

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

Step 1: Safety during a violent incident

- A. If I decide to leave, I will _____
_____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (place) _____ in order to leave quickly. I can keep an extra set of keys (place) _____.
- C. I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house. I can also tell _____ and _____.
- D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact police and the fire department
- E. I will use _____ as my code for my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- F. If I have to leave my home, I will go _____.
(Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.) If I can't go to that location, then I can go to _____ or _____.
- G. I can teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children
- H. When I feel an argument coming on, I will try to move to a space that is low risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, and kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

Step 2: Safety When Preparing to Leave

At some point I may need to leave. If I decide to leave, I will carefully use a plan to increase my safety. Abusers often strike back when they believe that a victim is trying to escape them.

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

- B. I will keep copies of important documents at _____.
- C. I will open a savings account to increase my independence and I won't tell my abuser about this account.
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include:
_____.
- E. The domestic violence program's hot line number is _____ and I can seek shelter by calling this hot line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use a telephone calling card, regular long distance, or charge a call to my home number, my abuser will know where I made calls. To keep my calls confidential, I will use a pay phone, call collect, or ask a friend to borrow their calling card for a while.
- G. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- H. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____ (advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- J. I will rehearse my escape plan and practice it with my children.

Items to take when leaving:

When leaving an abusive partner, it is important to take certain items with you. Beyond this, women sometimes give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they must leave quickly.

When I leave, I should have:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| * Identification for myself | * Work permits, Green card |
| * Children's birth certificates | *Divorce papers |
| *My birth certificate | *Medical records |
| *Social security cards | *Lease/rental agreement, deeds |
| *School and vaccination records | *Mortgage payment book |
| *Money | *Bank books, insurance papers |
| *Checkbook, ATM card | *Passport(s) |
| *Credit cards | *Address book |
| *Keys (house, car, office) | *Pictures, jewelry |
| *Driver's license and registration | *Children's favorite toys/blankets |
| *Medication | *Items of special sentimental value |

Step 3: Safety in My Own Residence

There are many things I can do to increase safety in my residence. It may be difficult to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Safety measures I can use include:

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. I can replace hollow-core wooden doors with solid wood doors, or replace wooded doors with steel/metal doors.
- C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____ (friend/minister/other) in the event that my partner takes them.
- H. I will tell people who take care of my children what persons 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: _____
 - Day Care Staff: _____
 - Babysitter: _____
 - Sunday School Teacher: _____
 - Teachers: _____
 - And: _____
- I. I can inform neighbor, pastors, and friends that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he/she is observed near my residence.

Step 4: Safety with an Order of Protection

You can never tell which abusers will obey protection orders and which will not. Recognize that you may need to ask the police and the court to enforce your protection order. The following are some steps that I can take to help with the enforcement of my protection order

- A. I will keep my protection order _____. (Always keep it on or near your person. You can also keep copies in the car, at the office, etc.)
- B. I will give copies of my protection order to law enforcement agencies in the communities where I work, live, and usually visit family and/or friends.
- C. I will give copies of my protection order to my children's school or daycare.
- D. I can make sure that my protection order has been served and is on file by calling _____.
- E. If my abuser violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation. I can also call my attorney, an advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- F. If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and will file a complaint with the chief of the police department.

Step 5: Safety on the Job and in Public

You must decide if and when you will tell others that you have been abused and that you may be at a continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help protect you. Consider carefully which people to invite to help secure your safety.

- A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and _____ at work of my situation.
- B. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work, I can _____.
- D. When driving home, if problems occur, I can _____.
- E. I will go to different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those when residing with my abuser.
- F. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my abuser.
- G. I can also _____.

Step 6: Safety and Drug or Alcohol Use

The legal outcomes of illegal drugs can be very harsh, may hurt your relationship with your children, and put you at a disadvantage in other legal actions with an abuser. Carefully consider the potential cost. The use of any alcohol or other drug can also reduce your ability to act quickly to protect yourself.

- A. If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with my abuser, I can enhance my safety by _____.

Step 7: Safety and My Emotional Health

Being battered, whether physically, emotionally, sexually, or psychologically, is tiring and can drain my emotions. I must recognize that the process of building a new life for me and my children takes courage and incredible energy. To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid tough emotional times, I can do some of the following.

- A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation I can _____.

- B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can _____.

- C. I can try to use “I can...” statements with myself and to be assertive with others.

- D. I can tell myself _____ whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

- E. I can read these resources to help me feel stronger: _____.

- F. I can call sources of support, like friends, neighbors, or the crisis line. The people and numbers I can call include: _____
_____.

- G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are: _____.

- H. I can attend support groups or talk with an advocate individually to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.
Support Groups: _____
People I can talk to: _____

Telephone Numbers I Need to Know:

- * Police: 911 * Police Department Violence Line: _____
- * District Attorney General's office: _____
- * Battered Women's Program: _____
- * County Registry: (protection orders): _____
- * Work Number: _____
- * Supervisor's Home Number: _____
- * Minister: _____
- * Other: _____

I will keep this document in a safe place and out of reach of my abuser.

By no means is this list comprehensive and not all things on this list may apply to you and your unique situation. But hopefully, it got you thinking...and planning. Having these and other steps done ahead of time can make your decision to leave easier when an opportunity presents itself or your physical safety demands it. In addition, it will give you some peace of mind and a sense of regaining some control over your life again. And that is the longest journey, so start it soon.