

Safety Planning

Kinds of Abuse: Emotional, Physical, Mental, Sexual, Financial, Cultural, Religious, Economic

You, and your body are the best indicator that there is danger. If you are with a partner and you sense danger, you have an Oh-Oh feeling in your stomach or gut, you are probably right. If the voices are getting louder, you have evidence of anger from the abuser, or if the abuser is in an altered state due to drugs or alcohol here are some of the things you can do:

*Make sure you are not in the Kitchen or bathroom. Kitchens have too many objects that can be used as weapons, the bathroom has too many hard surfaces that could cause injury if you fall or are pushed.

*Make sure if you can that the abuser is not between you and the door. If you feel the incident escalating and the tension is high stand as close to the door if possible.

*Have a bag of clothes for you and the children hidden at a trusted friend's house or secret location.

*Copy your important papers, drivers license, social security cards for you and the children, pass ports, legal documents, such as divorce papers, separation agreements, protective orders and hide them in the bag.

*Stash money if you can do so safely so that you have an emergency account. Open your own checking account and have your check deposited directly if you work. The abuser might react to this but follow the safety plan.

*Have and give your kids emergency numbers of family members who know about the abuse and train them to call 911 if they are scared, they know you are in trouble, or they see any kind of weapon.

*Talk to you local DV/SA advocacy center to learn where your resources are for legal help and emotional support.

*Do not hesitate to ask for help. Abusers number one goal is to isolate you and convince you that the abuse is your fault and no cares about you anyway. Don't give him or her the edge up by falling for this isolation tactic. Keep up contact with your friends, your family, local advocates, - your safety depends on it.

*If you are planning to leave your abuser, be careful who you tell where you are going. Even if the person promises not to tell the abuser, abusers can intimidate or threaten your friend or family member to find out where you are. It is better to just promise them that you will call and let them know you are safe.

When you are no longer with the person who abused you:

- Change the locks and phone number
- Consider using a PO box for your address rather than physical location
- Install a dead-bolt lock on doors. Install a peep-hole
- Install steel/metal doors if possible.
- Use wood or poles to lock sliding doors/windows so they cannot slide
- Buy alarms that go off when doors/windows are opened (they can be found relatively cheap at home improvement stores)
- Install motion lights outside
- Have a dog in the house if possible
- Alert trusted neighbors of abuser's car(s) and description.
- Develop a code word or warning system (flashing porch lights) if you need assistance
- Get caller ID set up on the phone. Ask for your phone to be blocked so your # does not show up on ID. Request your # to be unlisted
- Keep a copy of your order of protection with you at all times, give your employer a copy
- Inform trusted friends, neighbors, family that you have an order of protection in effect
- If you have to meet your partner, do it in a public place.
- Vary your routine, routes to work, change where you regularly shopped/frequented. Take new public transportation routes
- Notify school and work contacts.

Technology and Safety:

Trust your instincts: If you suspect the abusive person knows too much, it is possible that your phone, computer, email, or other activities are being monitored. Abusers and stalkers can act in incredibly persistent and creative ways to maintain power and control.

- Create new online social accounts, do not put personal info on accounts. If in hiding be aware of status updates and pictures posted. Be cautious of adding new people.
- Use public computers instead of private if possible (ie: library, café).
- If using a phone provided by abuser turn cell off when possible and get a new phone.
- Create a code on phone to lock it, turn off location finding/gps features on phone
- Change passwords and codes frequently (every 2-6 months)
- Create a password using letters, #'s and symbols to make it difficult to guess.
- Create a new email address that does not use identifying information (ex: do not use your name)
- Learn about the safety features on computers, email, cells and online social accounts to protect your personal information
- Spyware' and 'keylogging' programs are commonly available and can track what you do on your computer without you knowing it. It is not possible to delete or clear all of the 'tracks' of your online or computer activities
- Minimize use of cordless phones or baby monitors
- Ask about your records and data
- Learn about **spoof cards**, where someone can 1) Call you from their phone and the Caller ID displays the # that the person wants you to see, not the # they are calling from. 2) Change the tone of their voice to the point that they can be unrecognizable. 3) Record the call and capture important information or keep a phone call as a backup for

future reference.

- Ask government agencies about their privacy policies regarding how they protect or publish your records. Request that courts, government, post offices and others restrict access to your files to protect your safety.
- Google yourself See if your private contact information is can be found online. Go to Google and do a search for your name in quotation marks: “Full Name”

Strategies for Sobriety and Safety: You are not alone!

- Recognize points when you are vulnerable, including HALT (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) and work with both safety and sobriety issues “one day at a time” to avoid being overwhelmed.
- Identify who to call for support: advocate, sponsor, counselor, Alcohol Drug Help Line. Form support systems and know about meetings.
- Learn information about domestic violence, sexual assault and addiction. You can contact the National DV Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)
- Remove substances and paraphernalia from your home, along with removing weapons from their usual place in the home.
- Learn to recognize unsafe persons, places and things.
- Understand how to deal with legal and other problems that come from domestic violence/sexual assault and addiction, including CPS involvement, health, poor nutrition.
- Assemble paperwork to determine eligibly for assistance and/or sobriety programs. Begin to seek employment school, housing, or other options.
- Seek education about how domestic violence and sexual assault can contribute to relapse.
- Seek education about how substance use can be a safety issue.
- Understand how physical, emotional, cognitive, environment and other cues are indicative of risk and have a plan to work through it. Recognize the role of stress and craving, and develop a plan to deal with it.
- Learn how to parent, engage in relationships and develop sober friendships.
- Know when and where to run in a life threatening situation, avoid places that put safety and sobriety at risk.

