



Strength

Domestic violence: Strategies for staying safe at home

Domestic abuse puts victims, children and pets in danger. Putting together a safety plan can help keep you and your loved ones stay safe. Here are some tips¹:

If you're living with your partner

- Identify your partner's abuse patterns (triggers, levels of force, etc.) to help you measure your risk.
- Find safe areas in your house where there are no weapons and ways to escape. Try to move to these areas during fights.
- Make yourself a small target during violence. Go into a corner and curl into a ball with your face protected and your head covered by your hands.
- Try to keep a phone nearby. Know the number to your local shelter.
- Tell trusted friends and neighbors about your situation. Come up with codes to use if you need help.
- When researching shelters and services, use computers at your library or workplace. Search histories, emails and texts can be tracked by your partner. So avoid using home computers or cell phones when possible.
- Keep weapons locked away and hard to access.
- Avoid wearing long necklaces or scarves as they can be used to choke you.
- Come up with reasons you may need to leave the house at different times. This will help when it comes time to leave.
- Teach children how to call for help. Tell them to avoid getting involved in fights and plan codes and signals letting them know to seek help or leave the home.
- Make a habit of backing your car into the driveway, keeping doors unlocked and the gas tank full. This can help you make a quick escape.

¹Types of Safety Planning. The National Domestic Violence Hotline. Accessed February 2018.

Preparing to leave

- Take pictures of injuries or damage as a result of abuse. Keep these in a safe place.
- Keep a record of violent outbursts. Include dates, events and threats. Keep this in a safe place.
- Know where you can go and be safe.
- Tell others what is happening to you.
- If you're hurt, go to the doctor and report what happened.
- Set money aside. You may want to ask a trusted friend or family member to keep money safe for you.
- Plan with your children and find safe places for them to go for help.
- Get a new cell phone and discard your old one. Your abuser may try to use the old one to track your location or actions.

- Contact your local shelter to learn about laws and resources for your situation.
- Find a place for pets. Ask friends to take care of pets or go to awionline.org/safe-havens.

When you leave

- Make a plan for how and where you can escape.
- Request a police escort when you leave.
- Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline **(1-800-799-SAFE)** or go to womenslaw.org to find out about restraining orders and child custody.
- If you're not a US Citizen, you may qualify for self-petition legal status under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Learn more about your rights at: casadeesperanza.org. Or reach out to womenslaw.org. They can connect you with a specialized immigration attorney.

What to take

Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Driver's license• Birth certificates for you and your children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social security cards• Passport
Financial information and means	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cash• Credit cards (in your name only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checking and/or savings account books
Legal papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protective order• Insurance papers• Work permits/green cards/visas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Copies of lease agreements or the deed for your home• Marriage license• Medical records• Car registration• School records
Other items	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medications• Extra keys for your car or home• Valuables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay-as-you-go cell phone• Address book• Photos and sentimental items• Clothing

After you leave

- Change your locks and phone number.
- Make sure your phone has caller ID. Ask the phone company to block your number so that no one will have your new number.
- Create a new email address and be sure your partner doesn't know about it.
- Change your work hours, if possible.
- Take different routes to work, school or other places you visit.
- Change the stores you frequent.
- Let school authorities know about the situation.
- Keep a copy of your restraining order with you at all times.

- Let friends, neighbors and others know to be on the alert for your abuser's presence. You may want to give them a picture of the abuser.
- Get a post office box for mail.
- Alert your workplace about the situation.
- Install motion-active lighting and security systems at your new home.
- Replace wooden doors with ones made of steel or metal.
- Make sure you have working smoke detectors and fire extinguishers.
- Post only the things you want the public to know online. This information could be used against you.

If you share custody of children

- Teach children how and when to call 911.
- Talk about where they should go if things become unsafe.
- If it's safe to do so, send a cell phone with children so they can call for help if needed.
- Help children come up with a list of people they can talk to about their feelings.
- Meet in safe, crowded places with lots of cameras for custody exchanges. Avoid your home or your partner's home for these drop-offs and pick-ups.
- Bring a trusted person with you during custody exchanges.

Leaving an abusive situation is hard. But you can do it. Just be sure to put your safety first.



The EAP is administered by Resources For Living, LLC.

All EAP calls are confidential, except as required by law. Information is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a professional. Contact a professional with any questions about specific needs. There may be other explanations for any or all of the above [behaviors/ characteristics/ symptoms]. This information is not a complete list of all signs concerning such [behaviors/ characteristics/ symptoms] and should not be used as a stand-alone instrument.