

## Safety Plan

Creating a thorough safety plan as you leave an abusive relationship can save your life. It's also vital for your own empowerment, and deeply nourishing to your nervous system as it undergoes significant change.

Use the following recommendations as a way to start thinking about how you can leave safely.

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### Planning Ahead

- ☐ Create a new email address
- ☐ Tell someone you trust
  - ☐ Trusted contact
  - ☐ Code word for alerting them
  - ☐ Safe place to store their contact information
- ☐ Identify safe places to go on short notice
  - ☐ Possible safe locations (friends, family, shelter)
- ☐ Gather valuables and documents
  - ☐ Packed bag
  - ☐ List of essential items
    - ☐ ID/Passport
    - ☐ Birth certificate(s)
    - ☐ Money
    - ☐ Medications

- ☐ Important documents (tax returns, bank statements, restraining order, etc.)
  - ☐ Cash available for untraceable expenses
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### **Taking Action**

- ☐ Plan the best time to leave
    - ☐ Time or date when the abuser isn't present
  - ☐ Make arrangements for pets
    - ☐ Pet care arrangements
    - ☐ Contact for animal shelter/foster
  - ☐ Be cautious of online activity
    - ☐ Is social media activity secure?
    - ☐ Are you using a public computer?
    - ☐ Is your phone location turned off?
  - ☐ Find support
    - ☐ Therapist/support group
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### **If You Have Children**

- ☐ Consult with an attorney
  - ☐ Attorney contact
  - ☐ Good Cause report
- ☐ Notify the children's school

- ☐ Make sure your children know how to call 911
  - ☐ Have they been instructed on how to call 911?
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### **Emotional and Physical Well-being**

- ☐ Are you noticing any emotional or physical symptoms? (sleep issues, focus problems, body aches, irritability, mood swings)?

If so, these are common signs. Consult with your primary doctor or find a therapist who can help.

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Trust your instincts during this process. Creating and following a safety plan can significantly increase the chances of leaving an abusive relationship safely and beginning the journey toward healing and independence.

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### **Additional Things to Consider**

- Safety During an Argument
  - Stay in an area with an exit and don't let the other person get between you and the exit.
  - Avoid rooms with weapons, such as the kitchen.
  - Tell trustworthy neighbors about the violence. Ask them to call the police if they hear or see any disturbance.
  - Devise a code word or signal to use with your children, family, friends, and trustworthy neighbors when you need the police.
- Safety in Your Own Home
  - Change the locks on your doors. Landlords are legally obligated to change locks within 24 hours if you are experiencing domestic violence.

- Safety at Work
  - Ask security staff for an escort to and from the car.
  - Use a variety of routes to go home.
- Safety with Orders of Protection
  - Keep your protective order on you at all times and give a copy to a trusted neighbor, friend or family member.
  - Call the police if your abuser violates the protective order. Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.
  - Inform family, friends, neighbors and health care providers that you have a restraining order in effect.
  - If my protection order gets destroyed, I know I can go to the courthouse and get another copy.
- Safety with Children
  - Teach children how to use the telephone and consider getting children a cell phone to be used for emergencies.
  - Teach children a code word to be used to dial 911.
  - Tell the people who take care of children, including their school, who has permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.
  - Give the people who take care of children copies of orders of protection, custody and other court orders, and emergency numbers.
  - If children use social networking websites, talk to them about being very careful with what information they post there.
- Stalking
  - Keep a log of all stalking incidents, including date, time, location, type of incident, and witnesses.

- Keep all evidence, including letters, emails, voicemails, and gifts received from the abuser.
- Strategies if You Feel You are Being Monitored
  - If you can, and you feel it's safe, replace your current phone.
    - You can get a donated phone through the Verizon Hopeline (which partners with domestic violence programs) or through a low-income program such as Safe Link Wireless.
  - You can purchase a pay-as-you-go phone, one that isn't connected to any accounts that the perpetrator might have access to. Make the purchase with cash to avoid the phone being connected with your personal information
- Safety When Preparing to Leave
  - Establish your independence. Open savings and credit card accounts in your name
  - only and specifically instruct institutions that your partner is not to have access.
  - Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents, extra medicine and clothes
  - with someone you trust so you can leave quickly.
  - Determine safe people you can stay with and or how long you can stay.
- Other items to bring with you
  - Legal Papers
    - Orders of Protection
    - Lease, rental agreement or house deed
    - Car registration and insurance papers

- Health and life insurance papers
  - Medical records for you and your children
  - School records
  - Work permits/Green Card/Visa
  - Marriage license
  - Divorce and custody orders
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### **Immediate Resources**

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
- 911