Alternatives for Women

PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, ON

# Creating a Safety Plan



## Alternatives for Women

**Crisis Line: 613-476-2787**

# Contents

Introduction ..... 3

An Emergency Escape Plan ..... 4

Creating a Safer Environment ..... 6

- At Home (if you are living with your abusive partner or spouse) ..... 6
- At Home (if you are not living with your abusive partner) ..... 7
- In the Neighbourhood ..... 8
- At Work ..... 9

An Emotional Safety Plan ..... 11

A Child's Safety Plan ..... 13

During a Violent Incident ..... 15

Telephone Safety ..... 16

- Landlines ..... 16
- Mobile/Cell Phones ..... 17

Technology Safety Planning & Risk Assessment Resources ..... 18

Notes: ..... 22

Our Services ..... 23

# Introduction

It is important to know that although you do not have control over your (ex)partner's violence, it is possible to increase your own, as well as your children's, safety when being subjected to this abuse. Creating a safety plan involves identifying action steps to increase your safety, and to prepare in advance for the possibility of further violence. This information package offers many suggestions and ideas that we hope you will find useful. However, don't try to do everything right away. Take it a step at a time and start with the ideas that seem most workable for you.

In creating a safety plan, it is important to remember that:

- Although you cannot control your (ex)partner's violence, it may be possible to increase your own and your children's safety.
- A safety plan is needed whenever the possibility of abuse is identified.
- This safety plan information is specifically designed for actions that you can take.
- This safety plan information also includes actions you can take to increase your children's safety.
- It is important to become familiar with and to review and/or revise your safety plan regularly. Abusive situations and risk factors can change quickly.

Remember Alternatives for Women staff is available to help you set up your safety plan.

# An Emergency Escape Plan

The Emergency Escape Plan focuses on the things you can do in advance to be better prepared in case you have to leave an abusive situation very quickly.

Following is a list of items you should try to set aside and hide in a safe place (e.g., at a friend's or family member's home, with your lawyer, in a safety deposit box):

- Passports, birth certificates, immigration papers, health cards, social insurance cards for all family members.
- School and vaccination records.
- Driver's license, registration, and insurance.
- Medications, prescriptions, medical records, for all family members.
- Bank and credit cards.
- Welfare identification.
- Work permits.
- Divorce papers, custody documentation, court orders, restraining orders, marriage certificate.
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage records.
- Bank records.
- Insurance papers.
- Contact information for important people/places.
- Picture of spouse/partner.

**Keep your wallet or purse handy, and containing the following:**

- Cell phone.
- Car/house/office keys.
- Driver's license, registration, insurance, health cards.
- Emergency money (cash) hidden away.

**Keep the following items hidden, so you can grab them quickly:**

- Emergency suitcase with immediate needs.
- Special toys, comforts for children.
- Jewelry.
- Small saleable objects.
- Items of special sentimental value.
- A list of other items you would like to take if you get a chance to come back to your home later.

**Do the following:**

- Open a bank account in your own name and arrange that mail/phone calls be directed to a friend or family member.
- Save and set aside as much money as you can.
- Plan your emergency exits and rehearse the steps you will take if you must leave quickly.
- Hide extra clothing, house keys, car keys, money, etc. at a friend's house.
- Consider getting a safety deposit box at a bank that your partner does not go to.

You can arrange for a police escort to remove additional personal belongings from your home later. Take the items listed above as well as anything else that is important to you or your children.

When you leave, take the children if you can. If you try to get them later, the police cannot help you remove them from their other parent unless you have a valid court order.

## Creating a Safer Environment

There are many things a person can do to increase their safety. Here are a few suggestions.

### At Home (if you are living with your abusive partner or spouse)

- Get your Emergency Escape Plan in order and review it often.
- Create a telephone list with numbers of local police, nearest shelter, assaulted women's help line, crisis help line, family members, counselors, children's friends.
- Plan with friends or family so that you can stay with them if necessary.
- Try to predict the next likely violent episode and make plans for the children to be sent to friends, family, etc.
- Teach the children to let you know when someone is at the door before answering the door.

- Teach your children how to use the telephone, and your cell phone to contact the police and the fire department.
- Keep an extra cell phone hidden and charged (pay as you go) that you can use in an emergency.
- Create a code word with your children and friends/family so they know who to call for help.
- Teach your children how to make a collect call to you and to a special friend if your partner takes the children.
- Plan your emergency exits and show your children.
- Teach your children their own safety plan.

## At Home (if you are not living with your abusive partner)

- Change the locks on the doors and windows. Install a peep hole in the door. Change the locks on your garage and mailbox.
- Teach your children to tell you if someone is at the door and not answer the door themselves.
- Always keep your restraining order near you.
- Make sure that the school, day care, and police have a copy of all court orders, including restraining orders, custody, and access orders, as well as a picture of the abusive partner.
- Try to predict the next likely violent incident and be prepared.
- If you have call display on your phone, be careful about who can get access to the stored numbers.

- Have your telephone number unpublished and block your number when calling out.
- Block your abuser from calling your cell phone or contacting you through social media.
- Move your furniture as this is something your partner may not anticipate and cause them to bump into it giving you warning someone is in the house. Also put your kitchen utensils and knife block in the cupboards so they are not as accessible.
- If you live in an apartment, check the floor clearly when getting off the elevator. Look in mirrors and be aware of doorways in hallways. Speak to security, or make an anonymous call, requesting safety in your building.
- Purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from upper floors.
- If you have a balcony, consider putting wire around it.
- Replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- Consider the advantages of getting a guard dog.
- Install outside motion sensitive lighting system.
- Set up doors and windows so you will know if someone has entered when you return home.
- Install monitored security systems, additional locks, window bars, and poles to wedge against doors.

## In the Neighbourhood

- Tell your neighbours that you would like them to call the police if they hear a fight or screaming in your home.

- Tell people who take care of your children, who has permission to pick up your children.
- Tell people in your neighbourhood that your partner no longer lives with you, and they should call the police if they are seen near your home. Give them a photo and description of them and their car.
- Ask your neighbours to look after your children in an emergency.
- Hide clothing and your Emergency Escape Plan items at a neighbour's house.
- Use different grocery stores and shopping malls, and shop at hours that are different from when you were living with your abusive partner.
- Use a different bank or branch and take care of your banking at hours different from those you used with your abusive partner.
- Change your doctor, dentist, and other professional services you would normally use.
- Do not put your name in your apartment building directory.

## At Work

Each person must decide for themselves if and/or when they will tell others that their partner is abusive, and they may be at risk. Friends, family, and co-workers may be able to help protect you. However, each person should consider carefully which people to ask for help. If you are comfortable, you may choose to do any or all the following:

- Tell your boss, the security supervisor, and other key people or friends at work of your situation.
- Ask to have your calls screened at work. It would also help to have these calls documented.
- Discuss the possibility of having your employer call the police if you are in danger from your (ex)partner.

**When Arriving or Leaving Work**

- Let someone know when you'll be home.
- Carry your keys in your hands.
- Get a remote or keyless entry car door opener.
- Walk with someone to your car.
- Scan the parking lot.
- Walk around your car, look under the hood, and check if anything has been tampered with and check brakes. Look to see if someone is hiding in the car.
- If your partner is following you, drive to a place where there are people to support you, e.g., a friend's house, police station.
- If you have underground parking, consider parking across the street.
- Keep a sign in your car saying, "call police".
- If you are walking, take a route that is populated.
- Change the patterns of when you arrive and leave work and the routes you take home.
- If you see your partner on the street, try to get to a public place, e.g., a store.
- If you see your partner on the street, call attention to yourself and request help.

# An Emotional Safety Plan

The experience of being abused and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of surviving and building a new life requires much courage, and incredible energy. To conserve your emotional energy, and to support yourself in hard emotional times, there are several things you can do:

- Attend as many Crisis Counselling sessions as you can.
- Become involved in community activities to reduce feeling isolated.
- Take a part-time job to reduce isolation and to improve your finances.
- Enroll in school to increase your skills.
- Join support groups of other women to gain support and strengthen your relationships with other people.
- Take time for yourself to read, meditate, play music, etc.
- Spend time with people who make you feel good and provide support.
- Take part in social activities e.g., movie, dinner, exercise.
- Take care of your sleep and nutritional needs.
- Keep a personal journal to write about your feelings, especially when you are feeling low or vulnerable. Keep it in a safe place or burn it.
- Take time to prepare yourself emotionally before entering stressful situations like talking with your partner, meeting with lawyers, or attending court.

- Try not to overbook yourself- limit yourself to one appointment per day to reduce stress.
- Be creative and do whatever makes you feel good.
- Write something positive about yourself everyday- your own personal affirmations.
- Do not find your comfort in excessive use of alcohol or food, it only serves to increase your depression.
- Avoid excessive shopping and impulse buying.
- Join a health club or start an exercise program. It will increase your energy level and increase your sense of well being.
- It's OK to feel angry but find positive and constructive ways to express your anger.
- Remember that you are the most important person to take care of right now.

# A Child's Safety Plan

This plan was developed to help parents teach their children some basic safety planning. It is based on the belief that the most important thing that children can do for their abused parent and their families is to get away from the area of violence! They cannot stop the abuse, although they often try by distracting the abuser or directly interfering in the abusive episode. It is important to tell the child that the best and most important thing for them to do is keep themselves safe.

Children who experience their parent's abuse can be profoundly affected. It is very traumatic for them to be faced with violence directed at them or at someone they love. Personal safety and safety planning are extremely important and necessary for children whose families experience violence. Children should learn ways to protect themselves. There are several ways to help you develop a safety plan with your children.

- Have your child pick a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone. The first step of any plan is for the children to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
- Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not the child's responsibility to make sure that their parent is safe.
- Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that children know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser. This puts them at risk. Talk to your children about using a neighbour's

phone if they can't use a phone at home. Teach your children how to use your cell phone.

- Teach them how to contact police at the emergency number.
- Ensure that the children know their full name and address (rural children need to know their Concession and Lot #).
- Rehearse what your child/children will say when they call for help.
    - Dial 911.
    - An operator will answer: "Police, Fire, Ambulance."
    - Your child says: Police.
    - Then your child says: My name is _____. I am _____ years old. I need help. Send the police. Someone is hurting my mom/dad. The address here is _____. The phone number here is _____.
- It is important for children to leave the phone off the hook after they are done talking. The police may call the number back if they hang up, which could create a dangerous situation for yourself and your child/children.
- Teach your children about Neighbourhood Block Parents and how to use them.
- Pick a safe place to meet your children, out of the home, after the situation is safe for you and for them (so you can easily find each other).
- Teach your children the safest route to the planned meeting place.

## During a Violent Incident

Persons cannot always avoid violent incidents. However, to increase your safety, here are some things you can do:

- Remind yourself that you have an Emergency Escape Plan and go over it in your mind.
- Start to position yourself to get out quickly or near a phone so you can call 911 or emergency phone number, if necessary.
- Move to a space where the risk is the lowest. (Avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- Use your code word with your children, family, or friends so they can call for help.
- Use your judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, you can agree with your partner or give them what they want to calm them down. You must protect yourself until you are out of danger.
- When, or after, you have been assaulted, call the police at 911, if you can. Tell them you have been assaulted by someone (don't say your husband/wife/partner) and leave the phone off the hook after your call.
- Make as much noise as possible (set off the fire alarm, break things, turn up the stereo or TV) so that neighbours may call the police for you.

# Telephone Safety

There are some important things to know about privacy and safety when you use the telephone. Check with your service provider for up-to-date information regarding the following services.

## Landlines

Anyone you call can find out your name and phone number through phone services such as Call Display and Call Return. Call Blocking keeps the person you call from getting your name and number. Both types of blocking are free.

**Occasional Call Blocking**

Press *67 on your touch tone phone or dial 1167 on your dial phone. When you hear three beeps, you will know that your name and number have been blocked and you can dial the number you want to call. You must do this procedure before each call you want to block.

**Permanent Call Blocking**

If you are a victim or potential victim of violence, call Bell to permanently block your name and number. Then every call you make from that number will be blocked without you having to press *67 or dial 1167.

Note: Call Blocking does not block your telephone when you call 911 emergency. If you are calling other countries, Call Block may not work.

**Last Call Return**

A person can find out the telephone number of the last caller by pressing *69.

If you are living with your partner and do not wish your partner to know the last number called to your home: after completing your call, pick up the phone again, press a few numbers then hang up again. This will prevent your partner from having access to the last call information.

**Harassing Telephone Calls**

If you are receiving harassing calls, you may wish to use Call Screen to screen out specific phone numbers. Press *60 or dial 1160 and follow voice instructions.

If you are receiving threatening or persistent phone calls, you may wish to use Call Trace. This service will trace the caller's telephone number even if the call is blocked however, Bell Canada will release the traced number only on presentation of proper legal authorization and only to the police. To use Call Trace: hang up after answering the call. Pick up the receiver and listen for the dial tone. Press *57 or dial 1157. A voice message will indicate whether the call has been traced successfully. There is a charge for this service.

## Mobile/Cell Phones

- Turn your Caller ID off in your phone settings if you do not want people you are calling to know your contact information.
- You can block callers you do not want to contact you from the recent calls list.

# Technology Safety Planning & Risk Assessment Resources

Technology changes quickly. The following links provide current, reliable resources.

**BC Society of Transition Houses**

A guide for Canadian women experiencing technology-facilitated violence: Strategies for Enhancing Safety

- What is Technology-Facilitated Violence against Women?
- Common Forms of Technology-facilitated Violence
- What Should You Do If You Are Experiencing Technology-Facilitated Violence?
- General Technology Safety Planning Tips
- Safer Strategies for Technology Use
- Smartphones
- Smartphone and Computer Surveillance
- Distribution of Non-Consensual Images
- Location Tracking
- Social Media
- Technology-Facilitated Violence Log
- Technology-Facilitated Violence and the Law

https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BCSTH-A-guide-for-Canadian-women-experiencing-technology-facilitated-violence-2019.pdf

**BC Society of Transition Houses**

An Introduction to the Technology-Facilitated Violence: Preserving Digital Evidence Toolkit

- Prioritizing Safety
- Women's Right to Technology
- The Digital Trail of Evidence
- Technology Isn't the Problem

https://bcsth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/2.-An-Introduction-to-the-Preserving-Digital-Evidence-of-Technology-Facilitated-Violence-Toolkit_FINAL_24Feb2021.pdf



**BC Society of Transition Houses**

The Technology Safety and Privacy Toolkit

- General Technology Safety
- Devices and Hardware Technology Safety Tips
- Considerations when Using Internet of Things
- Online Safety and Privacy
- Legal Remedies for Technology-Facilitated Violence
- Youth and Technology

https://bcsth.ca/techsafetytoolkit/



**Luke's Place**

Tech safety toolkit: Identify, manage and document tech abuse

- Understanding Tech Abuse
- Key Safety Planning Resources
- Other Safety Planning Resources For Women
- For Service Providers and Organizations

https://lukesplace.ca/resources/tech-abuse/



**Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic**

Technology safety for virtual conferences and services
A toolkit for survivors of intimate partner violence

- General Guidelines for Technology Safety
- Guidelines for Virtual Family Court Appearances

https://www.schliferclinic.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Technology-Safety-A-Toolkit-for-Survivors.pdf



**National Network to End Domestic Violence**

WiFi Safety & Privacy: Tips for Victim Service Agencies & Survivors

- How WiFi Works
- WiFi Hotspots Under Your Control
- Open/Public WiFi Hotspots
- Activities that are generally safe when using HTTPS
- Activities that are NOT private with HTTPS
- Benefits of Using a VPN
- Other Safety Tips
- What Advocates and Survivors Can Do

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51dc541ce4b03ebab8c5c88c/t/614caad33cc1ca38a2bf436a/1632414420044/NNEDV_WiFiSecurity&Privacy_2021.pdf



Notes:

# Our Services

- 24-hour crisis intervention
- Free, confidential counselling
- Emergency transportation to shelter
- Safety Planning
- Individual and group support
- Accompaniment to meetings and court
- Information About Options
- Outreach Counselling in PEC
- Second-Stage housing
- Advocacy and referrals to other agencies
- Transitional and Housing Support
- Public Education Programs

**Alternatives for Women**
**Crisis Line: 613-476-2787**
**alternativesforwoman.ca**

Alternatives for Women