Safety Planning



Are you safe?

It can be hard to figure out if your partner will hurt you or your children. You may find it helpful to talk with someone at a transition house, or with a counsellor at a men's program.

Women's centres or even family or other people you trust can give you information and support.

A counsellor or transition house worker can help figure out how safe you are and suggest ways you could be safer. They can also help you plan your next steps.

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.

A safety plan

A safety plan is a plan to help you be safe and ready if your partner abuses you. It can help you think about what to do if your partner hurts you or your children, or how to stay safe if you end the relationship.

It can help to memorize your safety plan because it can be difficult to think about everything in an emergency. If you write down your safety plan, keep it where your partner will not find it.

Call a transition house and talk to the staff. Work out a code word with them so they know who is calling if there is a crisis. You can call or text the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia any time of day for free at 1-855-225-0220. The person who answers will help you reach the right transition house for you. **In an emergency, call 911**.

SAFETY PLANNING CHECKLIST

It is important that you are prepared in case you have to act quickly. Here are some things to consider:

- Establish an escape route. Know a safe place to go, even if only to make a phone call.
- If your partner has abused you in the past, make sure the police or someone you trust know your situation. If you can, keep a record of any abuse. Keep it where your partner will not find it.
- Have emergency numbers (a transition house, family, neighbours, those who will help) programmed into a safe phone.
- Call a transition house and talk to the staff. Work out a code word with them so they know who is calling if there is a crisis. You can also call or text the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia any time of day for free at 1-855-225-0220. The person who answers will help you reach the right transition house for you. In an emergency, call 911.
- Speak with your family or neighbours and other trusted people. Let them know what's going on so they can pay attention and call for help if they become concerned.
- Talk to your children. They need to know where to run in an emergency and how to use the telephone to call police.
- If you can, put some money aside for things such as emergency taxi fare or bus fare or gas money, as well as a spare set of car keys so you can leave quickly.
- You may want to pack an emergency bag. See page 32 for an Emergency Bag Checklist.

Support for your partner

If your partner wants to stop hurting you, they will have to take steps to deal with the problems that led to the abusive behaviour.

This could include:

- counselling for alcoholism or drug use
- addressing their own trauma
- dealing with memories of past victimization
- understanding expectations
- dealing with feelings of insecurity and desperation
- finding healthy ways to deal with things

SAFETY

Transition houses can tell you about services available to you. Call 1-855-225-0220 to find one near you, or to get help. Someone answers this number all day, every day, and you can call for free from anywhere in Nova Scotia.

If you are in danger now, call 911.

To find out where you can get help in your area, call 211.

Finding a counsellor or support person

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

In addition to individual counselling, you and your partner can seek counselling together if you feel safe enough to do this. Many couples benefit from having counselling together. This type of counselling is offered through a local family services association or at programs designed to help men heal and repair the effects of their abusive behaviour on their families. Call 211 or look in the Resources section at the end of this book for resources.

If you have a no-contact order, you and your partner cannot go to couples counselling until the court changes the order.

You and/or your children may be eligible for free counselling from the Criminal Injuries Counselling program. See page 136 for contact information.

COUNSELOR CHECKLIST

You may find it helpful to talk with someone you can trust like a friend or relative, a spiritual leader or elder, a doctor, or a counsellor.

A support person should be able to offer:

- the opportunity to explore the advantages and disadvantages of continuing your relationship rather than telling you that you should leave
- an understanding that you know more about your relationship and your partner than the counsellor 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 staying or leaving, 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 difficult
- access to resources and referrals
- assistance, if asked for, in making a safety plan

Counsellors and support people should avoid:

- labelling your partner as “abusive”
- labelling 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 staff, even if you do not live at the transition house.

Transition house staff 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 visit 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.

Cut or tear along this line. Fold up and keep in a safe place.

Safety Alert

If you have experienced domestic abuse, know that you are not alone, and that there are a variety of supports available to you.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911.

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

Women's, Men's, and All Genders Helplines: 211

Help Lines

Crime Stoppers 1-800-222-8477

Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868

Mental Health Crisis Line
Serves all of Nova Scotia (24/7)1-888-429-8167

Avalon Sexual Assault Centre
Crisis Line 902-422-4240

Your local number:

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Quick connect

Community and social services 211
ns.211.ca

HealthLink 811
Hearing impaired 711
811.novascotia.ca

Women's, Men's, and All Genders Helplines:211

Mi'kmaw Family Healing Centres

Millbrook 902-756-3440
Toll-free: 1-800-565-4741

We'koqma'q 902-756-3440
Toll-free: 1-800-565-3440

Transition Houses and Shelters Crisis Lines

Amherst, Autumn House 902-667-1200

Antigonish, Naomi Society. 902-863-3807

Bridgewater, Harbour House 902-543-3999

Digby, Juniper House 902-742-8689
Toll-free: 1-800-266-4087

Halifax, Bryony House 902-422-7650

Kentville, Chrysalis House 902-679-1922
Toll-free: 1-800-264-8682

New Glasgow, Tearmann House . 902-752-0132
Toll-free: 1-800-831-0330

Port Hawkesbury, Leeside Transition House
. 902-625-2444
Toll-free: 1-800-565-3390

Shelburne, Juniper House 902-742-8689
Toll-free: 1-800-266-4087

Sydney, Cape Breton Transition House
. 902-539-2945
Toll-free: 1-800-563-2945

Truro, Third Place 902-893-3232
Toll-free: 1-800-565-4878

Yarmouth, Juniper House 902-742-8689
Toll-free: 1-800-266-4087

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