING. When women leave partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, women sometimes give an extra copy 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.

These items might be best placed in one location so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should try to take:

- *• Identification
- *• Children's birth certificates
- *• My birth certificate
- *• Social security cards
- *• Abuser's social security and license plate numbers
- *• School and vaccination records
- *• Money
- *• Checkbook, ATM card
- *• Credit cards
- *• Keys--house/car/office
- *• Driver's license and registration
- *• Medications
- *• Work permits
- *• Green Card
- Welfare identification
- Passport(s)
- Divorce/Custody Papers
- Medical records--for all family members
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book
- Bank books
- Insurance papers
- Small objects I could sell
- Address book
- Pictures
- Jewelry
- Children's favorite toys and/or blankets
- Items of special sentimental value

TELEPHONE NUMBERS I NEED TO KNOW:

Police department (home) _____
Police department (school) _____
Police department (work) _____
Domestic Violence Hotline _____
Legal Advocate _____
County registry of protection orders _____
Work number _____
Supervisor's home number _____
Spiritual Advisor _____
Other _____