

## Personalized Safety Plan

*Take some time to design a Personalized Safety Plan for you and your children.*

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**

*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 ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.

I can also tell about the violence and ask them to 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 word with my children and/or my friends so they will know to call for help.

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 .

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, kitchens, 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. 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 their partner 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 I can leave quickly.

I will keep copies of important documents (see step 8) or keys at .

I will open a savings account by \_\_\_\_\_ to increase my independence.

Other things I can do to increase my independence include:

The Domestic Violence Program's Hotline number is \_\_\_\_\_. 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 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 her telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.

I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them and lend me some money.

I can leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_.

I will sit down and revise my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ in order to plan the safest way to leave my residence. \_\_\_\_\_ (domestic violence advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.

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 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.*

Safety measures I can use include:

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, an 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 of my house or 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 (friend, faith leader, other) in the event that my partner takes my 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 the pick-up permission include:

(school)

(day care staff)

(babysitter)

(Sunday School teacher)

(teacher)

and (others)

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 one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protective orders.*

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

I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protective order.

I will keep my protective order (location). (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that should go in it.)

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.

I can call the local Domestic Violence Program if I have problems with or questions about my protective order.

I will inform my employer, my minister/rabbi/faith leader, my closest friend, and that I have a protective order in effect.

If my partner destroys my protective order, I can get another copy from the clerk of the court.

If my partner violates my protective order, I can call the police or go the magistrate and report the violation.

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.

If my partner commits a new crime, I can file a 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 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 coworkers can help to protect women. Each woman should consider carefully which people to invite to help her 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 ride the bus, take a taxi, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

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.

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.

I can also \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **STEP 6: SAFETY AND DRUG OR ALCOHOL USE**

*Many people use alcohol. Many use 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 woman, may hurt her relationship with her children, and 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. Beyond this, the use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a woman's awareness and ability to act quickly to protect herself from her battering partner. Furthermore, the use of alcohol or other drugs by the batterer may give him/her 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:

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 \_\_\_\_\_.

#### **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 yourself 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:

If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

When I have to communicate with my abuser 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 \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ as other resources to support me.

Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

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 women 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 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