

PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility for further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to the abuser and how 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:

- 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 and car keys ready and put them (place) - _____ in order to leave quickly.
- C. I can tell _____ about the violence and request that they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.
- 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 or my friends so they can call for help.
- F. If I have to leave my home, I will go _____ (Decide this even if you didn't think there will be a next time.) If I cannot get to the location above, then I can go to _____ or _____.
- G. I can also 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 _____ or _____. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, by the telephone, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- I. I will use my judgment, experience and intuition. If the situation is very serious I can give my partner what he wants to calm him 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 strategically in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a battered woman is leaving a 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 or keys at _____.
- C. I will open a savings account by _____, to increase my independence.
- D. I can get legal advice from a lawyer who understands woman abuse.
- E. Other things I can do to increase my independence are:

- F. The “Wife Assault Helpline” telephone number is _____ (listed in every Ontario telephone book). I can seek shelter and support by calling this helpline.
- G. 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 would tell my batterer those 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, or buy a calling card.
- H. I will check with _____ and _____ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I. I can leave extra clothes with _____
- J. I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. _____ (women’s advocate or friend) has agreed to help me review this plan.
- K. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.
- L. I will teach my children to learn their address.

STEP 3: SAFETY IN MY OWN HOME.

There are many things that a woman can do to increase her safety in her own residence. It may not be possible to do everything 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 floors, and electronic system, etc.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from first floor windows.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my home.
- G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to _____(friend/helper/other) in the event that my partner abducts the children.
- H. I can install the “call blocking” option on my telephone. This will allow me to make telephone calls, even to the batterer, without my number being identified on another telephone’s “incoming call” viewing mechanism. To request this option free of charge, please call 310-BELL (2355)
- I. 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 pick-up permission include _____(school),
_____(day care staff),
_____(babysitter),
_____(Sunday school teacher),
_____(teacher), and
_____(other).
- J. I can inform _____(neighbor), _____(clergy), and
_____(friend) that my partner no longer lives with me and they should call the police if he is seen near my residence.

STEP 4: SAFETY WITH A PROTECTION ORDER

Protection orders are legal/court orders or restrictions that come in different forms: peace bonds, restraining orders, bail conditions, parole conditions, child custody/access order. Many batterers do 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 courts to enforce my protection order.

The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order.

- A. I will keep my protection order document (original, if possible) in _____ (location). Always keep it on or near your person. If you change purses, that's the first thing that you should check.
- B. I will inform my employer, my clergy support, my friend and _____ and _____ and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
- C. If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse, my lawyer, or _____.
- D. If my partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact his parole officer, contact my lawyer and /or my advocate, and /or advise the court of the violation.
- E. If the police do not help, I can contact my advocate, his parole officer, or lawyer and will file a complaint with the chief of the police department.
- F. I can also file a private criminal complaint with the Justice of the Peace in the jurisdiction where the violation occurred. I can charge my battering partner with a violation of the protection order and all the crimes that he commits in violation of the order. I can call the "Wife Assault Helpline" to help me with this.

STEP 5: SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC. Each battered women 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 women. Each woman should consider carefully which people to recruit to help secure her safety.

I might do any or all of the following:

- A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and _____ at work of my situation.
- B. I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work, I can _____
- D. When driving home if problems occur, I can _____
- E. If I use public transit, I can _____
- F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those when living with my battering partner.
- G. I can also _____

STEP 6: DRUG OR ALCOHOL SAFETY CONSUMPTION.

Most people in this culture consume alcohol. Many consume mood-altering drugs. Much of this consumption is legal and some is not. The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard for a battered woman, it 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. But 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 the batterer an excuse to use violence. Therefore, in the context of drug or alcohol consumption, a woman needs to make specific safety plans.

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

- A. If I am going to consume, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence and care about my safety.
- B. I can also _____
- C. If my partner is consuming, I can _____
- D. To safeguard my children, I would _____

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 requires 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:

- A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can _____.
- B. When I have to communicate with my partner 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 _____ as other resources to support me.
- G. I can find out about and attend workshops and support groups in the community by calling the “Wife Assault Helpline” for information.
- H. I can try and connect with other women who have been in the same situation.
- I. I can ask my social worker/settlement worker to help me connect up with some women’s groups.
- J. I can try and maintain a positive attitude by _____.
- K. I can try and find out which of my family members are supportive of me.

STEP 8: ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING.

When women leave abusive partners, it is important to take certain items with them. Beyond this, women can sometimes give extra copies of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case she has to leave her own bag behind. Items with asterisks in the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, the other items might be taken, or stored outside the home. These items might best be placed in one location so that a woman needs to leave in a hurry she can grab them quickly.

When I leave, I should take:

- ❖ Identification for myself
- ❖ Children's birth certificates
- ❖ Protection Order papers/documents
- ❖ My birth certificate
- ❖ Social Insurance cards
- ❖ Immigration papers
- ❖ School and vaccination records
- ❖ Money
- ❖ Chequebook, bankcards
- ❖ Credit cards
- ❖ Keys-house/car/office
- ❖ Driver's license and ownership
- ❖ Medications
- ❖ Passport

Also:

- ❖ Divorce/separation papers
- ❖ Medical records – for all family members
- ❖ Lease/rental agreement, deed, mortgage records
- ❖ Bank books
- ❖ Insurance papers
- ❖ Address book
- ❖ Pictures/photos
- ❖ Jewellery
- ❖ Children's favourite toys and /or blankets
- ❖ Items of special sentimental value

TELEPHONE NUMBERS I NEED TO KNOW:

Police Department _____

Battered Women's Program _____

Wife Assault Helpline (24hrs a day) _____

Lawyer's _____

Work number _____

Minister/Rabbi/Priest/Elder _____

Another area you may want to think about is the following:

I can ask _____, or _____ to look after my children in an emergency situation.