

# Suggestions for Safety Planning

Domestic violence is a crime. You have a right to be safe!

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## Questions You May Have

Victims who seek the Battered Women's Project services are encouraged to explore their options and make their own decisions. Staff and volunteers are available as valuable sources of information and support.

### **What if I have no money?**

Our project does not turn anyone away because of money. Our services are free.

### **Will I be told to get a divorce?**

No, we will help you consider all ways possible to deal with a violent situation.

### **Will I be accused of desertion?**

You can't be legally punished for seeking safety. You will still have rights to household possessions, etc.

### **Will my children be taken away from me?**

You will help your children by taking them from a frightening and possibly dangerous situation. Children who grow up in violent homes are also victims of that violence.

### **Who is eligible for shelter?**

Because of the nature of our shelter, we cannot shelter anyone who needs constant supervision, is an unaccompanied minor (without parental permission), or is not assessed to be in need of emergency shelter. We can, however, provide other services including information, referral and advocacy.

## Steps you can take by yourself...

Domestic violence does not have to be a fact of life.

You can call the police.

You can go to the nearest district court and file for a Temporary Protective Order from Abuse or Harassment. (The Battered Women's Project can help you with filling out these forms)

It is your right to get protection. If you have problems with or questions about any of these options, call us (1-800-439-2323).

## Safety before a violent encounter:

Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, or stairwell would be best. Rehearse getting out: in the dark and with your children.

Have an extra set of keys and a packed bag ready; keep them in an undisclosed but accessible place in order to leave quickly. (see [checklist](#) for a list of items to take with you)

Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.

Devise a code word or signal to use with your children, family, friends, and neighbors when you need the police. Examples of some signals are a turned on porch light or a drawn shade, or an "I can't come over on Thursday after all" phone call to a friend or family member.

Consistent with their age, their "instincts" and their skills, develop safety plans for the children: about calling for help, or getting to a place where they will be safer. Teach your children how to dial 911. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.

Decide and plan for where you will go if you have to leave home (even if you don't think you will need to).

Keep some change or a calling card on you at all times for emergency phone calls.

Call your local domestic violence project for more guidance. The Battered Women's Project 24 hour hotline number is 1-800-439-2323 in-state/ out of state 769-8251.

**Always remember: You don't deserve to be hit, threatened or controlled!**

## Safety During an Explosive Incident:

If possible, stick with your plans from **Before a violent encounter** but ...

If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in a room or area with two exits and where there are fewer things that can be used as weapons; if possible, rooms where you can be seen or heard from the outside.

Use your instincts and judgment. If the situation is very dangerous, consider giving the abuser what he wants to calm him down. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.

## **Safety When Preparing to Leave:**

Open a checking and/or savings account in your own name to begin to establish or increase your independence. Rent a post office box to receive mail that may not be safe to receive at home. (**DON'T TAKE THAT MAIL HOME** or leave it in your car, for obvious reasons). Think of other ways in which you can increase your independence.

Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, and extra clothes with someone you trust so you can leave quickly.

Determine who would let you stay with them or lend you money.

Keep your local domestic violence project's number nearby, and have change or a calling card with you at all times for emergency phone calls. Remember: you may call collect, or use the toll-free number, 24 hours a day.

### **What to take if you leave:**

- ✓ Identification
- ✓ Car ownership papers
- ✓ Driver's license and registration
- ✓ Your birth certificate and children's certificates
- ✓ Money
- ✓ Lease, rental agreement, deed
- ✓ Address book
- ✓ Bank books
- ✓ Checkbooks
- ✓ Children's small toys/ or items that would make them feel comfortable
- ✓ Credit cards
- ✓ Jewelry
- ✓ Keys - house, car, office
- ✓ Medications
- ✓ Medical records- any documentation of past incidents of abuse (photos, police reports, medical records, etc.)
- ✓ Passport
- ✓ Personal treasures
- ✓ Pictures
- ✓ School identification
- ✓ Small saleable objects

- ✓ Social Security card
- ✓ Welfare Identification
- ✓ Work permits
- ✓ Marriage License
  
- ✓ Proof of Income (pay stubs or W2's)
- ✓ Divorce papers
- ✓ Green card
- ✓ Insurance papers

### **Safety in Your Own Home:**

Replace wooden doors with metal/steel doors.

Change your door locks as soon as possible. Buy additional locks and safety devices to secure your windows.

Purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.

Install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is approaching the house.

Discuss a safety plan with your children for when you are not with them.

Inform neighbors and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see him near your home.

If there are guns in your home, take necessary precautions (e.g., make sure they are not loaded, dispose of ammunition, give guns to a trustworthy friend).

### **Phones:**

Have a list of numbers (shelter, friend, relative, 911, etc.) posted next to the phone, and a list in your purse.

Change your phone number and request that it be unlisted.

Install Caller ID on your phone so you can screen calls.

Install an answering machine and let it answer all your calls - preferably the kind that has tapes that allow you to save the threatening messages you may get from the abuser.

Purchase a cell phone to have with you at all times, or ask your advocate for a free cell phone that will dial 911.

### **Keys:**

Keep keys and purse in the same handy place at all times so you can be ready to leave quickly.

Hide a set of car keys outside of the house so that you have an extra set in the event the abuser takes your set away from you.

## **Children & Safety:**

Inform the school that you don't want them to release your children to the abuser.

Keep copies of protection, custody and visitation with everyone who takes care of your child, and with their schools

Teach children how to make collect and emergency calls, and that they can give their address and phone number to "safe" adults (i.e. police)

Use the Visitation Center or have a third person pick up or drop off children for visitation.

Discuss with your child(ren) only what you think they need to know about the situation and what is appropriate for their age.

Develop a code word with your children so they know when they need to run or call for help.

## **Safety with a Protection Order:**

If you have one, keep your protection order on you at all times.

Call the police if your partner breaks the protection order in any way.

Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.

Inform family, friends, neighbors, teachers, that you have a protection order in effect, and give them relevant details (who has custody, when and where visitation takes place, etc.).

## **Safety in the Workplace:**

If you feel comfortable, tell your boss and/or coworkers. Your office may set up a safety policy.

Post your protection order.

Tell your co-workers and office security to call the police if they see your batterer at the workplace. Show them his picture.

Ask coworkers not to tell where you are if your batterer comes to the workplace or calls.

Ask someone to screen your calls.

Move to an alternate work-site, avoid sitting with back to doors, lobbies or street level windows and include barriers in victim's work space such as desks, bookcases, walls, furniture

Carry cell phones, use escorts to vehicles, and park close to building

Keep your office door locked if you can.

Plan an escape route if your partner comes to work.

Work when other people are there, never alone.

Vary your route and the times you go to work.

Have people you trust walk you to and from your car.

## **Safety in the Community:**

Vary or change any routine your partner may be familiar with. Change groceries, banks, day care, shopping malls, gas stations as well as other places of business and utilize these at different hours than those when you resided with the abuser.

Go out during the busiest times.

Take someone with you.

Carry a whistle.

Take a self-defense class.

Program the police, crisis line or friend on your cell phone. Keep it with you at all times.

If your abuser is following you and you do not have a cell phone, drive directly to the closest police station and continuously honk your horn.

Have a plan for transportation - day or night. If you leave suddenly, let someone you trust know your plans, and notify them when you arrive safely at your destination.

Trust your intuition and do whatever you feel is necessary to protect yourself.

## **Your Safety and Emotional Health:**

If you are thinking of returning to a potentially abusive situation, discuss an alternative plan with someone you trust.

If you have to communicate with your partner, determine the safest way to do so. Have witnesses present, and keep a record of calls, messages and unwanted contact.

If you have a protection order, do not let your abuser get away with violating the order. Call the police and report the violation. The more the abuser gets away with violating the order, the more he may feel he is able to violate.

Read books, articles, and poems to help you feel stronger. Keep a journal.

Decide who you can call to talk freely and openly to give you the support you need.

Find a "positive mirror"- friends, family members, spiritual supports-to affirm your self-worth and ability to cope with the abuse (and for that matter, with the changes you're making in order to get free of it!)

Plan to attend one of the Coalition's support groups to gain support from others and learn more about yourself and the relationship.

## **If You are a Teen in a Violent Dating Relationship:**

Decide which friend, teacher, relative, or police officer you can tell.

Contact an advocate to decide how to obtain a protection order. In Maine, a protection order can be obtained by a parent on behalf of a minor.

Call the nearest shelter for crisis advocacy and help in making a safety plan. [Click here](#) for an example safety plan.

Keep in mind that you can always call your local domestic violence project to receive help in any of these areas or with other issues related to domestic violence. Someone is there to help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call anytime.

**Battered Women's Project**

**24-hour hotline**

**1-800-439-2323 / out of state 207-769-8251**