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## Safety Plan

The following is a safety plan designed to assist those individuals in abusive relationships. This safety plan contains elements and questions that will not be applicable to all relationships. Please complete those portions you find most useful and relevant to your circumstances.

Those who are victim/survivors of dating and domestic violence often lose their sense of what safety is and what safety feels like.

Safety is the freedom from abuse, danger, and harm, as well as freedom from the threat of harm.

Physical, sexual, psychological, and emotional abuse is damaging and dangerous. The abused partner is diminished in value and strength. She or he may be in danger of losing her or his mental health, physical ability, and/or life. When someone is violent and abusive, safety is obliterated.

Safety planning for the victim/survivor is an essential tool whether leaving the abusive partner is temporary or permanent. We may not be able to stop someone's violence, but we can get ourselves out of danger as well as support others to get themselves out of danger.

### **Safety During an Argument or Violent Incident**

If an argument seems unavoidable, try to move to a room or area that has access to an exit or a phone. Avoid the bathroom, kitchen, or anywhere near weapons.

Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator, or stairwell would be best.

Have a packed bag ready and keep it in an undisclosed but accessible place in order to leave quickly.

Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.

Devise a code word to use with your children, family, and neighbors when you need the police.

Decide and plan where you will go if you have to leave home (even if you don't think you will need to).

Use your own instincts and judgement. If the situation is very dangerous, consider giving the abuser what he/she wants to calm him/her down. You have the right to protect yourself until you are out of danger.

This information is available in alternative formats by calling The Aurora Center for Advocacy and Education at (612) 626-2929. The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

## Safety with a Restraining Order

Keep your protective order on you at all times. Make extra copies to keep in your car, at work, in your school bag, briefcase, or purse.

Call the police if your partner or ex-partner breaks the protective order.

Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.

Inform trusted family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and/or employer that you have a restraining order in effect.

## Safety on the Job and in Public

Decide whom at work you will inform of your situation. This should include office or building security and supervisor. Provide a picture of your abuser if possible to the security guard.

Arrange to have someone screen your telephone calls if possible. If the abuser attempts to contact you at work, save the voice mail, email, or written message.

Devise a safety plan for when you leave work. Have someone escort you to your car or bus. If possible, vary your route home. Think about what you would do if something happens while going home (i.e. in your car, on the bus, etc.).

## Personalized Safety Plan

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Review Dates \_\_\_\_\_

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond and how to best get myself (and my children) to safety.

### Step 1: Safety During a Violent Incident

- A. If we are having an argument, I can 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).
- B. If my partner frequently threatens to "out" me, I can \_\_\_\_\_ .
- C. If it is not safe to stay, I can \_\_\_\_\_ . (Practice how to get out safely). What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes would I use?
- D. I can keep my important papers, keys, and clothing ready and put them \_\_\_\_\_ so that I can leave quickly.
- E. I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and ask them to call the police if they hear suspicious noises from my home or dorm room.
- F. I can use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children and/or my friends so they can call for help.
- G. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department.
- H. If I have to leave my home or dorm room, I can go to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_. (Decide this even if you don't think there will be a next time).

*Continued...*

**Use your judgement. If the situation is very serious, give the perpetrator what she/he wants. You have the right to protect yourself until you (and your children) are out of danger.**

## Step 2: Safety when Preparing to Leave

Victims/survivors of domestic violence 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 their partner is leaving the relationship.

- A. I can leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so that I can leave quickly.
- B. I can keep copies of important documents or keys and some extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. I can open a savings account to increase my independence. (Preferably opened in a separate bank than the one you and your partner use jointly).
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include \_\_\_\_\_.
- E. The domestic violence program's hotline number is \_\_\_\_\_. I can keep change for phone calls with me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month's telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers that I called after I left. To keep my telephone communications confidential, I can either use coins, or I might get a friend to permit me to use his/her telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.
- F. I can check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me money.
- G. I can rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

**Remember: If you tell your partner that you'll leave if she/he ever hits you again, think about whether you're giving the abuser permission to hit you "just one more time."**

### What I Need to Take When I Leave:

- |                                        |                                                     |
|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| ___Driver's license                    | ___Medical reports for all family members           |
| ___Children's birth certificates       | ___Social Security cards                            |
| ___My birth certificate                | ___Welfare identification                           |
| ___Money                               | ___School records                                   |
| ___Power of Attorney documents         | ___Work permits                                     |
| ___Lease, rental agreement, house deed | ___Green card                                       |
| ___Mortgage payment book               | ___Passport(s)                                      |
| ___Bank books                          | ___Divorce papers                                   |
| ___Check books                         | ___Jewelry                                          |
| ___Credit cards                        | ___Children's favorite toys, books, and/or blankets |
| ___Insurance papers                    | ___Items of special sentimental value               |
| ___Keys – house/car/office             |                                                     |
| ___Medications for me and my children  |                                                     |
| ___Small saleable objects              |                                                     |
| ___Address book                        |                                                     |
| ___Pictures                            |                                                     |

**Continued...**

### Step 3: Safety in my Own Residence

- A. If my partner takes away or threatens to deprive me of essential medication or medical care, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. If my partner no longer lives with me, I can act to increase my safety and my children's safety at home.
1. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
  2. I can get an unlisted phone number.
  3. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc.
  4. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my home.
  5. I can install outside sensor lighting that lights up when a person comes close to my home.
- C. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that my partner no longer resides with me and they should call the police if she/he observed near my home.
- D. I can teach my children to \_\_\_\_\_ when I am not available.
- E. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about who has permission to pick up my children.
- F. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to \_\_\_\_\_ in the event that my partner abducts them.

### Step 4: Safety with an Order for Protection

- A. I can keep my Order for Protection \_\_\_\_\_. (Always keep it on or near your person. If you change clothes, purses, briefcases, etc., that is the first thing that should go in).
- B. If my partner breaks the order, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- C. If the police are not responsive, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- D. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that I have an Order for Protection.
- E. If my partner destroys my Order for Protection, I can get another copy from the County Court.

### Step 5: Safety on the Job and in Public

- A. If my partner threatens to "out" me at work or other important places, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- B. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ at work of my situation.
- C. I can use voice mail, the receptionist, or a co-worker to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- D. When leaving work, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- E. If problems occur when I am driving home, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- F. If I use public transportation, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

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## Step 6: Safety and Drug or Alcohol Consumption

The use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce a victim/survivor's awareness and ability. Furthermore, the batterer's use of alcohol or other drugs may give her/him an excuse to use violence.

- A. If I am going to consume alcohol or other drugs, I can do so in a safe place with people who understand the risk of violence and are committed to my safety.
- B. If my partner is consuming, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

*The legal outcomes of using illegal drugs can be very hard on battered women/men, may hurt the relationship with her/his children and put the victim at a disadvantage in other legal actions with the battering partner. Therefore, women/men should carefully consider the potential cost of the use of illegal drugs.*

## Step 7: Safety and Emotional Health

- A. If I feel down, lonely, 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 use positive self-talk with myself and be assertive with others. I can tell myself that I don't deserve to be beaten or abused whenever others are trying to control or abuse me.
- D. I can call \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as additional resources to support me.
- E. I can read \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ to help me be more educated about domestic violence and to feel stronger.

**I CAN KEEP THE ITEMS CONCERNING ME IN ONE LOCATION. IF I HAVE TO LEAVE IN A HURRY, I CAN GRAB THOSE ITEMS QUICKLY.**

### IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

Police/Sheriff's department: \_\_\_\_\_

Shelter Programs, 24 – hour crisis lines: \_\_\_\_\_

Outreach Domestic Violence Programs: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_