

# A Safety Planning Worksheet



notes

A DIY plan to prepare for safety the next time an abusive incident occurs

Sep 25, 2019

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There's going to be another abusive incident. Be it a degrading shouting match, intimidating threats or an outright attack, you know in

your gut that it's going to happen again. Think of your safety plan as a life vest. You put it on before you fall off the ship, knowing it will keep you afloat when you land in the water.

The best way to create a safety plan is by calling a trained domestic violence advocate near you, or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233. An advocate can help you walk through the steps and also find local resources, like shelters, support groups and legal and financial assistance.

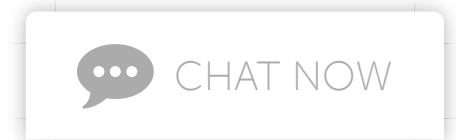
But if for any reason you aren't ready to or are unable to contact an advocate, you can DIY your safety plan by

filling out the worksheet below.

### **What a Safety Plan Can Do**

A safety plan can increase the chances you a.) escape a threatening, scary or violent encounter with an abuser safely, even if it's a temporary escape and b.) help you solidify a plan to leave an abuser permanently, prepared with what you need to file charges if you so choose and start a new life over without having to contact the abuser again.

A safety plan does not mean you need to leave your home forever. In the plan, you will think about where you can go temporarily to be safe and consider next steps. Those next steps may



be acquiring an order of protection that forces the abuser to leave your home, breaking a lease or initiating divorce proceedings. For some survivors, leaving a home they share with an abuser for good turns out to be the safest option, but remember, it's all up to you and what you deem safest and doable.

### **What a Safety Plan is NOT**

A safety plan is not a replacement for calling 911, filing for an order of protection or contacting a lawyer. In many cases, a safety plan involves some of those steps.

### **Step 1: Prepare**

**Collect evidence.** If it is safe to do so, keeping a

journal of abusive incidents (date, time, details), including threats, as well as copies of threatening or abusive emails, text messages, police reports, doctor or hospital records will be helpful if and when you file for an order of protection or press charges against an abuser. Keep this evidence outside of your home, like at a workplace, a friend's house or a safety deposit box.

*I can keep the evidence I've collected or will collect, which includes:*

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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- \_\_\_\_\_

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-

at -----

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----- (safe  
place the abuser  
won't find).

### **Stash a getaway**

**bag.** This bag, which you should, again, keep somewhere where the abuser can't find it, such as a friend's house, your workplace or a neighbor's house, will contain important documents such as: your driver's license, passport, birth certificate, social security cards, copies of financial records, your lease or deed, health insurance information, prescriptions, marriage license or divorce

papers, and all similar paperwork for your children, if applicable. It should also include, if possible, some cash you are able to save in case the abuser cancels credits cards or blocks you from accessing bank accounts. See "Packing Your Bags" for a more comprehensive list of what should go in this getaway bag.

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*I will make sure to pack the following in my getaway bag:*

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- 
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 

*and will hide it  
at \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (safe  
place the abuser  
won't find).*

## **Step 2: Plan**

**Decide where to go.** When it's time to leave—it could be while the abuser is at work, the next time you feel in danger, exactly two weeks from now or whenever you deem the best time—you need to plan where to go. Consider an emergency shelter (which will need advance notice,



so contact an  
advocate there),  
a friend or family  
member's house  
that the abuser  
doesn't know  
the location of  
or is far enough  
away that it will  
be difficult for  
the abuser to  
get to you, or, if  
affordable, a  
hotel or  
apartment that  
you pay for with  
cash so the  
abuser cannot  
track you there.  
Keep in mind  
that if you have  
a cell phone, the  
abuser may be  
able to trace  
your location, so  
consider getting  
a pay-as-you-go  
temporary  
phone and  
leaving your cell  
behind.

*I will be leaving*

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*(approximate  
date/time) and  
going to*

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\_\_\_\_\_. *I will only  
tell*

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\_\_\_\_\_ (trusted  
friend/family  
member/advoca  
te) of my  
whereabouts.

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**Plan for all possibilities.** You know your partner best. You know what abusive tactics he or she is most likely to use. Make sure you think about that as you get ready to leave. The abuser may feel like something is different in your demeanor and may become more controlling. When an abuser feels like they are losing control, it is

often the most dangerous time for a survivor. Prepare for this by thinking out different scenarios that could happen and what you will do. For example, if an abuser always shuts the bedroom door to close you in before he or she becomes violent, can you unlock a window ahead of time, given you're on the ground floor, and exit through it when this starts? If an abuser threatens to keep or harm your children or pets if you leave, can you make sure they're in a safe place before you leave, such as taking them to a trusted relative's house? Can you create a code word that, if you say it in front of your children, they'll know to run next door to the neighbor's

house and call  
911?

*I know my  
partner is likely  
to use the  
following tactics  
to control me  
and keep me  
from leaving:*

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\_\_\_\_\_  
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- \_\_\_\_\_  
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- \_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
—

*To counteract  
these things, I  
will prepare by  
doing the  
following:*

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**Step 3: After You Leave**

**Stay vigilant.** After you leave an abuser, or after an abuser is forced to leave your home, you'll want to take safety precautions to keep yourself and your family safe. This should include considering an order of protection, alerting your place of employment and your children's school what is going on and giving them a photo of the abuser so they can alert you if he or she comes around, using a different route

to get to and from work or school, changing your schedule, taking a break from social media so the abuser is less likely to track or harass you, and changing your phone number and making it unlisted.

*After I leave, I will do the following actions to help keep myself safe:*

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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Click here to  
download a  
printable  
worksheet.

This is a basic  
plan to leave an  
abuser, but there  
are many things  
to consider  
when doing so.  
Read "Safety  
Planning With  
Your Kids" for  
more tips on  
leaving when  
children are  
involved, and  
"Planning for Pet  
Safety" when  
there are  
animals in the  
home. You may  
want to also  
peruse the rest  
of the articles in  
our Safety  
Planning section  
to prepare. The  
more you know,  
the better.

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