

VICTIM SERVICES

INITIATIVES

Do You Need a Safety Plan?

Guidelines for Persons in Abusive Relationships

		always	sometimes	never
Isolation	My partner controls what I do, who I see and talk to and where I go, limiting my outside involvement.			
	My partner uses jealousy to justify his or her actions, saying I made him or her get angry.			
	My partner interferes with my relationships and limits my friendships.			
Economic Abuse	My partner prevents me from getting or keeping a job.			
	My partner takes my money.			
	My partner makes me ask for money for an “allowance”.			
Physical Abuse	My partner hits, punches, bites, kicks, or harms me in other ways.			
	My partner confines me, holds me down or prevents me from leaving.			
	My partner makes it difficult for me to get physical care, food, or medication.			
Spiritual Abuse	My partner makes fun of my spiritual beliefs or doesn’t allow me to be involved in spiritual traditions or ceremonies.			

Sexual Abuse	My partner forces me to do sexual things that I don't want.			
Uses Children Against Me	My partner uses his relationship with the children to control or threaten me.			
	My partner threatens to take the children away.			
Minimizing, Denying & Blaming	My partner minimizes the abuse.			
	My partner says the abuse didn't happen.			
	My partner says I caused the abuse.			
	My partner blames stress or alcohol/drugs as the problem.			

If abuse is occurring in your relationship, it is important to have a safety plan, if you are living together or apart.

Safety During a Violent Incident

Use a variety of strategies to increase your safety during a violent incident. Consider each of the following:

Safest places in your home

During a violent incident, try to avoid places in the house where you may be trapped or where weapons are readily available, such as the bathroom or kitchen. Bigger rooms with more than one exit may be safer. Think about the places you would try to avoid. Think about the places you would try to move to.

What Is a Safety Plan?

A safety plan prepares you to take action if you face violence from a spouse or intimate partner. Creating a safety plan involves mapping out steps you can take to increase your safety. This brochure can help you think about whether you need a safety plan. It describes some of the things involved. Is it for you? Only you can decide, but think about these things:

You need a safety plan whenever you identify the potential for abuse.

- You need both a long-term strategy and a short-term emergency plan.
- You need to find out what resources for spousal/intimate partner violence are available in your community.
- You need to make a safety plan that will work for you and your situation.

- You need to learn your plan by heart. It will be hard to remember everything when you are in danger.
- You need to review and revise your safety plan regularly. Abusive situations and risk factors can
- change quickly.

Abuse Is All About Power and Control

To determine whether or not you are being abused, look for signs of the abuse of power and control in your relationship with your spouse or intimate partner. If you answer “yes” to one or both of the following questions, you may be experiencing abuse. If so, you may wish to speak to an Advocate/Counselor. We have used the word “partner” to describe your spouse or intimate partner, whether it be your husband, wife, spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, or other close relationship.

- Are you afraid of your partner? For example, do you give up seeing friends or family because your partner doesn't like them?
- Do you regularly change your behavior, opinions, or choices because you fear what your partner will do? For example, do you choose to wear clothes that your partner wants you to wear, in order to avoid verbal abuse and name-calling?

Abuse can take many forms. It can range from mild to very serious. Take this quiz to see if your partner is abusing power and control in your relationship.

Below are statements that describe kinds of abuse. For each statement, check the box that best describes your relationship with your partner – always, sometimes, or never. Your answers can help you think about whether you need a safety plan.

		always	sometimes	never
Emotional Abuse	My partner puts me down, calls me names, or uses sarcasm to make me feel bad about myself.			
	My partner twists what others or I say or do to make me think I am confused or wrong.			
	My partner humiliates me in front of friends, family or co-workers.			

		always	sometimes	never
Intimidation, Coercion and Threats	My partner uses looks, actions, or gestures that make me afraid.			
	My partner smashes things			
	My partner Threatens to report me to authorities even though I have done nothing wrong.			
	My partner has or displays weapons			
	My partner abuses pets or destroys items that are special to me			

Phone

Keep change for phone calls on you at all times. Be careful when using a telephone credit card – your partner might see the numbers you have called on next month's telephone bill. To keep telephone communications private, use a pay phone, a friend's phone, or a friend's calling card.

Support people

Think about people that you could ask for help with:

- money
- childcare
- support for appointments
- pets
- housing
- transportation

Police escort

Ask for a police escort if you need to return home to get personal belongings. They will stand by and keep the peace.

Important items

Make a list of items you will need to take with you when you leave and put them or copies together in a safe place

- Medication for me and my children
- Keys: house/car/office
- Money, credit cards, jewelry
- Driver's license, car registration

- Health cards, vaccination records
- Cheque books/bank books/debit cards
- Children's favourite toys, blankets
- Divorce/separation papers
- Work permits such as green cards
- Passport, immigration papers
- Indian Status Cards
- Lease/mortgage/insurance papers
- Medical records for all family members
- Birth certificates
- Family pictures, address book
- Copies of court orders
- Copies of Emergency Protection Orders
- School records
- Social insurance cards
- Social security cards
- Health records of pets
- Welfare identification
- Other

Support Services

List the telephone numbers you may need. You may need to keep them hidden for your safety, but make sure you can find them when you need them. You may be able to memorize the numbers or keep them listed below.

Emergency Numbers

Police Department

Women's Shelter

Women's Centre

Lawyer

Work

Minister/Rabbi/Priest/Elder/Spiritual Leader

Animal Shelters

Other

Escape routes

What are the possible escape routes from your home?

What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes could you use? Practice how to get out safely.

Money and keys

Keep your purse or wallet and keys handy. Always keep them in the same place, so that you can find them easily if you must leave in a hurry. Have a second set of keys made in case your partner takes the first set.

Safe places

Think about safe places you can go to if you need to leave your home:

- a place to use the phone
- a place to leave your pets
- a place to stay for a couple of hours
- a place to stay for a couple of days

Children

Plan for your children's safety. If they are old enough, teach your children a safety plan that you have worked out with them. Have them practice what to do.

Code word

Pick a code word to use with your children or other family members that tells them they should call for help.

Backup

If it is safe for you, tell some people you trust about the violence. Ask them to call the police if they think you are in danger.

Police

You may have to call the police in order to stop the violence. Spousal/Intimate partner violence is a crime. That means it is against the law. The police must lay a charge of assault against your partner if they have evidence that you were assaulted.

Safety On the Job and In Public

- Decide who at work you will inform of your situation. This may include office or building security.
- Arrange to have someone screen your telephone calls, if possible.
- Have someone escort you to your car, bus, or train. Use a variety of routes to go home if possible.

Think about what you would do if something happened on your way home.

Safety If You Are Preparing to Leave

Some people decide to leave the home they share with the abusive partner. Make a plan to leave, even if you are not planning to leave just now. If the violence gets worse, you may need to leave quickly.

Secrecy

Keep your plan to leave a secret from your partner, if that would be safer for you.

Emergency pack

Leave some emergency cash, medications, an extra set of house and car keys, and extra clothes with someone you trust in case you must leave home quickly.

Documents

Leave copies of important documents such as immigration papers or birth certificates with someone you trust in case you must leave home quickly.

Money

Open a savings account in your own name so that some money is available to you. Make sure the bank knows not to send mail to your home address.

Legal advice

Get legal advice from a family law lawyer who understands abuse. Make sure the lawyer knows not to contact you at your home address.

If you would like more information on spousal/intimate partner violence or safety planning, please contact the Transition House or Outreach Service in your area.

or contact them through the:

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia:

Phone (902) 429-7287

Fax (902) 429-0561

Email: admin@thans.ca

Web site: www.thans.ca

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