

DEVELOP A SAFETY PLAN

Although you do not have control over your partners, abusive behavior, you do have a choice about how to respond to that behavior, and know the best way to get yourself and your children to safety.

****One thing that helped me towards the end of my abusive marriage was to respond in a soft manner, instead of responding with harsh words when the abuser was attempting to start an argument or fight. This tactic allowed me to not get beat and have to heal, while giving me time to think clearly and plan my escape.****

1. Before an attack

1. Educate yourself. Learn about organizations and services that can help you, both in your area and nationally. Make a list of places you can call in an emergency (police, shelters, friends, family, church, YWCA, Salvation Army, support groups, domestic violence coalitions etc.) Find out what services are available in your community, and what their limitations are, if any. Will they pick you up in the middle of the night? Will they allow you to bring your pets? How long can you stay? Do they provide or refer you to counseling services, legal assistance, or help you get a job and permanent housing? Is your local church prepared to handle domestic violence issues?
2. If you have to travel to another town to reach a shelter or safe housing, find out how to get there ahead of time. Know which hotel/motel you could go to and how to get there. Choose some alternatives, in case that hotel/motel is full. Determine ahead of time, where you could park your car, so that it will be out of sight from the road.
3. Pack a bag with emergency supplies such as a change of clothing, toothbrush and other necessities, non-perishable food, special blanket or toys for the children, cash, checkbook, ATM card, credit cards, phone numbers of friends or agencies who can help, copies of important documents (personal identification, birth certificates, Social Security cards, school and medical records, passport, deeds to house, title to car, insurance papers, investment documentation, tax returns), extra keys to car and home, etc. Leave the bag at the home of a trusted friend or relative. If necessary, you can rent a locker at a bus station or airport.
4. Think about how you would get out of the house safely, and practice it, to see how long it takes and whether or not, you will have difficulty getting out that way. Consider using doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes, but make sure you can exit safely without being trapped or injured. A good investment is a rope ladder that can help you escape from two or three stories.
5. Tell neighbors, friends, church members that you trust and family members what is

going on. Request that they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from your house. Work out a signal (window shade down on a certain window, or blinking lights), so the neighbors will know they should call the police.

Important Tips

Consider writing a letter to someone you trust, explaining how you have been abused, the name of the abuser, when incidents have occurred, and any other important details, including a photo of the abuser. Sign it and mail it. It may be used as evidence later.

Teach your children how to dial 9-1-1, and instruct them to call whenever they hear or see violence in the home. Work it out with trusted neighbors for the children to leave home at the first sign of violence and seek shelter with them. The neighbors can then call the police.

Develop a code word to say to your children or friends when you need them to call or run for help. Keep a list of telephone numbers in your wallet of people who will help you.

If a friend or family member has offered you emergency shelter, ask if you can have a key to their home to keep in your wallet (or a secret place), or to let you know the location of a hidden key on their property.

Make an extra copy of the house key and car keys, and keep them in your wallet or emergency bag.

Gather up sentimental possessions such as photographs, children's drawings, jewelry, etc. If photographs or video tapes can easily be copied, make a plan to copy everything of value to you and get it out of the house. A vengeful abuser delights in destroying his partners property or withholding sentimental items to hurt her.

Familiarize yourself with your monthly household expenses. List what you spend for groceries, rent, insurance, utilities, childcare, transportation, medical care, etc. This will help you determine how much you will need to earn when you are on your own. You will also need this information for filling out forms for restraining orders, public assistance programs, etc.

Begin saving money a little at a time out of the grocery budget, from garage sales, or from any other source you can find. Keep enough money on you at all times, if possible, to pay for taxi, bus fare, gas (for your car), and one or more nights at a hotel.

Get a credit card in your own name and use the address of your workplace or a trusted friend. Open up a savings account in your name and deposit as much as you can each week.

Important Tips:

- 1. If possible, join a support group for battered women. If your abuser doesn't ask you where you are going, don't volunteer the information. However, if he asks, don't lie, but be cautious in offering specific information about the group, especially the location.
 2. Make a list of advantages and disadvantages of leaving. Be realistic about both situations, and evaluate your options frequently. What may be a good option today may not work well tomorrow. Don't act impulsively on such an important decision. Take time to carefully strategize and evaluate your next move.
 3. Research information about apartments. Know where you can rent an apartment in a safe neighborhood for the lowest price, how much is required for a security deposit, whether or not they allow children and pets, whether you have a security system so it would be difficult for the abuser to get into the building, etc. Save enough money for the security deposit and two to three months of rent (if possible).
 4. Make a habit of backing your car into the driveway (if you have one), so you can leave quickly. If there is a chance your car can be blocked in, park on the street. Always make sure the passenger and back seat doors are locked when you get into the car. Make sure the car always has a full tank of gas.
 5. Remove all knives or sharp objects from view. If you have a knife holder or rack, either put it in a hard to reach place or remove the knives and put them in a safe place.
 6. If there are guns in the house, learn how to unload them. If you anticipate violence, either lock up the ammunition or get the guns and ammunition completely out of the house.
 7. If you are sleeping in separate bedrooms, lock and barricade the door so you won't be attacked while you are sleeping. Do not stay in a room where you cannot escape from a window or another entrance in case of an emergency.
 8. Plan ahead of time where you will go during an argument or at the first sign of violence. Try to move to a room where you will not be trapped. Avoid the bathroom, garage, basement, or rooms without access to a window or outside door.
 9. Consider taking a self-defense course which will increase your self-confidence along with physical and emotional strength. Do not count on this training to make you safe. Many women can easily be overpowered by an angry man, and they can be more seriously hurt or killed by trying to fight back.

1. During and following an attack

1. Try to diffuse the abuser's anger by staying as calm as possible. (Remember Proverbs 15:1) Be careful about hitting back, or picking up objects used as weapons. The abuser can grab them and use them on you.
2. Promise the abuser whatever he wants to get him to calm down. Do not argue or defend yourself verbally.
3. Try to position yourself as far away from the children as possible to protect them from the abuser. If possible, say the code word, so the children can know to get out of the house and/or call 9-1-1.
4. If you have devised a signal system with a neighbor, work your way to the part of the house, where the signal can be activated.

Important Tips During an Attack

- 1. If the abuser is distracted, grab your children, purse and keys and get out of the house. Get into the car and drive away as quickly as possible. If you don't have a car, walk or run to the nearest place of safety or public place, such as a restaurant, business, or home of a neighbor and call the police.
 2. If you have to leave the house without the children, or if he locks you out, arrange to go back for them as soon as possible. Do not go alone! Ask a police officer to accompany you or pick them up at school.
 3. If you are injured and need medical attention, wait until the abuser is asleep or distracted and call 9-1-1. If the bathroom has a window large enough to escape through, suggest that you are going to get some bandages. Lock the door, climb out of the window, and drive or run to safety. (Keep your rope ladders in a handy place, if you are in rooms above the 1st floor).
 4. If you are unable to escape immediately, wait until the abuser is asleep or make an excuse to check on the children. Grab the children and go out the window or backdoor before the abuser realizes what is happening.
 5. If you see the abuser with a weapon in his hand, do not take time to call 9-1-1 or confront him. Leave immediately!
 6. If you have a cellular phone in your purse, make your way to a room with a door that can be locked. If you are unable to escape out the window, barricade the door, quietly call 9-1-1, put the phone back into your purse, and wait for the police to arrive.

1. After you leave (or he leaves)

1. If he leaves the home, changed the locks on all outer doors and windows immediately.
2. Obtain an Order of Protection and keep it with you at all times.
3. Install window locks, bars in sliding glass doors, and an electronic safety system (if possible).
4. Purchase rope ladders to escape from second-floor windows.
5. Install an outside lighting system that lights up when someone comes close to the house.
6. If you leave, find an apartment that has security entrances and dead-bolt locks on the inner doors.
7. Alert your new neighbors not to let the abuser in the building for any reason. Show his photograph to all! Ask them to call the police if they see him in the building or around the property.
8. Do not, for any reason, allow the abuser to visit the children in your apartment. Arrange to meet him at a public place, or if your children are older, arrange for them to meet him in the parking lot or driveway.
9. Fill out a change of address card for yourself and your children. If you have custody of the children, check with the post offices occasionally to make sure the abuser has not changed the children's address back to his address. Get to know your mail carrier, and alert them to potential problems.
10. If there are no children involved, get an unlisted phone number. Make sure every one who knows your number also knows not to give it to the abuser. If possible, install, caller ID on your phone system.
11. Don't open the door, unless you can identify the one who knocks. Require all service people to show their identification before you unlock the door.
12. If a suspicious box or package shows up that you did not order, do not move it or open it. Call the police.
13. Install an automatic timer for your lights and use it regularly. Leave a radio or TV on when you leave your home.
14. Teach your children how to call you collect in case they are "kidnapped" by the abuser.

****If phone calls from the abuser become threatening, hang up. If he calls back and continues the abuse, hang up again and don't pick up afterwards.****

1. Safety while in the car

1. Park in well lit areas. Do not get out of the car if you sense someone approaching. Be observant and do not exit the car until you have door keys in hand and your surroundings look safe.
2. Install a locking gas cap (if your car does not have one already), which can be unlocked from the inside of the car.
3. Never get into your car without looking inside first. If you see suspicious wire inside or outside your car, or signs that your car has been tampered with, call the police immediately. Do not get inside, or try to start the engine.
4. Keep all doors locked while you are driving.
5. If you sense that you are being followed, drive to the nearest police or fire station. Honk the horn to attract attention. If you are not near a police or fire station, go to a heavily populated area such as a restaurant or gas station. Ask someone to call the police.
6. Get a cellular phone which you can carry in your purse when you are not in the car. Purchase an adapter, which will allow you to plug the phone into the cigarette lighter, in case your phone battery runs low.
7. If you feel unsafe walking to your car alone, ask someone to escort you. This is especially important if you have parked in a parking garage or other place where you may be walking to the car alone.
8. Ask someone to escort you to and from joint counseling sessions and legal proceedings.
9. If you are approached by the abuser in public, and you feel threatened, scream "HELP!", and go quickly to where ever people are congregated.
10. If the abuser gets into the vehicle with you, take the keys out of the ignition and try to get out of the car. If he tries to prevent you from taking the keys out of ignition and makes it impossible for you to get out of the car, hold onto the keys as tightly as possible with one hand, while sounding the horn with the other. If you can get the window down, scream "HELP!", and continue to honk the horn. If the abuser tries to drag you out of the car, wrap your arms tightly around the steering wheel and hold on. Your chances of being injured or killed are greater if he is able to get you outside of the car.
11. If the abuser stands in front of your vehicle and blocks you from leaving, remain in the vehicle with the doors locked and windows up. If you have a cellular phone, call 9-1-1. If not, honk the horn to attract attention. Be careful about trying to maneuver the car backwards or around the abuser. You may hit him and can be arrested yourself!

2. Safety at work

1. Alert your boss, coworkers, and receptionists about your situation. Make sure they know not to give out your home phone number or any personal information to any caller. The abuser may have someone else to call on his behalf.

Safety with Technology*

General Cell Phone Strategies:

- Lock your cell phone with a pass code.
 - Turn off location services on your phone and leave it on E-911 only. **Be aware that some phone may limit this capability and some Apps will not work with location services turned off.
 - Turn off the Bluetooth on your cell phone when it is not in use.
 - Check your cell phone account every now and then through your wireless carrier's website to ensure that you know all the features that are running on your phone.
 - Run anti-virus and security software on your phone. Some software will even list all the programs that are running on your phone. 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. If you purchase a new phone with a traditional carrier, considering switching carriers and phone number. Ask that you are the only authorized account holder and check to see what type of notifications you will receive if any features get added or removed.
 - Think about your safety when getting rid of the monitored cell phone. Some abusers may escalate their abusive behavior if they think that the victim/survivor is removing their control and access.
 - Take caution before moving data (porting contacts through the carrier or using the same memory card) or SIM cards from the cell phone that is monitored onto the new phone. The safest method is to manually enter the new data onto the new phone.
 - If you cannot leave the cell phone but don't want the person monitoring you to know where you are going, you can turn off the phone and take out the battery.
- Safety strategies for location tracking devices:

- Narrow down what might be used. If it is a location tracking device that is in the car, You could ask a trusted mechanic or law enforcement to go through the car to see if they can find them device.
- Be thoughtful about identifying and removing the device. Keep in mind that the person monitoring you might also know that you visited a mechanic or law enforcement and may escalate his/her abusive behavior if he/she suspects that you may be removing his/her access and control.
- Location tracking devices can also be hidden in gifts either to you or to family members. Look through anything that is new or was given as a gift.

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.

Checklist of Items to Take When Leaving:

Identification

- o Driver's License
- o Birth Certificate
- o Children's Birth Certificates
- o Social Security Cards
- o Passports

Financial

- o Money and/or credit cards (in your name)
- o Checking and/or savings account books

Legal Papers

- o Orders of Protection
- o Lease, rental agreement or house deed

- o Car registration and insurance papers
- o Health and life insurance papers
- o Medical records for you and your children
- o School records
- o Work permits/Green Card/Visa
- o Marriage license
- o Divorce and custody orders

Other

- o Medications
- o House and car keys
- o Cellphone
- o Address book