

## THINGS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR SAFETY PLAN:

As the victim in an abusive relationship, you do not have the ability to control or change your partner's behavior. You do, however, have options that you can explore to help keep you and your family safe. Only you have the ability to determine with whom you may safely discuss your situation and possible options. It is a good idea to speak to people who may be able to help you before a crisis occurs so that you have a plan as well as an idea of resources that may be able to assist you.

- Have an **escape route**, identify which door, window, stairwell or elevator offers the quickest way out of the home. Know where you plan to go, how you will get there and practice if possible.
- Keep money, keys, important telephone numbers, clothing and any other necessary items in the same place in order to assist you in leaving quickly. (Consider leaving cash, duplicate keys to your car and home, a day's clothes and important items with someone you trust outside the home or at work, in case you have to leave without your belongings).
- Identify **safety areas** in the house where there are no weapons and where there are always ways to escape. If an argument seems unavoidable, move to a room or area with easy access to an exit to allow you to leave if necessary.
- If possible, have a phone **accessible** at all times and know the numbers to call for help.
- Discuss safety with your children. Identify a safe place for them and teach them to dial 911. Use a code word to teach them to call for help or leave the house.

### ***If the abuser does not reside with you:***

- If you have a restraining order, keep it with you at all times.
- Vary your routes to and from work. Do not walk to your car alone. Park in well-lit areas.
- Change your telephone number.
- Install new deadbolt locks on doors, secure all windows and glass doors.
- Trim all trees and shrubbery for an unobstructed view of the property surrounding the home.
- Make sure your children's school or daycare center knows who is authorized to pick up your children.
- Install smoke detectors and purchase a fire extinguisher.
- Alert your neighbors of your situation.
- If you have a security alarm system, change the code.
- Consider installing an alarm or security cameras.
- Limit your postings on social media – don't "update your status" or "check-in" at places, thereby disclosing your location.
- Change your passwords for bank accounts, electricity bill, cell phone bill, email account, social media, etc.

## SAFETY PLANNING WORKSHEET

### Step 1: Prepare

Collect evidence. If it is safe to do so, keeping a journal of abusive incidents (date, time, details), including threats, as well as copies of threatening or abusive emails, text messages, police reports, doctor or hospital records will be helpful if and when you file for an order of protection or press charges against an abuser. Keep this evidence outside of your home, like at a workplace, a friend's house or a safety deposit box. I can keep the evidence I've collected or will collect, which includes:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ (safe place the abuser won't find).

Stash a getaway bag. This bag, which you should, again, keep somewhere where the abuser can't find it, such as a friend's house, your workplace or a neighbor's house, will contain important documents such as: your driver's license, passport, birth certificate, social security cards, copies of financial records, your lease or deed, health insurance information, prescriptions, marriage license or divorce papers, and all similar paperwork for your children, if applicable. It should also include, if possible, some cash you are able to save in case the abuser cancels credits cards or blocks you from accessing bank accounts.

I will make sure to pack the following in my getaway bag:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

and will hide it at \_\_\_\_\_ (safe place the abuser won't find).

## Step 2: Plan

Decide where to go. When it's time to leave—it could be while the abuser is at work, the next time you feel in danger, exactly two weeks from now or whenever you deem the best time—you need to plan where to go. Consider an emergency shelter (which will need advance notice, so contact an advocate there), a friend or family member's house that the abuser doesn't know the location of or is far enough away that it will be difficult for the abuser to get to you, or, if affordable, a hotel or apartment that you pay for with cash so the abuser cannot track you there. Keep in mind that if you have a cell phone, the abuser may be able to trace your location, so consider getting a pay-as-you-go temporary phone and leaving your cell behind.

I will be leaving \_\_\_\_\_ (approximate date/time)

and going to \_\_\_\_\_.

I will only tell \_\_\_\_\_ (trusted friend/family member/advocate) of my whereabouts.

Plan for all possibilities. You know your partner best. You know what abusive tactics he or she is most likely to use. Make sure you think about that as you get ready to leave. The abuser may feel like something is different in your demeanor and may become more controlling. When an abuser feels like they are losing control, it is often the most dangerous time for a survivor. Prepare for this by thinking out different scenarios that could happen and what you will do. For example, if an abuser always shuts the bedroom door to close you in before he or she becomes violent, can you unlock a window ahead of time, given you're on the ground floor, and exit through it when this starts? If an abuser threatens to keep or harm your children or pets if you leave, can you make sure they're in a safe place before you leave, such as taking them to a trusted relative's house? Can you create a code word that, if you say it in front of your children, they'll know to run next door to the neighbor's house and call 911?

I know my partner is likely to use the following tactics to control me and keep me from leaving:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

To counteract these things, I will prepare by doing the following:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### **Step 3: After You Leave**

Stay vigilant. After you leave an abuser, or after an abuser is forced to leave your home, you'll want to take safety precautions to keep yourself and your family safe. This should include considering an order of protection, alerting your place of employment and your children's school what is going on and giving them a photo of the abuser so they can alert you if he or she comes around, using a different route to get to and from work or school, changing your schedule, taking a break from social media so the abuser is less likely to track or harass you, and changing your phone number and making it unlisted. After I leave, I will do the following actions to help keep myself safe:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

***To create a safety plan with a domestic violence or dating violence advocate, please call:***

#### **Florida Domestic Violence Hotline**

1-800-500-1119

TTY: 1-800-621-4202

#### **National Domestic Violence Hotline**

<https://www.thehotline.org/what-is-live-chat/>

1-800-799-7233

TTY: 1-800-787-3224

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