

Safety Planning





Help is available

If you have difficulty figuring out whether you are at risk, you may find it helpful to talk with someone at the local transition house, or with a counselor at a men's intervention program.

Women's centres can also provide information and support. A counselor or transition house worker can help figure out how safe you are and identify possible ideas and options that would make you safer. They can also give you information and support, and help you explore your options and with any planning steps that you want to consider.

You may decide that you want to live at a transition house or shelter for a few weeks until you can figure out if you want to stay and work on improving your relationship, or if you want to move toward a temporary separation or divorce.

Everyone is different. You must make your own decisions about the strengths of your relationship, and the potential it has to become what you want. Even if you decide to stay with your partner, transition houses can give you the opportunity to learn about improving your relationships, establishing your independence and financial security, or if you just need to talk: 1 855 225 0220

A safer relationship may be possible if both you and your partner:

- want a respectful, fair, and caring relationship
- are willing to take responsibility for your own choices and behavior, and to work towards change
- are willing to learn how to stop using threats or resorting to abuse
- are able to communicate what you want in your relationship in a non-violent way.

Accessing support

If you are considering whether to stay or leave the relationship, you may have to make some very difficult decisions. You can choose to talk over your situation with a counselor or therapist. They can help you understand more fully what you are thinking and feeling about the relationship and your situation. This process can help you make decisions about your future.

While you may be focused on the reasons to stay, a counselor can help you consider the reasons why you may want to leave. These decisions can be very complex, and everyone has the right to make these decisions for themselves.

If your partner is committed to ending the abuse, your partner will have to take steps to deal with the problems that led to the abusive behaviour. This could include:

- counseling for alcoholism and/or drug use
- addressing past trauma
- dealing with feelings of past victimization
- recognizing the pressures of traditional gender roles
- dealing with feelings of insecurity and desperation
- finding healthy ways to deal with unemployment.

SAFETY

Transition houses can advise you about what help and services are available to you. *See page 155 for contact information.*

Help line numbers can usually be found at the front of the phonebook and in the Yellow Pages under *social service organizations* as well as *women's organizations and services*. *See page 129 of the Directory at the back of this book for services.*

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

To find out about services in your area, call 211.

If you are seeking help or are looking for information about abuse, call the **Transition House Association of Nova Scotia's 24-hour toll-free line: 1 855 225 0220**

You may want to pack an emergency bag in case you need to leave quickly. See pages 31-32 for Safety Planning and Emergency Bag Checklists.

Finding a counselor or support person

You can find support through private or publically funded counseling. Family therapists are listed under *Marriage and Family Therapy* in the Yellow Pages. Many employers offer employee assistance programs that will assist with counseling referrals.

In addition to individual counseling, you and your partner can seek counseling together if you feel safe enough to do this. Many couples benefit from having counseling together. This type of counseling is offered through a local family services association or at programs designed to help men heal and repair the effects of their abusive behavior on their families. *See the Directory, starting on page 129, for resources.*

If a no-contact order is in place, couples counseling is not an option without returning to Court to have the order changed.

You and/or your children may be eligible for free counseling from the **Criminal Injuries Counselling program**. *See page 134 for contact information.*

What to look for in a counselor or support person

You may find it helpful to talk with someone you can trust – a friend or relative, a spiritual leader or elder, a doctor, or a counselor. A support person should be able to offer:

- the opportunity to explore the advantages and disadvantages of continuing your relationship rather than telling you or advising you that you should leave
- the assumption that you know more about your relationship and your partner than the counselor or support person
- support to improve your relationship, or support to end your relationship, depending on what you choose for yourself
- the ability to accept if you change your mind about whether you want to stay or leave, and not pressure you to choose one option over the other
- acceptance that your partner can be abusive but also loving and caring, which can make the decision to stay or leave very difficult
- access to resources and referrals
- assistance, if asked for, in making a safety plan.

Counselors and support people should avoid:

- labeling your partner as “abusive”
- labeling your relationship as an “abusive relationship”
- seeing your partner only as an “abuser”
- not validating any positive things that happen in the relationship.

There are always people you can talk to, such as a trusted friend or relative, or a person at the local transition house. You can call a **transition house** anytime to get information, support, and safety planning from a trained counselor, even if you do not want to live at the shelter.

Transition house counselors will give support on the phone. These phone calls are confidential and you do not need to give your name. You can call the **24-hour crisis line**:

1 855 225 0220. If you want to, you can arrange a visit to the transition house to speak with someone in person. Some houses have workers who can meet you in your home or somewhere safe.

Transition houses can help you even if you are not staying at one.



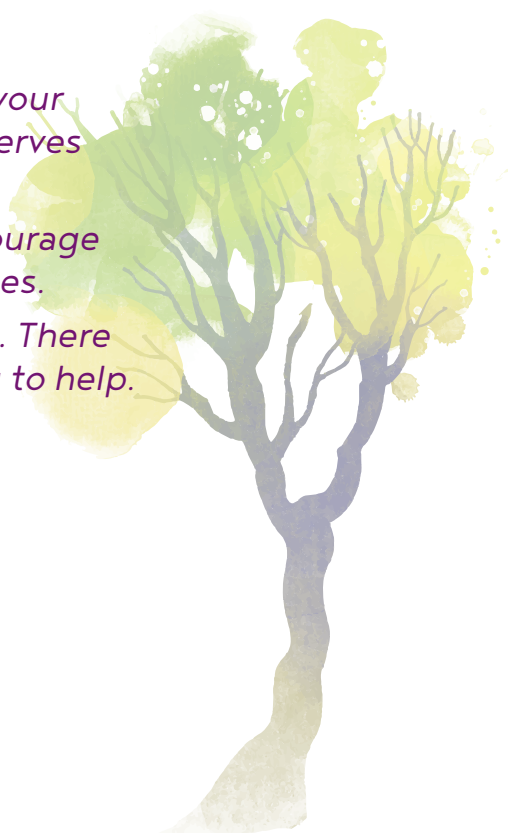
Remember

*There is no excuse
for abuse. Abuse of
any kind is never okay.*

*The abuse is not your
fault. No one deserves
to be abused.*

*It takes a lot of courage
to face these issues.*

*You are not alone. There
are people willing to help.*



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Barbara Cottrell, writer
Crystal Sutherland, editor and project manager
Allison Smith (Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia),
editing support and legal review
Kathy Kaulbach, graphic designer
Etta Moffatt, design consultant

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Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

PO Box 745, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 2T3
Phone: 902-424-8662,
Toll-free 1-800-565-8662
Fax: 902-424-0573
E-mail: women@novascotia.ca
Website: women.gov.ns.ca

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