

MY PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN

Important: It is a good idea to talk to shelter staff or other safety planning expert about additional safety planning to meet the needs of your particular, unique situation.

Step 1: Safety during a Violent Incident. Victims cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, victims should consider some or all of these strategies, and to remember this list is not exhaustive.

If I decide to leave, I will _____
(Practice how to get out safely; what doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes will you use?)

I can keep my purse/wallet/identification, passports, car keys, emergency cash ready and put them in (place) _____ in order to leave quickly.

I can tell _____, and _____
(list two trusted friends/neighbors and their phone numbers) about the violence and request they call the Police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house or if they cannot locate me.

I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the Police and to provide quick and accurate information including directions to our home and neighborhood.

I will use _____ as my code word with my children and my friends so they can go for help.

If I have to leave my home, I will go to _____ (Decide this even if you don't think there will be another violent incident.) If I cannot go to the above location, then I can go to _____.

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

When I expect my partner and I are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Remember to avoid the bathroom, kitchen, garage, rooms containing weapons and rooms with access to the outside.)

I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I should consider doing what I know will calm my partner down. I must remember that I have to protect myself and the children until we are out of danger.

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Step 2: Safety When Preparing To Leave. Victims frequently leave the residence they share with the abusive partner. Leaving must be done strategically in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a battered partner is leaving the relationship. Victims can use some or all of the strategies:

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

I will keep copies of important documents at _____.

I will open a savings account by *(date)* _____ in order to increase my independence.

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

The local Rape Crisis Centre telephone number is: _____.

The local Women's Shelter telephone number is: _____.

The local Women's Crisis Centre telephone number is: _____.

To make emergency phone calls and to keep them private, I can keep change and Quick Change (*an anonymous phone card*) with me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the next month's bill will reveal the numbers I have called recently, including those made after I left. If I need a new telephone credit card immediately, I could borrow one from a friend for a limited time when I first leave. I will check with the phone service to make sure that the last number I have called cannot be accessed by my partner.

I will contact _____ and _____ for a temporary place to stay and for emergency financial assistance.

I can leave extra clothes with _____.

I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ (*week? 2 weeks? Month?*) in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. My caseworker or friend, _____ has agreed to help me review this plan.

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

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Step 3: Safety in My Own Residence. There are many things that a victim can do to increase 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 consider include:

Can I change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible?

Can I replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors?

Can I install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system with “panic button”, etc?

Can I purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows?

Can I install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment?

Can I install an outside lighting system that light up when a person is coming close to my home?

I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to *(trusted friend/neighbor/relative)* _____ in the event that my partner abducts the children.

I will teach my children a code word that grants them permission to leave with a person other than myself only when that person uses that code word in direct communication with my children.

I will remember to give my code word to the person(s) I instruct to collect my children in an emergency or any other unusual situation AND I will change the code word with my children frequently.

I will tell 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:

(school) _____ *(teacher)* _____

(day-care staff) _____ *(coach/instructor)* _____

(baby-sitter) _____ *(others)* _____

I can inform *(neighbor)* _____, *(religious leader)* _____, and *(friend)* _____ that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call police if he is observed near my residence.

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Step 4: Safety with a Court Order (peace bond (810, 810.2 Criminal Code), release/bail conditions, recognition with conditions, conditions of probation order). Some abusers obey court orders such as peace bond, where they promise the court that they will abide by all terms and conditions of such an order. Unfortunately, one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate a court order. Here are some steps that a person can take to help enforce her partner's court order:

Recognize that I will have to report to the Police when my partner breaches any conditions of the court order. If a Police Officer does not assist me, I will report the breach of the court order to the Officer In Charge or to the Police Chief of the Police Service in the jurisdiction where the court order was violated. I understand that my partner may be charged if I contact him

I will get a copy of my partner's court order from the court office located at _____ and keep it with me at all times. *(If you change purses/wallet, that's the first thing to go in.)*

If my partner destroys my copy of his/her court order, I can get another copy from the court, located at:

_____.

If I relocate to another city/town, or if I work in a city/town other than where I reside, I will notify the Police Service, OPP detachment in that city/town, of my new address/work location AND of my partner's violent behavior and the details of his court order

For further safety, in often visit other cities/towns/countries, I will notify the Police service in the jurisdiction I am visiting, of my partner's violent behavior and details of his (her) court order.

I will inform my employer _____, religious leader _____, my outreach worker at the local safety network or shelter, and _____, that a court has been issued against my partner, including all of the condition that effect myself and my children.

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Step 5: Safety on the Job and In Public: Each victim must decide if and when they will tell others that their partner can become violent and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help protect the victim. Each victim should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure her safety. A victim could do some or all of the following:

I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and _____,
_____ (secretary, co-workers, etc.) at work of my situation.

I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work. I can also make use of telephone voice messaging to screen my calls.

When leaving work, I can walk from the building _____ (accompanied by security, co-workers, friends) to ensure my safety.

If problems occur while I am driving home, I can _____
_____ use my cellular telephone, in car telephone, personal sound- alarm; honk my horn continuously, drive directly to a well-lit public place that is open and heavily populated, drive directly to the local Police service/OPP detachment for assistance.

If I use public transit, I can _____
_____ (sit close to the front by the driver, arrange to have someone meet me at my bus stop and walk me home; once I arrive home, call a friend or relative to let them know I arrived safely).

I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different from those I used when living with my partner.

I can also _____.

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Step 6: Safety and Drug or Alcohol Consumption: Most people in our culture consume alcohol. Many consume mood-altering drugs. Much of this consumption is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a victim, may hurt relationships with the victim's children, and put the victim at a disadvantage in other legal actions with the abusive partner. Therefore, victims should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. But beyond this, the use of any alcohol and other drugs can reduce a victim's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect both the victim and the victim's children from the batterer. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the abuser may give the abuser an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug and alcohol consumption, a victim needs to make specific plans. They may include some or all of the following:

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.

I can also *(call a friend, call alcoholics anonymous sponsor etc.)*

If my partner is consuming, I can *(leave with the children, call a friend, call a friend of my partner's)*

To safeguard my children, I can *(remove them from the scene where my partner is consuming)*

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Step 7: Safety and My Emotional Health. The experience of being abused and/or verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotional draining. The process of building a new life for yourself takes much courage and incredible energy. Here are some things a person can do to conserve emotional energy and resources, and to avoid hard emotional times:

If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, *(I can call a friend, relative or shelter worker for support)* or, _____.

When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can *(advise him I am recording what he is telling me and then I will do so, I will arrange to have a trusted friend or close relative present during these meetings/communications, or make arrangements to go through a lawyer or another unbiased third party)* or _____.

I can use "I can _____" statements with myself and be assertive with others.

I can tell myself, "I'm in charge of my life and confident in my decision-making abilities or *(other positive statements about my abilities)* _____" when I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

I can read *(my spiritual teachings, poetry, self-help resources)* or _____ to help me feel stronger.

I can call *(names of friends, family, other support people)* _____ to be of support to me.

Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____

_____.

I can attend workshops and support groups offered through the church, community resource center, women's shelter or women's resource center or Health Unit located at _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

Step 8: Items To Take With Me When Leaving: When victims leave partners, it is important to take certain items. Beyond this, victims sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend, just in case the victim has to leave quickly. Items with asterisks on the following list are the most important to take, but are not in order of priority. If there is time, the other items might be taken or stored outside the home. Items to take when leaving should be placed ahead of time in one location so that they can be grabbed quickly if one has to leave quickly. Items to take:

My identification (*birth certificate, driver's license, passport etc.*)*

Children's birth certificates*

Social Insurance Cards*

My partner's Social Insurance Number*

My health card*

My children's health cards*

School and vaccination records*

Money*

Cheque book, ATM card*

Credit cards*

Bank Books*

Keys -house, car, office*

Medications/prescriptions*

Custody orders*

Ontario Works papers*

Work permits*

Lease/rental agreements, property deeds*

Mortgage payment documents*

Photographs*

Jewelry*

Small salable items*

Immigration papers*

Passports*

Divorce documentation*

Medical records for all family members*

Insurance papers*

Address book*

Children's favourite toys and/or blanket*

Items of special sentimental value*

Vehicle ownership documents*

Government of Ontario Seniors card*

Native Person Status card/documentation*

Employment/pension documentation*

3 years of tax assessment*

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Telephone Numbers I need to know:

Police, Fire, Ambulance: 911, or _____

Shelter for Women: _____

Rape Crisis Line: _____

Women and Children's Crisis Line: _____

Kids help phone: 1-800-668-6868. Nationwide, 24 hours, both French and English;
not just a crisis line, but to answer questions anytime.

Victim Support Line: 1-888-579-2888, or in Toronto: 314-2477

Victim Support Line: www.gov.on.ca/vicline

Doctor: _____

Religious Leader: _____

Lawyer: _____

Work: _____

Work Supervisor's Home: _____

Children's School: _____

Children's Daycare: _____

Social Worker: _____

Other Important Number: _____

Contact Police Officer: _____

NOTES/OTHER PHONE NUMBERS: _____

