

Safety Planning: After Leaving an Abuser

If you are reading this, you are most likely searching for advice on how to protect yourself once you have left an abusive relationship. Reaching out for support is the first step to a life free from abuse, and you are very brave to have taken that step.

Now that you've taken the brave first step of reaching out for help, it's time to create a **safety plan**. A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan that includes ways to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after you leave. A good safety plan will have all of the information you need, be specific to your situation, and will help walk you through different scenarios that you might come across while living with an abuser. *Some of the things that you put in your safety plan might seem obvious, and that's okay*- in moments of crisis your brain doesn't function the same way as when you are calm. In a crisis, it can be hard to think clearly or make logical decisions about your safety. Having a safety plan ahead of time can help you to protect yourself in those stressful moments.

Physical Safety Planning

- If possible/necessary, change your locks at home. (If you rent, your landlord may require a copy of your protective order to make this happen)
- Change your phone number. Call the telephone company to request caller ID. Ask that your phone number be blocked so that if you call anyone, your abuser won't be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
- If you work, ask your manager or supervisor about changing your hours. Consider taking a different route to work.
- Ask your coworkers, managers, and supervisors not to reveal any information about your schedule to anyone who calls or shows up to your workplace.
- If you have a protective order (OFP or HRO), keep a certified copy of it with you at all times, and inform friends, neighbors and employers that you have a restraining order in effect.
- Call your local law enforcement (if you feel comfortable) to enforce the order.
- Consider renting a PO Box or applying for Safe at Home, Minnesota's address confidentiality program.
- If you have appointments that your abuser knows about, reschedule them.
- Change which grocery store you go to.
- Alert your neighbors and ask that they call the police (or another trusted friend) if they feel you may be in danger.
- If you can, install motion sensitive lights or a security system for your home. Some counties and organizations have grant money available for this purpose.

Emotional Safety Planning

When you're putting together a safety plan, you might be focusing most of your energy on your physical safety. That's great, but did you know that you can include your emotional health in your safety plan, too? Emotional safety can look different for different people (everyone has unique needs!), but the goal of emotional safety planning is the same- developing strategies and coping mechanisms to help you accept yourself, your feelings, and your choices while dealing with abuse.

When you're developing your safety plan, consider including emotional safety planning. Here are a few ways to start:

- **Build your support system:** Reach out to trusted friends or family- even if you haven't spoken in a while because of the abuse, they'll be glad to hear from you. Supportive people can give you the space to process tough situations and think through your options.
- **Think small, achievable goals:** Be gentle and patient with yourself, and work at a pace that feels doable. Your goal for the day might be calling one local hotline or finding out about a new support group. You don't have to do anything you aren't comfortable with, but when you're ready, your small goals will have laid the groundwork for you.
- **Create your own Happy Place:** When you're living with abuse, it can be helpful to carve out a physical space for yourself to relax, recharge, and feel safe. Whether it's a room or closet full of comfortable blankets, a favorite tree in a nearby park, or a chair by a window, you deserve a safe place to just be.
- **Tell yourself "I am valuable!":** You are important and special. Remind yourself of that! When living with abuse, simply remembering your worth can work wonders for your emotional health. It is not your fault when someone chooses to abuse you, and being abused does not mean you're a bad person. Tell yourself you matter. Believe it.

More Safety Planning Tools

Safety Planning Apps

MyPlan (also has a website!): <https://www.myplanapp.org/home>

RUSafe: <https://www.wcpittsburgh.org/rusafe-app/>

*Remember: if your phone is monitored, downloading an app like one of these might not be a safe option.

Women's Advocates Live Chat anytime at www.wadvocates.org

[Online Resource Hub](#)

[Day One Shelter Network](#)

[Safe at Home: Minnesota's address confidentiality program](#)