

PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN FOR ABUSED WOMEN

What is a safety plan? A safety plan represents possible strategies that can increase your safety and prepare you in advance for the possibility of further violence. A safety plan is needed whenever the potential for abuse is identified.

Woman abuse in adult relationships is generally defined as:

The intentional and systematic use of tactics to establish and maintain power and control over the thoughts, beliefs, and conduct of a woman. The tactics include, but are not limited to, emotional, financial, physical, spiritual, and sexual abuse, as well as tactics of isolation, using the children, and using social status and privilege. (adapted from Duluth)

Woman abuse includes the sum of all past acts of violence and the promise of future violence that achieves enhanced power and control for the perpetrator over the partner. (Hart 1986)

Foundations of woman abuse - - “Power and Control”

To help establish whether or not you are being abused, look for indications of the abuse of power and control in your relationship. If you answer yes to one or both of the following questions, you may be experiencing abuse and may wish to speak to an abused women’s Advocate/Counsellor.

- ÷ *Are you afraid of your partner?*
- ÷ *Do you regularly change your behaviour, opinions or choices due to fear of consequences or reprisals from your (ex) partner?*

For example:

- ÷ You don’t go to English as a Second Language classes because your partner does all the talking in public and gets angry if you try to participate in English-speaking culture.
- ÷ You give up seeing your friends and/or family because your partner doesn’t like them.
- ÷ You stay in the abusive relationship because your lesbian partner has threatened to “out” you to your ex-husband which would likely result in him taking legal action to get custody of your children.
- ÷ Despite your own preference, you choose to wear clothes that your partner approves of in order to avoid verbal abuse and name calling from wearing anything “too revealing.”

Tactics of abuse -- “Power and Control”

This is a visual tool that is useful in understanding how tactics are used by an abuser in order to maintain power and control over a woman.

ABUSE IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Woman abuse in adult relationships is generally defined as: The intentional and systematic use of tactics to establish and maintain power and control over the thoughts, beliefs, and conduct of a woman. The tactics can include, but are not limited to, the examples below.

Using Isolation:

- controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, where she goes, limiting her outside involvement
- using jealousy to justify actions
- sabotaging of friendships, new relationships

Using Emotional Abuse:

- putting her down, calling her names, making her feel badly about herself
- playing mind games, making her think she is crazy
- humiliated her in front of friends and/or co-workers

Using Children:

- using visitation (access) to harass her
- using children to relay messages telling them bad things about her
- threatening to take children away
- making her feel badly about her parenting

Using Intimidation Coercion & Threats:

- making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures
- smashing things
- threatening to report her to welfare, immigration, etc.
- purchasing or displaying weapons
- abusing pets or destroying cherished items

Minimizing, Denying & Blaming:

- making light of the abuse
- saying the abuse didn't happen
- saying the woman caused the abuse
- blaming stress as the problem

Physical Abuse:

- hitting, slapping, punching, biting, kicking, pushing or harming woman in any way
- confining, holding or preventing woman from leaving
- withholding/preventing a woman's access to physical care, food or medication

Using Social Status & Privilege:

- reinforcing control over her by the use of gender, race, class, sexual orientation, immigration status, age, occupation, wealth, physical or developmental ability
- using institutions to reinforce power or privilege

Using Economic Abuse:

- preventing her from getting or keeping a job
- taking her money
- making her ask for money or an “allowance”
- not allowing her to participate in financial decision making

Sexual Abuse:

- any sexual activity that is unwanted or coerced
- sexual name calling or accusations
- uninformed sexual activity, i.e. non-disclosure of STD/HIV status
- forced pregnancy or termination of pregnancy

CREATING A SAFETY PLAN

It is important to know that although you do not have control over your (ex)partner’s violence, it is possible that you may be able to increase your own as well as your children’s safety when being subjected to this abuse. This safety plan offers different alternatives which you could consider. You are likely to know what is best for yourself and what actions are or are not appropriate in your own situation. Creating a safety plan involves mapping out action steps to increase your safety and prepare in advance for the possibility of further violence. In creating a safety plan, it is important to remember:

- ÷ That a safety plan is needed whenever the potential for abuse is identified.
- ÷ It can be helpful to be aware of the resources for abused women in your community.
- ÷ That this safety plan is specifically designed for actions that you can take. Another safety outline has been created to assist you in creating a safety plan specifically with your children.
- ÷ To become familiar with, and review and/or revise your safety plan regularly. Abusive situations and risk factors can change quickly.
- ÷ While considering long-term strategies, it is important to also have a short-term emergency plan.

SAFETY PLAN

Safety During a Violent Incident:

In order to increase safety during a violent incident, abused women may use a variety of strategies. Some strategies for you to consider are:

- A. What is/are the possible escape route(s) from my home? What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes could I use: _____
_____. I will take the time to practice how to get out safely.
- B. I can keep my purse/wallet and keys handy, and always keep them in the same place (_____), so that I can locate them easily if I need to leave in a hurry. I can also have a second set of keys made in case my (ex)partner takes the first set.
- C. If it is safe for me, I could tell the following people about the violence and request that they call the police if they suspect I am in danger: _____ and _____.
- D. Children's safety in woman abuse situations is central to a safety plan. I may be able to teach my children a safety plan specifically for them in these circumstances. LAWC has a specific safety planning outline for children.
- E. It may be helpful to have a code word to use with my children or other family members if I should need them to call for help. My code word is _____.
- F. Safe places that I can go if I need to leave my home:
- ÷ A place to use the phone: _____
 - ÷ A place I could stay for a couple of hours: _____
 - ÷ A place that I could stay for a couple of days: _____
- G. During an abusive incident it is best to try to avoid places in the house where I 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. The places I would try to avoid would be _____.

The places I would try to move to are _____.

H. In abusive situations, women sometimes say or do things that in an equal non-abusive relationship they would not. For some women this involves survival skills such as claiming to agree with abuser even when it's not true in order to increase safety. On other occasions, women may retaliate against the abuser with violence; however be aware that such actions could lead you to be charged with a criminal offence.

I. Calling the Police can increase safety. Woman abuse is a crime; it is against the law. If there are reasonable and probable grounds to assume an assault has occurred, the Police are mandated to lay a charge of assault.

J. Given my past experience, other protective actions that I have considered/employed are:

Safety Plan If You Are Preparing to Leave:

Some abused women leave the residence they share with the abusive partner. These are protective actions you may wish to consider if you are in this situation. Even if you are not planning to leave your partner, it is important to review a safety plan regarding leaving in case the violence escalates and you need to leave quickly.

A. It may not be safe to inform my partner that I am leaving.

B. Should I need to leave quickly, it would be helpful for me to leave some emergency cash, an extra set of house and car keys and extra clothes with _____,
and _____.

C. I can keep copies of important documents such as immigration papers or birth certificates at _____.

- D. I can open a savings account to increase my freedom to leave. I should make sure to alert the bank not to send any correspondence to my home address.
- E. I can get legal advice from a lawyer who understands woman abuse. But, as with the bank, I should make certain the lawyer knows not to send any correspondence to my home address.
(It is critical to consult with a family lawyer if you have children.)
- F. The local Abused Women's Helpline number is _____ (listed in the front of the telephone book with other crisis numbers). I can seek safe shelter and support by calling this help line.
- G. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I must be careful if I am using a telephone credit card because my (ex) partner could see the numbers I have called on next month's telephone bill. To keep telephone communications confidential, I can use a pay phone, a friend's phone, or a friend's calling card.
- H. These are people that I could ask for assistance:
- ÷ money: _____
 - ÷ childcare: _____
 - ÷ support attending appointments: _____
 - ÷ transportation: _____
 - ÷ other: _____
- I. If I need to return home to get personal belongings, I can call the police for an escort to stand by and keep the peace. To do this, I call 911 and ask the police to meet me somewhere close to my home. They will stay while I pick up my own and my children's personal belongings.
- J. Other protective actions I have considered are: _____

- K. When women leave abusive partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Items with asterisks on the following list are the most important, but if there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. Keeping them all together in one location makes it much

easier if a woman needs to leave in a hurry.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| * identification for myself | * children's birth certificates |
| * protection order papers/documents | * my birth certificate |
| * social insurance cards | * immigration papers |
| * school and vaccination records | * money |
| * checkbook, bank book/cards | * credit cards |
| * keys - house/car/office | * driver's license and ownership |
| * medications | * passport |
| * health cards | * medical records |
| * divorce/separation papers | * lease/mortgage/insurance |
| * address book | * pictures/photos |
| * children's favourite toy/blankets | * jewellery |
| items of special sentimental value | |

L. Telephone Numbers I Need to Know:

For safety reasons it may be necessary to keep these telephone numbers hidden (but accessible!) and/or memorize the numbers:

- ÷ Police Department: _____
- ÷ Abused Women's Help Line (24 hours): _____
- ÷ London Abused Women's Centre: _____
- ÷ Lawyer: _____
- ÷ Work: _____
- ÷ Minister/Rabbi/Priest/Elder: _____
- ÷ Other: _____

Safety In My Own Home

Following are some suggestions regarding safety measures in your own home that you may wish to consider. *(Some of these safety measures cost money.)*

- A. If financially possible I could:
- ÷ change the locks on my doors and windows (you may need to inform the landlord if you are renting or your lawyer if you own your home before taking this action)
 - ÷ install a peep hole in the door
 - ÷ replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors
 - ÷ install window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic alarm system
 - ÷ purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows
 - ÷ install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment

- ÷ install a motion sensitive lighting system outside that lights up when a person is coming close to my home
- ÷ leave the lights on

B. If I have custody and access issues, I can inform all the people who provide childcare for my children about who has permission to pick up my children and who does not. I can give these people copies of the custody and access order to keep with them and a picture of the abusive partner. The people I will inform about pick up permission include:

- ÷ school: _____
- ÷ daycare staff: _____
- ÷ babysitters: _____
- ÷ sunday school teacher: _____
- ÷ teacher: _____
- ÷ other: _____

If you are concerned about parental abduction of your child, call CHILD FIND for preventative measures that you can take.

C. I could inform _____ (neighbour), _____ (superintendent/landlord), _____ (friend) _____ (other) that I am separated and ask that they call the police if my (ex)partner is seen near my residence.

D. Other strategies that I am already using or that I might use: _____
_____.

Safety With a Protection Order

Protection orders are legal restrictions on movement and actions that come in different forms: peace bonds, restraining orders, bail conditions, parole conditions, child custody access orders, etc. Many abusers do obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. It is often necessary to ask the police and the courts to enforce a protection order. The following are some steps that I can take to help support the enforcement of my protection order.

A. It is important to know the specifics and limitations of my protection order. I will find out the conditions and what they mean for my safety.

- B. I can call the police station to ensure that the protection order is registered on CPIC (the police computer system).
- C. If my (ex)partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report the violation. Depending on the type of protection order, I can also contact my (ex)partner's parole/probation officer, contact my lawyer and/or my advocate. (It is important to report to the police every violation of the order).
- D. If the police do not help, I can call the Duty Sergeant immediately at the police station and express my concern. I can also contact my advocate, my (ex)partner's parole officer, or my lawyer, as well as filing a complaint with the police.
- E. I will keep my protection order document(s) (originals, if possible) _____
_____ (location). It is beneficial to keep the document(s) on or near me. It may also be helpful to keep a copy in a second safe location also.
- F. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse, my lawyer, or _____.
- G. If it is safe to do so, I can inform my employer, my friend _____
and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
- H. I can also file a private criminal complaint with the Justice of the Peace in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred. I can charge the abuser with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes committed in violation of that order. I can call the Abused Women's Help Line for more information regarding this action.

Safety on the Job and in Public

Each abused woman must decide if and/or when she will tell others that her partner has abused her and that she may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers may be able to help protect women. Each woman should consider carefully which people to recruit to help secure her safety.

I might do any or all of the following:

- A. If it is comfortable to do so, I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ at work of my situation.

- B. According to how comfortable and safe I feel, I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work. It could be of assistance to me if they document these calls.

- C. If it is comfortable to do so, and I feel it would be supportive to me and my situation, I could discuss the possibility of having my employer call the police if I am in danger from my (ex)partner.

- D. Some safety suggestions regarding arriving or leaving work:
 - ÷ let someone know when you'll be home
 - ÷ walk with someone to your car
 - ÷ scan the parking lot
 - ÷ if your partner is following you, drive to a place where there are people to support you, e.g. a friend's home, police station
 - ÷ if you are walking, take a route that is populated
 - ÷ take different routes home
 - ÷ if you see your partner on the street, try to get to a public place, e.g. store
 - ÷ you can also call attention to yourself and request help
 - ÷ purchase a personal alarm device

- E. I can use different grocery stores/shopping malls and shop at different times than I did before to reduce the risk of contact with my (ex)partner.

Safety and Drug or Alcohol Consumption

Many people in this culture consume alcohol. Many consume mood-altering drugs. Much of this consumption is legal and some is not. The disclosure of the use of illegal/legal drugs can put a woman at a disadvantage in legal actions with her abusive partner. Therefore, women should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of legal and/or illegal drugs. Beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a woman's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself from the abusive partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the abuser may be used as an excuse for violence.

Safety and My Emotional Health

Being subjected to abuse by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of surviving requires much courage and incredible energy.

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to support myself in hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:

- A. If I have left the relationship and I am experiencing loneliness or manipulative tactics from my abusive partner, I can take care of myself by _____
_____.
- B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can emotionally prepare by _____.
- C. When I face potentially difficult times like court cases, meetings with lawyers and such, I can prepare by _____.
- D. I can call _____, _____,
and _____ as other resources to support me.
- E. I can find out about and attend workshops and support groups in the community by calling the Abused Women's Help Line or the London Abused Women's Centre for information.