

Personalized Safety Plan for Adults

The following steps represent my plan to increase my safety and prepare in advance for the possibility of future violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to best get my children and myself to safety.

STEP 1: Safety during a violent incident

You cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, those being abused may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. If I decide to leave, I will _____
_____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- B. I can keep my purse/wallet and car keys ready and put them (place) _____
_____ in order to leave quickly.
- C. I can tell _____ about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house. I also can tell _____
_____ about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.
- E. I will use _____ as my code word with my children and/or my friends so they will know to call for help.
- F. If I have to leave the house, I will go _____. (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time.)

If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to _____
_____ or _____.
- G. I also can teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.
- H. When I expect we are going to have an argument, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as _____. (Try to avoid arguments in rooms with weapons like the bathroom, garage, kitchen or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I. I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my partner what he/she wants to calm him/her. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

STEP 2: Safety when preparing to leave

Battered individuals frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving the situation must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe their partner is leaving the relationship.

I can use some or all of the following safety strategies:

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.
- B. I will keep copies of important documents (see step 8) or keys at _____.
- C. I will open a savings account by _____ to increase my independence.
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

- E. The local Domestic Violence Program, the Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley, can be reached at (540) 639-1123. I can seek shelter by calling this hotline. (You can also call the Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline at (800) 838-8238 v/tty to get the number of your local Domestic Violence Program if you are not in the New River Valley).
- F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must use coins, purchase a calling card or maybe get a friend to allow me to use a telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.
- G. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them and lend me some money.
- H. I can leave extra clothes with _____.
- I. I will sit down and revise my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave my residence. _____ A domestic violence advocate or a friend has agreed to help me review this plan.
- J. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

STEP 3: Safety in my own residence

There are many things that you can do to increase your safety in your own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step.

Safety measures I can use include:

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.

- C. I can install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor of my house or apartment.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____
_____ (friend, faith leader, other) in the event that my partner takes my children.
- H. I will tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about the pick-up permission include:
 - _____ (school)
 - _____ (day care staff)
 - _____ (babysitter)
 - _____ (Sunday School teacher)
 - _____ (teacher)
 - _____ (others)
- I. I can inform _____ (neighbor), _____ (minister, rabbi or other faith leader), and _____ (friend) that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if he is observed near my residence.

STEP 4: Safety with a Protective Order

Many batterers obey protective orders, but no one can ever be sure which violent partner will obey a protective order and which will violate them. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protective order.

The following are steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protective order:

- A. Make copies of the protective order. If lost or thrown away, it will cost you to get another copy of the order.
- B. I will keep my protective order _____ (location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses/wallets, the order is the first thing that should be placed in your purse/wallet.)
- C. I will give copies of my protective order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends and in the community where I live.

- D. I can call the local Domestic Violence Program if I have problems with or questions about my protective order.
- E. I will inform my employer, my minister/rabbi/faith leader, my closest friend, _____ and _____ that I have a protective order in effect.
- F. If my partner destroys my protective order, I can get another copy from the clerk of the court.
- G. If my partner violates my protective order, I can call the police or go to the magistrate and report the violation.
- H. If the police do not help, I can contact my domestic violence advocate, my attorney and/or the Commonwealth's Attorney, and I can file a complaint with the chief of the police department or the sheriff.
- I. I also can file a Show Cause Petition with the clerk of the court in the jurisdiction where the Protective Order was issued. If my partner commits a new crime, I can file a private criminal complaint with the magistrate in the jurisdiction where the crime was committed. I can call the Domestic Violence Program to help me.

STEP 5: Safety on the job and in public

Each battered woman/man must decide if and when they will tell others that their partner has battered them and that they may be at continued risk. Friends, family and coworkers can help to protect battered individuals. Each woman/man should consider carefully which people to invite to help secure their safety.

I might do any or all of the following:

- 1. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ at work of my situation.
- 2. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- 3. When leaving work, I can _____.
- 4. When driving home if problems occur, I can _____.
- 5. If I ride the bus or metro, I can _____.
- 6. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to get what I need and I can shop at hours that are different from those my batterer might expect.
- 7. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours that are different from those I used when I was with my batterer.
- 8. I also can _____.

STEP 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use

Many people use alcohol and/or mood-altering drugs. Much of this use is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on a battered person and may hurt their relationship with their children and put them at a disadvantage in other legal actions with their battering partner. Therefore, women/men should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. Beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce the awareness and ability to act quickly and self-protect against a battering partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the batterer may give them an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol use, a woman needs to make specific safety plans.

If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with my batterer, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:

- A. If I am going to use, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.
- B. I also can _____.
- C. If my partner is using, I can _____.
- D. I also might _____.
- E. To safeguard my children, I might _____.

STEP 7: Safety and my emotional health

The experience of being battered and abused in other ways (verbally, sexually, financially, etc.) is exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes much courage and incredible energy.

To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some or all of the following:

- A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____.
- B. When I have to communicate with my abuser in person or by telephone, I can _____.
- C. I can try to use "I can..." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- D. I can tell myself "_____ " whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- E. I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
- F. I can call _____ and/or _____ as other resources to support me.

G. Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are _____,
_____ and _____.

H. I can attend workshops and support groups at the Domestic Violence Program or _____
_____ or _____ to gain
support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

STEP 8: Items to take when leaving

If you leave your partner, it is important to take certain items with you. Some people also give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case they have to leave quickly.

When I leave, I should take the following items. These items might be best placed in one location, so that if I/we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly.

MOST IMPORTANT:

- Identification for myself
- Children's birth certificates
- My birth certificate
- Social Security cards
- School and vaccination records
- Money
- Checkbook, ATM or debit card
- Credit cards
- Keys – house, car, office, etc.
- Driver's license and registration
- Medications
- Protection order, if there is one

OTHER ITEMS YOU MAY WANT:

- Welfare identification
- Work permits
- Green card
- Passport(s)
- Divorce papers
- Medical records
- Lease/rental agreement, house deed and/or mortgage payment book
- Bank books
- Insurance papers
- Small, salable objects
- Address book
- Pictures
- Children's favorite toys and/or blankets
- Items of special sentimental value
- Jewelry

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Domestic Violence Program: _____

Police department (home): _____

Police department (school): _____

Police department (work): _____

Work number: _____

Supervisor's home number: _____

Minister, rabbi or other faith leader: _____

Other: _____

FOR MORE INFORMATION, I CAN CONTACT:



women's resource center
of the New River Valley

P.O. Box 477, Radford, VA 24143
Office: (540) 639-9592
Fax: (540) 633-2382

E-mail: director@wrcnr.v.org
Website: www.wrcnr.v.org

Hotline: (540) 639-1123
TTY: (540) 639-2197
Toll Free: (800) 788-1123 (regional access)

Developed by Virginia Family Violence & Sexual Assault Hotline (800) 838-8238

A Project of the Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Adapted from: Personalized Safety Plan, Office of the City Attorney, San Diego, California, April 1990.

For support or assistance with the safety planning worksheet, please call (540) 639-1123.

You may believe that your children are not aware of the abuse in your relationship. The reality is that children are almost always aware of the abuse and become afraid for their parent and themselves. Rather than increasing a child's fear, talk to them about their feelings. Help your child develop their own personal safety plan; this will actually increase their sense of safety and control over the situation. The following is an example of a Safety Plan for children.