



## Personalized Safety Plan

Abuse within a relationship can be dangerous for your physical and emotional health. The following information represents areas to address when looking at your personal safety.

### Level of Violence

Research has been done in regard to level of violence and increased danger. Some of the following issues have been related to increased physical danger. Look at these issues and decide which apply to your relationship then adjust your safety plan accordingly.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perpetrator has access to guns | <input type="checkbox"/> Left or leaving perpetrator            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threats to kill                | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol or drug problem by perpetrator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Perpetrator is unemployed      | <input type="checkbox"/> Perpetrator tries to choke you         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forces you to have sex         | <input type="checkbox"/> Stalking behavior                      |

### Safety at Home

You may not know it now, but you are an expert on safety within your relationship. You have learned to read his behavior and assess the danger you are in. Use this information along with what you already know to create your own personalized safety plan.

### Perpetrator Out of Home

If you have left your perpetrator or he is out of the home, here are some ideas to think about in regard to your personal safety.

1. Change your locks and/or make sure locks on windows and doors work.
2. If at all possible, get a steel door (there are some hardware and building supply stores that sell used or discontinued doors at reduced prices).
3. Cut down shrubs, bushes, trees, etc that block your view.
4. Security systems are nice but not everyone can afford a system. Look into alternatives to these security systems. Check police supply and army surplus stores to see about cheap alternatives.
5. Install smoke detectors and establish a way of leaving your home in case of fire (example do you live on the second floor and need a rope ladder).
6. Install additional lighting if at all possible.
7. Talk to neighbors about watching your house. Make sure to only talk to those you trust.
8. Think about getting a pet.

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### Safety During a Violent Episode

Again, you are the expert on your safety. Think about all you have done to stay safe and keep the following things in mind.

1. Think about the rooms that are not safe to be in during a violent episode (ie kitchen, garage etc). Think about the rooms that have weapons or potential weapons. Stay away from these rooms.
2. Think about the exits in your house. What is the best way to get out of your home?
3. Keep a spare key within reach so that you can leave easily.
4. Keep a set of clothes, medication, or any other things you might need in a safe place. You can either leave it with a friend or in the trunk of your car.
5. Back your car in so that all you have to pull out of the drive.
6. Talk to a trusted neighbor who can call the police if any suspicious noises comes from your home. You may even want to create a code word to let this neighbor know that the police need to be called immediately.
7. Think about ways and things you can do to protect yourself.

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### **Safety When Preparing to Leave Your Perpetrator**

Leaving a spouse or significant other who is abusive can be scary. It is not always possible to completely plan your escape but here are a few things to think about.

1. Create and practice a personalized safety plan. Try to think of any circumstances that may arise and plan ahead.
2. Think about the safest way to leave your perpetrator. Think about the situations that may lead to your perpetrator reacting violently (ie being served with divorce papers or a protective order, court dates etc). Plan for these events (where is a safe place to stay etc).
3. Talk with an attorney. Contact an advocate at DVIS to discuss referrals for legal services.
4. Try to think of ways to help in your independence. Is there a way to hide money from your abuser? If you are not staying in the house, can you apply for housing ahead of time and have any correspondence sent to a safer location?
5. Think about all the financial issues that may come up (examples.. do you have a joint checking account or does he have access to your social security checks?). Take steps to protect these assets.
6. Contact an advocate to explore these issues.

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### **Safety Away From Home**

You may be fearful of leaving home and doing everyday errands. This is common. Some fear may even keep you safe if it keeps you alert. Keep these things in mind when leaving your home.

1. Change your routine (example: running errands during lunch instead of after work)
2. Include a friend when running errands
3. There are personal alarms that you can buy that may help you feel safer.
4. Carry a cell phone with 911 and an emergency contact # programmed into the phone.
5. Think about what would help you feel safer.
6. Let the appropriate people at work know about your situation and create a safety plan for work.

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### **Safety and the Children**

If your child/ren were victimized or they are aware of your victimization, it may be necessary to safety plan with them. Safety planning is not harmful and it may actually help reduce their anxiety. Keep in mind what your child is capable of doing in regard to their personal safety (their ability to use the phone, to give their address etc.).

1. If your children are aware of situation, they may be feeling anxious. Not saying anything can cause more anxiety. They do not need to know details but telling them about all the ways you are protecting yourself may help lessen their anxiety.
2. Teach your children how and when to call 911. Practice this with your children.
3. Play *the what if game* with your child ("what if a stranger comes to the door"). This should be done repeatedly to reinforce safety issues. While doing this "game", throw in circumstances you want to plan for with the children in regard to the perpetrator.
4. Teach your children to listen to their instincts.
5. Create a password that you can use with your children. They should know that this password should be used by people who are picking them up, if you want them to go to the neighbors or call the police etc.
6. Think about all you have learned so far about safety and use it to create an age appropriate safety plan for your children.
7. Help your child plan for visitation. Where is a safe place to go when with the perpetrating parent? Who can they call for help?
8. Think about safe places to exchange the children for visitation. Is there a friend or family member who can be present?
9. Document any incidences involving the children.

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## Safety and Protective Orders

### Before Filing for a Protective Order

Protective Orders can be a safety tool but there are some things to take into consideration before filing for a protective order.

1. Protective Orders are documents signed by a judge. These documents can be helpful in that it creates a paper trail detailing the abuse and it has legal consequences if broken.
2. Protective Orders are only pieces of paper, not a guarantee of safety.
3. Protective Orders should not replace the safety practices you have already put into place.
4. Some perpetrators abide by the Protective Orders but some do not. Think about how your perpetrator will respond. Will getting a Protective Order help you with safety or will it enrage your perpetrator?
5. If your perpetrator does not know where you are at, filing a Protective Order may result in him finding out.
6. If you need to file a protective order because of stalking behaviors, try to write down all the episodes that have occurred so that you can show a pattern of behavior.
7. Talk with an advocate about any concerns you have

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### After Filing for a Protective Order

Protective Orders are only as strong as you make them. You should understand the limitations and be prepared to follow through with any reporting for the Protect Order to be a useful safety tool.

1. Keep a copy of your order with you at all times.
2. Take copies of your orders to work and your children's school. If you spend time in other counties than the one in which you filed, you may want to provide copies to the other counties sheriff's department.
3. Report any and all contact by your perpetrator to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
4. If you have questions, please contact your local Domestic Violence Agency.

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## Technology

As with anything, there are both good and bad issues related to the technology we have available today. Here are some issues to keep in mind in regard to using available technology.

1. Cell phones are an easy way to help you feel safe and connected with others. Remember that the newer cell phones have GPS tracking so if your abuser has your phone information he may be able to track you using your phone. This GPS tracking can be turned off. Just contact your cell phone provider to get the details on turning on the GPS.
2. The internet can be a source of information but remember that it may not always be accurate and others can look at the history of the sites you have visited.
3. Some states have court issues on the internet. This may be a way of staying safe if you can look into a person's criminal history
4. Cordless phones are convenient but anyone with a baby monitor can listen in on your conversation.
5. If you make a phone call to someone you don't want to perpetrator to know about, dial another number so that he won't be able to hit redial.

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## Stalking

Being stalked can be scary but you can use this safety plan to help you not only stay safe but to also assist the police in building a case against your perpetrator.

1. Create a log documenting stalking behavior.
2. Make a police report every time there is an issue of unwanted contact or following.
3. Carry a disposable camera and take pictures any time you see your perpetrator follow you or drive by your residence.
4. Talk with an advocate about further ways of protecting yourself.

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### Other Means of Protection

Many well meaning people will offer ideas about what could help you feel safe including weapons. Keep these things in mind.

1. If having a gun in the home adds anxiety then that may not be the thing to help you feel safe.
2. Look into all the legal forms of self defense weapons that are available (examples include mace, pepper spray, tazers, stun guns).
3. If you plan to have any kind of self defense weapon, be prepared to use it. Any weapon is useless if you don't know how and are not prepared to use it.
4. Get a dog. Dogs can offer not only protection but relaxation too.
5. Look into self defense classes in your area.
6. Participate in neighborhood watch programs.
7. If your perpetrator has a permanent protective order against him or he has been convicted of a domestic violence related crime, then he should not own a weapon. If his ownership of weapons threatens your safety, then you may need to contact a law enforcement agency to report his ownerships of weapons.

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### The Emotions

Depression, anger, fear, anxiety, and shame, are all emotions common and normal after living in an abusive relationship. You can plan how you are going to cope with these the same way you plan for your safety. Think about ways you have coped with these feelings in the past and/or use the following to help guide you:

1. Look into services offered at counseling centers in your area.
2. Is there someone you can call when you are depressed, angry, etc?
3. Avoid thinking about people, places, things, etc that remind you of the event until you have practiced using coping skills.
4. Talk with your doctor about medication if you are feeling anxious and/or depressed. These are normal reactions to trauma but you don't have to live with them.
5. Think about the people in your life that are soothing and calming. Try to keep in touch with these people.
6. Are there places you can go that are peaceful and calming? If you cannot actually go to these places, can you picture them in your mind?
7. Journaling can be a good way of exploring your thoughts and feelings in a safe way.
8. Try to spend an hour a day doing things that are relaxing to you.

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### Alcohol and Drug Use

You may have used alcohol and/or drugs in the past as a way of coping with your situation. Although this is not the best way of dealing with the issue, it is not uncommon. Think about the following before you use alcohol or drugs.

1. If your perpetrator knows about the use, he may use this against you in a court case.
2. Alcohol and drugs lessen your ability to judge danger and act in ways to protect yourself.
3. If you decide to use, think about where you can use safely. Do you have friend who will aid in your safety at these times?
4. If your perpetrator uses drugs such as crank or crack, then you may be in more danger. Think about the times when your perpetrator is more likely to use. How can you protect yourself while he is using? Is there a place you can go? Friends you can stay with?
5. Contact DVIS/Call Rape to discuss and receive referrals in regard to not only your safety but to address any issues with drug use.

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### **Things to Keep in Mind**

\*It is very difficult to replace some things such as pictures and jewelry that have sentimental value. It is also difficult to replace things such as birth certificates, social security cards etc. If may be necessary to put these things in a safe place or to leave them with a trusted friend.

\*You may think you have a good relationship with some of his family. However, it is not a good idea to include them on any safety issues that you may working on. Only discuss safety practices with people you trust and know won't tell your perpetrator.

\*If you have left your perpetrator and feel pressured to return, contact an advocate to discuss you feelings. Perpetrators are generally manipulative and the charming behavior that they may be using is a way of gaining your trust again.

### **Important Numbers**

<b>Domestic Violence Intervention Services/Call Rape.....</b>	<b>585-3143</b>
<b>Ann Patterson Dooley Family Safety Center.....</b>	<b>742-7480</b>
<b>Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault.....</b>	<b>405-524-0700</b>
<b>National Domestic Violence Hotline.....</b>	<b>800-799-SAFE(7233)</b>

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