

## PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

Safety plans help survivors anticipate the dangers they might face. A safety plan is an adaptable tool to help increase your safety in an ever-changing situation.

### **WHEN TO USE A SAFETY PLAN**

Safety plans can be made for a variety of situations: for dealing with an emergency, such as when you are threatened with physical assault or an assault has occurred; for continuing to live with or date a partner who has been abusive; or for protecting yourself after you have ended a relationship with an abusive partner.

### **USE WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW**

If you have been abused, you probably know more about safety planning and risk assessment than you might realize. Being in a relationship with an abusive partner—and surviving—requires considerable skill and resourcefulness. Any time you do or say something as a way to protect yourself or your children, you are assessing risk and enacting a safety plan. You do it all the time; it's just not always a conscious process.

### **LOOK AT THE RISKS**

It can be a helpful strategy to evaluate risks and make safety plans in a more intentional way. Whether you are currently with your partner or have ended the relationship, and whether you choose to use available services or to involve the police, there are certain things that are helpful to consider in planning for your future safety.

### **BE AWARE OF DANGERS**

If you are planning to leave your partner or already have left, be aware that abusers often escalate their violence during times of separation. Making a separation safety plan can help reduce the risks to you and your children.

### **EVALUATE YOUR OPTIONS**

Only you can judge whom it's safe to tell about your situation and whom to ask for help. Sometimes, people who don't have good information about domestic violence respond in ways that aren't

helpful, even when they mean well. On the other hand, you might feel comfortable asking for help from someone you know. It's your decision. The important thing is for you to identify all the people who might be willing and able to help you. Make a list of their phone numbers and attach it to your safety plan for easy reference.

### **PLAN AHEAD**

You don't have to wait for an emergency to ask for help. In fact, it's a good idea to talk to people who can help before there's a crisis. Find out what they are willing and able to do for you. That way, you'll know in advance if you have a place to stay, a source of financial assistance or a person to help you in other ways.

### **REDUCE YOUR RISK**

No one has control over a partner's violence, but people can and do find ways to reduce their risk of harm. The following safety plan is a tool to help you identify and evaluate your options and assist you in creating a personalized plan to reduce your risk when confronted with the threat of harm or with actual harm. Use what applies or change it to reflect your particular situation. Your safety plan does not need to be written down (especially if you fear your abuser will find it), though you may choose to. There's no right or wrong way to develop a safety plan. Make it your own, and review it regularly to make changes as needed.

### **KEEP YOUR PLAN IN A SAFE PLACE**

**Only you can decide whether it is safe to have a written safety plan. If you decide to keep a written plan, find a place to keep it where your partner won't find it. Ask a friend to keep a copy for you. Whether it's safe to write down your plan or not, it's still important to make one.**

### **SAFETY DURING A VIOLENT INCIDENT**

- I will use my judgment and intuition. If I think my partner is going to hurt me, I will try to move to a space that has lower risk, such as \_\_\_\_\_. [Often bathrooms, garages, kitchens, areas near weapons or rooms without an outside exit are most dangerous.]

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- If the situation is serious, I can try to calm down my partner by giving in to demands. I have the right to protect myself until I/my children are out of danger.

### SAFETY IF STAYING

- I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request they call 911 if they hear noises coming from my home.
- I can teach my children how to use the phone or call 911 to contact the police or fire department and/or how to contact a safe neighbor for help. I will make sure my children know our address.
- I can put emergency numbers in my phone.
- I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as the code word with my children or my friends so they will call for help if needed.
- If I have to leave my home, I will go to \_\_\_\_\_.  
If I cannot go there, I can go to \_\_\_\_\_.
- The local domestic violence program hotline number is \_\_\_\_\_.  
I can call it or the national hotline at [800] 799-SAFE [7233] for help.

### SAFETY IF LEAVING

#### *Preparing to leave*

- I will call a domestic violence program to get help making my plans. The hotline number for the nearest program is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.
- I will leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can open a post office box and have personal mail and bills (credit cards, cellphone, etc.) sent there.
- I will ask \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- I can increase my independence by opening a bank account and getting credit cards in my own name; by taking classes or getting job skills; and/or by getting copies of all the important papers and documents I might need and keeping them with \_\_\_\_\_.

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- I can rehearse my escape plan and, if appropriate, practice it with my children.
- If it's not safe to talk openly, I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as the code word or signal to my children that we are leaving, or to my family or friends that we are coming.
- I can keep my purse or a wallet and car keys ready and put them \_\_\_\_\_ so I can leave quickly.
- I can take my pet to \_\_\_\_\_ if I need to leave.

### ITEMS TO CONSIDER TAKING IF LEAVING

*The following items may be helpful to have if you decide to leave, but remember that almost all of these items are replaceable.*

- Identification for myself
- My and my children's birth certificates and Social Security cards
- Credit, debit and ATM cards
- School and vaccination records
- Money, checkbook and bankbooks
- Cellphone chargers and phone plan records
- Medication and medical supplies
- Medical records for all family members
- Keys—house, car, work
- Driver's license, car registration
- Insurance papers
- Public assistance ID/EBT and Medicaid cards
- Passports, Alien Registration Receipt Cards, work permits, green cards for myself and my children
- Divorce or separation papers
- Lease, rental agreement or house deed
- Car/mortgage payment book
- Children's toys, security blankets, stuffed animals
- Sentimental items, photos, jewelry
- Small objects to sell
- My personalized safety plan (if written down)

## SAFETY AT HOME

*If my partner and I are no longer living together*

- I can, or ask my landlord to, change the locks on my doors and windows.
- I can, or ask my landlord to, replace wooden doors with metal ones.
- I can, or ask my landlord to, install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, etc.
- I can buy rope ladders to be used for escape from second-floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors and put fire extinguishers on each floor in my home.
- I can provide my onsite property manager and/or trusted neighbors with a picture of my partner and ask them to notify the police if they see him near my home.

## SAFETY AT WORK

- I can inform my boss, the security supervisor and the employee assistance program (EAP), if available, about my situation. The number of the EAP office is \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to screen my calls and visitors at work.
- When leaving work, I can \_\_\_\_\_.
- If there's trouble when traveling to and from work, I can call 911 or \_\_\_\_\_.

## SAFETY IN PUBLIC OR IF BEING STALKED

- If I suspect I am in imminent danger, I will locate a safe place for myself (police stations, residences of family or friends, domestic violence shelters, local churches, public areas, etc.).
- I can document my partner's actions and keep it in a safe place. This may include taking photos of destroyed property/vandalism, saving voicemails, keeping texts/email/letters/notes, etc.
- I can change my patterns—avoid stores, restaurants, banks, doctor's appointments, self-service laundries and other places where my partner might find me based on my regular schedule.

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- I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ about the situation and provide them with a photo or description of my partner and any possible vehicles. I can ask them to call the police if they believe I or my children are in danger.
- When I am out of the house, I will try not to travel alone and will try to stay in public areas.

### WITH AN ORDER OF PROTECTION

- I will keep my protection order \_\_\_\_\_. [Always keep it on or near you.]
- I will give copies of my protection order to the local police or sheriff and to departments in towns where I visit friends and family.
- I will give copies to my employer, my religious adviser, my closest friend, my children's school and child-care center and \_\_\_\_\_.
- If my partner destroys my order or if I lose it, I can get another copy from the court that issued it.
- If my partner violates the order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my domestic violence program advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
- I can call a domestic violence program if I have questions about how to enforce an order or if I have problems getting it enforced.
- I will document all instances, including dates and times, of abuse and/or violations of a valid Order of Protection

### PROTECTING MY CHILDREN

- I can teach developmentally appropriate safety strategies to my children.
- I can teach my children how to make a phone call to me if they are concerned about their safety.
- I can teach my children how to use the phone or call 911 to contact the police and fire departments and how to contact a safe neighbor for help. I will make sure they know our address.
- I can tell my children's caretakers who has permission to pick them up and make sure they know how to recognize those people.

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- I will give the people who take care of my children copies of custody and protection orders, as well as emergency numbers.
- I can arrange care for my pets ahead of time and keep them supervised when outside.

## SAFETY AND TECHNOLOGY

- Each day there are advances in technology. I can ask someone familiar with technology or domestic violence about the ways that my partner might monitor me.
- I will use a computer that my partner doesn't have access to when I look for help, a new place to live, etc. It might be safest to use a computer at a public library, community center or \_\_\_\_\_.
- I can ask my friends and family to be careful about whom they give my email address to and to use the Bcc: option when copying me on an email.
- When making or receiving private calls, I will not use a cellphone that I share with my partner because my partner might have access to cellphone billing records or might have put settings on my phone to track my whereabouts. My local domestic violence shelter might have a donated cellphone I can use.
- I will ask the court systems, post office and other government agencies how they protect or publish my records and request that they seal or restrict access to my files to help protect my safety.
- I will ask a domestic violence advocate about the address confidentiality program Safe at Home.

## MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- If I am feeling down, lonely or confused, I can call \_\_\_\_\_ or the domestic violence hotline \_\_\_\_\_.
- If I have left my partner and am considering returning, I will call \_\_\_\_\_ or spend time with \_\_\_\_\_ before I make a decision.
- I can attend support groups, workshops or classes at the local domestic violence program or \_\_\_\_\_ so I can build a support system, learn skills or get information.

- I will look at how and when I drink alcohol or use other drugs. If I am going to drink or use other drugs, I will do it in a place where people are committed to my safety.

## **MY SAFETY PLANNING AS AN IMMIGRANT OR REFUGEE**

### *Additional items to consider collecting*

- Copies of important papers, including those I might need for my immigration case, such as my I-94, copies of visa applications, work permits, etc.
- Photos of my spouse and I when we were dating
- Wedding invitation
- Marriage certificate
- Photographs of my wedding
- Love letters, emails or cards from my spouse when we were dating and after our marriage
- Copies of police reports and medical records
- Photos of my injuries
- Copies of my spouse's birth certificate/Social Security card/green card/or certificate of naturalization
- Divorce papers from my previous marriage or from my spouse's previous marriage, papers that show I have lived with my spouse in the United States (e.g., copies of my lease/rental agreement, utility bills or any envelopes or documents with my name and my spouse's name listed at the same address)

### *If law enforcement becomes involved*

- I will consider contacting an attorney or organization that provides immigration legal services to learn more about what forms of help and immigration relief might be available to me or in the event that I am detained and need their assistance.
- I can consider appointing a power of attorney over my minor children in case I am detained and separated from my children (a possible power of attorney might be a friend or trusted family member).
- I will educate myself about my rights as an immigrant or refugee.
- I can become familiar with my consulate and the assistance it provides.