

Creating My Domestic Violence **SAFETY PLAN**

This is my plan to prepare for the possibility for 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 best to get myself and my children to safety.

STEP 1: Safety during a violent incident.

Women cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, battered women may use a variety of strategies.

I can use some (or all) of the following strategies:

- If I decide to leave, I will _____. (Practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells or fire escapes would you use?)
- I can keep my purse and car keys ready, and put them (place)_____ in order to leave quickly.
- I can tell _____ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.
- I will use _____ as my code for my children or my friends so they can call for help.
- If I have to leave home, 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 _____.
- I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.
- 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 the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- 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 down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

STEP 2. Safety when preparing to leave. Battered women frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a battered woman is leaving the relationship.

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

- I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____, so that I can leave quickly.
- I will keep copies of important documents or keys at _____.
- I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- The domestic violence program hotline number is (800) 799-7233, and I can seek shelter by calling this hotline.
- 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 the numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.
- I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can leave extra clothes with _____.

- I will set down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- I will rehearse my escape plan. I will, practice it with my children when appropriate.

STEP 3: Safety in my own residence. There are many things that a woman can do to increase her safety in her own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once. But safety measures can be added step by step.

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

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- I can install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, electronic system, etc.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me, and to _____ (friends/minister/other) in the event my partner takes the children.
- 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 pickup permission include:

_____ (School),
 _____ (Daycare staff),
 _____ (Baby-sitter),
 _____ (Sunday school teacher),
 _____ (Teacher),
 _____ (and),
 _____ (others)

- I can inform _____ (neighbors), _____ (pastor), 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 battered women obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey, and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the court to enforce my protection order.

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

- Always keep a copy of the order with you. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in.
- I will also keep a copy of my Protective Order _____ (location) next to my telephone in case I need to call the police. I will give my protection order to the police department in the communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live.
- I will inform my employer, my minister, my closest friend and _____, and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.

- If my partner destroys my protective order, I can get another copy by going to the District or Circuit Court Civil Clerk's office, depending on which court issued my order
- If my partner violates the protective order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and he or she will assist me with getting help.
- I can also file a criminal complaint with the District Court commissioner in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred. I can charge my battering partner with a violation of the Protective Order. All the crimes that he commits in violating the order. I can call the domestic violence advocate to help me with this.

STEP 5: Safety on the job and in public. Each battered woman must decide if and when she will tell others that her partner has battered her, and that she may be at continued risk. Friends, family and co-workers can help to protect the woman. Each woman should consider carefully which persons to invite to help secure her safety.

I might do any (or all) of the following:

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ at work of my situation.
- I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- When leaving work, I can _____
- When driving home, if problems occur, I can _____
- If I use public transportation, I can _____
- I will go to different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business, and shop at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.
- I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.
- I can also _____.

STEP 6: Safety and drug or alcohol use. Most people in this culture use alcohol. Many use mind-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 woman. It may hurt her relationship with her children. Drug use can put her at a disadvantage in other legal actions with her battering partner. Therefore, women should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs. Even more important, alcohol or other drug use can reduce a woman's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself from her battering partner. Alcohol or other drug use by the batterer may give him/her an excuse to use violence. A woman needs to make specific safety plans about drug and alcohol use.

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

- 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.
- I can also _____.
- If my partner is using, I can _____.
- I might also _____.
- To safeguard my children, I might _____ and _____.

STEP 7: Safety and my emotional health. The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually 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 of the following:

- If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____.
- When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can _____.
- I can try to use "I can . . ." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- I can tell myself, " _____" whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
- I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
- I can call _____, _____ and _____ as other resources to be of support to me.
- Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are: _____, _____, _____ and _____.
- I can attend workshops and support groups at a domestic violence program, or _____ or _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.

STEP 8: Items to take when leaving. I will use the Checklist to plan my possible leaving.

- I will keep this document in a safe place and out of the reach of my abuser.

Review date: _____

Source: This material is based on a piece entitled "Creating My Safety Plan" by Marie Smith and Laura Kniaz, [House of Ruth](#), it is used with permission.