

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Safety Planning

HAVE A SAFETY PLAN

STEP ONE (Planning to get out safely)

Victims cannot control what their abusers may do. They cannot offset their anger, and they cannot change the other person's actions nor can they predict when a violent episode will occur. Whatever works to keep you safe, USE. You can use some or all of the following strategies:



- A.** Keep windows unlocked, and chain or bolt locks off doors. Worried about safety? A victim is in more danger in their home with an abusive partner than from some random chance that their home will be broken into. Make getting out a priority.
- B.** Keep your purse / wallet and keys where you have easy access to them at all times.
- C.** Let neighbors know if they hear sounds of a fight coming from your home, it is all right for them to call the police.
- D.** Teach children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.
- E.** Decide on a code (safe word) to use for children or friends so they can call for help. (It is best to choose a word that they will clearly identify as a request for help. Make it something that would not ordinarily be said in a violent confrontation. If you are in fear of what will happen next, that the situation is escalating beyond what you can handle, use the word. Possibly you could use a food or a flower term, or something along those lines.)
- F.** Have a couple of places in mind to go to if you have to leave quickly. Decide in advance and make sure these places are safe and that you will be welcomed any time you may need them.
- G.** You must decide whether or not to let your children know in advance what you are planning to do. It is important to keep in mind the age and emotional state of the child/children involved. Be absolutely sure that the abuser will not be able to coerce or bully the information about your plan from the child.
- H.** The home is in some ways the most dangerous place to be. In burglaries, it is the isolation of the home that offers the intruders the opportunity to torture, rape, or kill their victims. It is no different in a domestic violence situation. The "comfort of home" often gives the abuser a sense of security to do as they please. If at all possible try to move arguments out of areas such as the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.
- I.** Keep in mind that no one can give you a concrete answer on how to react in any given situation. During a violent encounter, you can only rely on your own instincts and judgments. Whatever works to diffuse the situation, USE. There is no other right or wrong, whatever keeps you safe, is your best action!

STEP TWO (Getting Out)

If you are preparing to leave, implement a plan to increase your chances of leaving safely. Choose the time you will leave carefully. It is best to leave during the time just after the fight when the abuser is trying to make up for what they have done. The abuser will watch immediately after a fight for signs that you are considering leaving; this is a more dangerous time to try to leave. Once they relax and are more calm, they will not be looking closely for signs that you will leave. You can use some or all the following safety strategies:



- A.** Leave some money and an extra set of keys with someone you can trust in case you have to leave without warning.

B. Leave extra copies of any documents, extra clothes for you and your children you may need with that person you trust. You might even leave a prepaid phone card or two (remember prepaid cards can not be traced).

C. Make sure you have access to any bank accounts you may need at all times.

D. Other things I can do to increase my chances of leaving safely:

1. Your local Domestic Violence program's hot line number is: **1-800-799-SAFE • 1-800-787-3224 TTY. Use this number at any time to obtain help. If you are experiencing a Domestic Violence emergency please call 911.**
2. Keep change or prepaid phone cards for phone calls on you at all times. Understand that if you use your telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell the abuser those numbers that were called after you left. Keep telephone communications confidential; either use coins, get a friend to permit you to use their telephone credit card for a limited time, or purchase a prepaid phone card.
3. Take those offers from people who have offered to give you a place to stay or to lend you money. It will be needed at first, and you can repay them in another way. Chances are, your leaving and finding safety will be payment enough.
4. Pack a suitcase with extra clothes and leave it with the person who has agreed to help you with your plan, or at a bus station locked or similar.

E. Review your safety plan periodically and evaluate your progress or any changes you need to make.

F. Rehearse your escape plan. If appropriate, practice it with your children. Again, keep in mind the age and emotional state of the children. Be careful not to give a child information as to your plan unless you are absolutely sure the abuser won't be able to coerce or bully it out of the child.

STEP THREE: (Once You've Made The Break)

Once you are out and living in your own residence, there are steps you can take to insure your safety in your own home. Money is usually a concern, so start where you can and add other measures as you can afford to. Safety measures you can use include:

A. Change the locks on all doors and windows as soon as possible.

B. Replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.

C. Install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.

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

E. Install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.

F. Install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.

G. Teach children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to in the event that the abuser takes the children. It is best if they know an alternate number to call in such an instance. Make sure your children know your phone number and address to give to the police. Instruct them not to give it to anyone but a police officer. This way, the child cannot be used as a means of the abuser finding out where you are.

H. Tell people who take care of your children which people have permission to pick up the children and that the abuser is not permitted to do so. Inform them of changes in your permission for your child's pick up. Try to have the same person pick them up at the same time every day.

_____ (school)
_____ (day care staff)
_____ (baby-sitter)
_____ (teacher)

Tell neighbors and child care providers that the abuser no longer resides with you and they should call the police if he is observed near your residence.

