



# Safety Planning Guide

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Thinking about your safety doesn't mean you have to make any decisions today. A safety plan can help you feel more prepared, no matter where you are in your journey.

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**24/7 HELPLINE: 780-479-0058**

④ WINhouse

# CREATING A SAFETY PLAN

A safety plan is a personalized, practical plan for ways to stay safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or even after you leave. It is custom to you and your circumstances. You can use this plan as a tool when faced with difficult, scary, or potentially dangerous situations with your partner, because your safety is paramount.

When you're ready to take the first step towards finding support, a safety plan is a great place to start. Please call our helpline 780-479-0058, and our team can help make your personalized safety plan. They are real people here for you 24/7.

If you are in immediate physical danger, please call 911 or your local emergency number.

[Click here for more Safety Planning Guidelines.](#)



# GUIDELINES

## Identifying Danger

Establishing potential triggers and behaviours in your partner, past and present, that made you fear for your safety. This could include situations that resulted in danger to your physical, emotional, or psychological health.

## Assessing Risk

Identifying the level of risk. This may include speaking about your partner's actions or reactions to those triggers, be it emotional or physical. This helps shelter staff determine the best and safest way to support you.

## Planning for Safety

Exploring safety strategies that work for you. Different strategies work for different forms of abuse. Shelter staff can help you develop custom strategies to increase your safety.

## Practice the Plan

Rehearsing. After developing your safety plan, shelter staff will encourage you to rehearse it. If you are not in shelter, prepare on your own so it is easier to implement if ever needed.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER:

## **-REACHING OUT FOR HELP - TECHNOLOGY**

If you do not have a phone, plan a route in which you can leave the home and arrive to a safe place (such as a neighbour's) so you can safely call the police or RCMP. Remember if you use a calling card or credit card, the numbers you call will be on your telephone bill. If you need to keep your phone calls confidential, use a public phone or ask a friend if you can use their phone.

Be careful when reaching out for help via Internet or telephone. Erase your Internet browsing history, websites visited for resources, e-mails sent to friends/family asking for help. To learn how to erase browsing information [click here](#). If you called for help, dial another number immediately after in case your partner hits redial.

## **-TELLING PEOPLE YOUR PLAN**

Create an emergency code with a trusted friend, family member, or local shelter (such as "I would like to order pizza", or "I am going to be late for coffee"), so if you need someone else to contact 9-1-1 for you, they can. Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.

## **-CONSIDER**

Create a false trail. Call motels, real estate agencies and schools in a town at least six hours away from where you plan to relocate. If your partner asks where you are going, give them a believable but false answer, such as a friend's home in a larger city a few hours away, or to your parents home (even if it is in a different province).

## **-PACKING A BAG**

Pack an emergency 'to go' bag. If your partner comes home and you are feeling threatened and want to leave, you can grab the kids, and this bag - which will contain **clothing, important documents (such as birth certificates, child tax documents, tax assessment, etc.), diapers, formula, toys, and other essential items**, so you can quickly leave the situation.

Identify which door, window, stairwell, or elevator offers you the quickest way out of the home. Try to practice your route as many times as possible. Decide where you will go if you have to leave, even if you do not think it will come to that.

Try to save some money, and hide it, or give it to a family member or a friend. If possible, open your own bank account so you have some money of your own. When you open it, remember not to use your home address, email or phone number as the bank statements may come to your home. See if you can use a friend or family member's contact information.

Plan carefully before you leave. Your partner may try to hurt you if they think you will leave and they are losing control of you.

## **PLANNING FOR DIFFERENT SITUATIONS**

There are many different situations where you may want to have a safety plan. Whether it is while you are staying at WIN House or after you leave, having a plan of action can help you feel more confident as you move forward with your new journey.

Below covers a few areas where having a safety plan might be helpful:

- During a violent episode
- Staying in Shelter
- Taking a bus or taxi
- After you leave a shelter

## FINDING A SAFE PLACE DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT

If you have been sexually assaulted, and if you choose to get medical assistance. Go directly to a hospital where a trained professional will examine you to collect evidence. It is important for you not to bathe or shower prior.

If an argument seems unavoidable, try to move to a room or area with easy access to an exit. (Avoid entering a bathroom, kitchen, or anywhere near possible weapons.) Make sure to always know your closest exit.

Never let the abuser come between you and your exit out of the house. If you are able to leave safely, run to a neighbour and call 911. Consider leaving your keys and purse near the door so you can easily grab them on the way out.

If it feels safer, you may choose strategies that reduce immediate conflict until you can leave.

If you have the opportunity, call our 24 hour crisis line at 780-479-0058 for support. If you are in danger call 911 and use your code words if unsafe to speak.

You have every right to protect yourself when you are in a dangerous situation. You DO NOT deserve abuse.

When in danger, try to make as much noise as possible (set off the fire alarm, break things, turn up the stereo or TV, set off a car alarm). By doing any of these things, there will be a higher chance your neighbours will call the police for you, if you are unable to do so yourself. And if possible, speak with a trusted neighbour ahead of time about what noises to listen for and when to call the police.

## SAFETY PLANNING WHILE YOU'RE IN A SHELTER

- Make a safety call to the police if you feel it is necessary. If you do not own a cell phone, an emergency phone will be provided to you by the shelter, which you may keep with you at all times until your discharge date.
- Try to travel in pairs whenever possible.
- Keep your cell phone charged and with you at all times. Be mindful of location settings on your cellphone, and turn them off to avoid your abuser being able to find your location.
- Avoid taking shortcuts.
- Travel in well lit, populated areas, especially at night.
- Avoid wearing headphones while walking outdoors, as you may not be able to hear anyone approaching you.
- If you think you are being followed, trust your instincts and take action. Try to cross the road and turn to see who is behind you. If you are still being followed, try to cross the road again. Try to keep moving and make your way to a busy area, and report to anyone who may be able to help you.
- If a vehicle pulls up suddenly alongside you, turn and walk in the other direction (you can turn much faster than a car).
- If you are trapped or in danger, try to yell or scream. Your voice is your best defence. If possible, call the police at 911.



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## SAFETY PLANNING WHILE USING PUBLIC TRANSIT/TAXI

- Always try to be in the back seat, not in front seat next to the driver.
- It is best not to give personal information or discuss your personal business with the driver. Do not disclose any information about why you're there, or your story (have good boundaries), or anyone else you meet at the shelter (never give any names).
- Try to have a code word to use when you are not feeling safe in the taxi. You can phone 911 or 780-479-0058 with your cell phone to get help. If you do not own a cell phone, inquire with shelter staff.
- If the driver asks or continues to ask personal questions and refuses to respect your privacy, ask the driver to let you off at the nearest public place (e.g. gas station, etc.).
- Make sure you have the driver's name, physical description, etc.
- Show self confidence. Let them know if they continue with their questions, you will contact their supervisor.
- Notify someone (friend, family, or frontline staff) that you have arrived safely at your destination.
- Trust your own instincts! If you feel something is wrong, go with your gut feeling.
- Familiarize yourself with the vehicle; does the door have locks at the front, window locks, master locks?
- Never be afraid to roll down the window and yell for help if you have to.

## SAFETY PLANNING WHEN YOU ARE DISCHARGED FROM A SHELTER

- Keep your cell phone charged and with you at all times, and carry a personal safety alarm if possible such as a whistle.
- Provide a trusted friend or family member with a code word in case you are in danger, and keep their number as well as the shelter's phone number with you at all times.
- You may want to change the locks and put bars on the windows if you think your abuser has a key. You may also want to install a security system, smoke detector, and outside lighting system.
- Keep copies of any court orders with you at all times. Also, give copies of these orders to school, daycare, and work, and ask them to contact you if they see your abuser. Give these people copies of your abuser's photograph so they can recognize them.
- Try to install a peephole you and your children can use.
- You can get features such as call blocking, call display, and speed dial to increase your safety.
- You can make sure your name is not on your mailbox or in an apartment directory.
- You may want to change your doctor, dentist, or other professional services if you think your abuser may track you down there.
- Keep your emergency escape plan items with a friend or family member.
- If you move to another town or district, notify the local police of the court order, your new location, and your abuser's history or violent behaviour.
- Try to remember you have been through a lot and may be feeling exhausted and emotionally drained. Know that building a new life free of violence takes a great deal of courage and requires a lot of energy.