

Personalized Safety Plan

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.

Safety during a violent incident

Victims cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, victims may use a variety of strategies. I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- If I decide to leave, I will _____.
(Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- I can keep my purse/wallet and car keys ready and put them (place) _____ in order to leave quickly.
- I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department (dial 911).
- I will use _____ as my code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- If I have to leave my home, I will go (where?) _____.
Decide this even if you do not think there will be a next time.)
- I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.
- When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchens, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- 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.

Safety when preparing to leave

Victims frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a victim is leaving a relationship. I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:

- I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.
- I will keep copies of important documents or keys at _____.
- I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times or I can purchase a pre-paid calling card. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or a pre-paid calling card. I may also get a friend to permit me to use his/her telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.
- I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. I will have _____ (Domestic violence advocate or friend) help me review this plan.
- I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

Safety in my own residence

There are many things that victims can do to increase safety at home. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Safety measures I can use include:

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.

- I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and _____ (friend/clergy/other) in the event that my partner takes the children.
- I will tell people who take care of my children which people 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:

- I can inform _____ that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if my partner is observed near my residence.

Safety with a protection order

Many batterers obey protection orders, but some do not. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order. The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

- **I will keep my protection order with me at all times.**
- I will give my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live.
- There should be a country registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order has been entered into the database by calling the St. Johnsbury State Police at 748-3111.
- I will inform _____, _____, and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
- If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse.
- If my partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or my attorney and will file a complaint with the chief of the police department.

Safety on the job and in public

Victims must decide if and when to tell others about their experience as a victim of domestic violence and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect victims. Victims should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure safety. I might do any or all of the following:

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and _____ at work of my situation.
- I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- When leaving work, I can walk out with _____.
- I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those when residing with my battering partner.
- I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.

Safety and my emotional health

The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes much courage and incredible energy. To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____.
- When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can _____.
- I can try to use “I can . . .” statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- I can tell myself - “_____” whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
- I can call _____ as a resource/support person.
- Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____, _____, and _____.

- I can attend workshops and support groups at the domestic violence program.

Items to take when leaving

When victims leave partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, victims sometimes give extra copies of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

Items with asterisks on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home.

These items might best be placed in one location, so that if we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should take:

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| * Identification for myself | Work permits |
| * Children's birth certificates | Green card |
| * My birth certificate | Passport(s) |
| * Social Security cards for myself/children | Divorce papers |
| * School and vaccination records | Medical records - for all family members |
| * Money | Lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book |
| * Checkbook, ATM card | Bank books |
| * Credit cards | Insurance papers |
| * Keys - house/car/office | Small saleable objects |
| * Driver's license, registration, and auto insurance | Address book |
| * Medications/Insurance cards | Pictures |
| Children's favorite toys and/or blankets | Jewelry |
| Welfare identification | Items of special sentimental value |

Telephone numbers I might need to know:

Police Emergency: 911

VT State Police: 748-3111

St. J Police 748-2314

Umbrella Main Office: 748-8645

Essex County Office

676-3920

Umbrella's 24 hour Crisis Line: 748-8141

County registry of protection orders: 748-3111

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-779-SAFE (7233)

National Domestic Violence Hotline: (TTY) 1-800-787-3224

State's Attorney's Office: 748-6657