

# Safety Planning

## What is a Safety Plan?

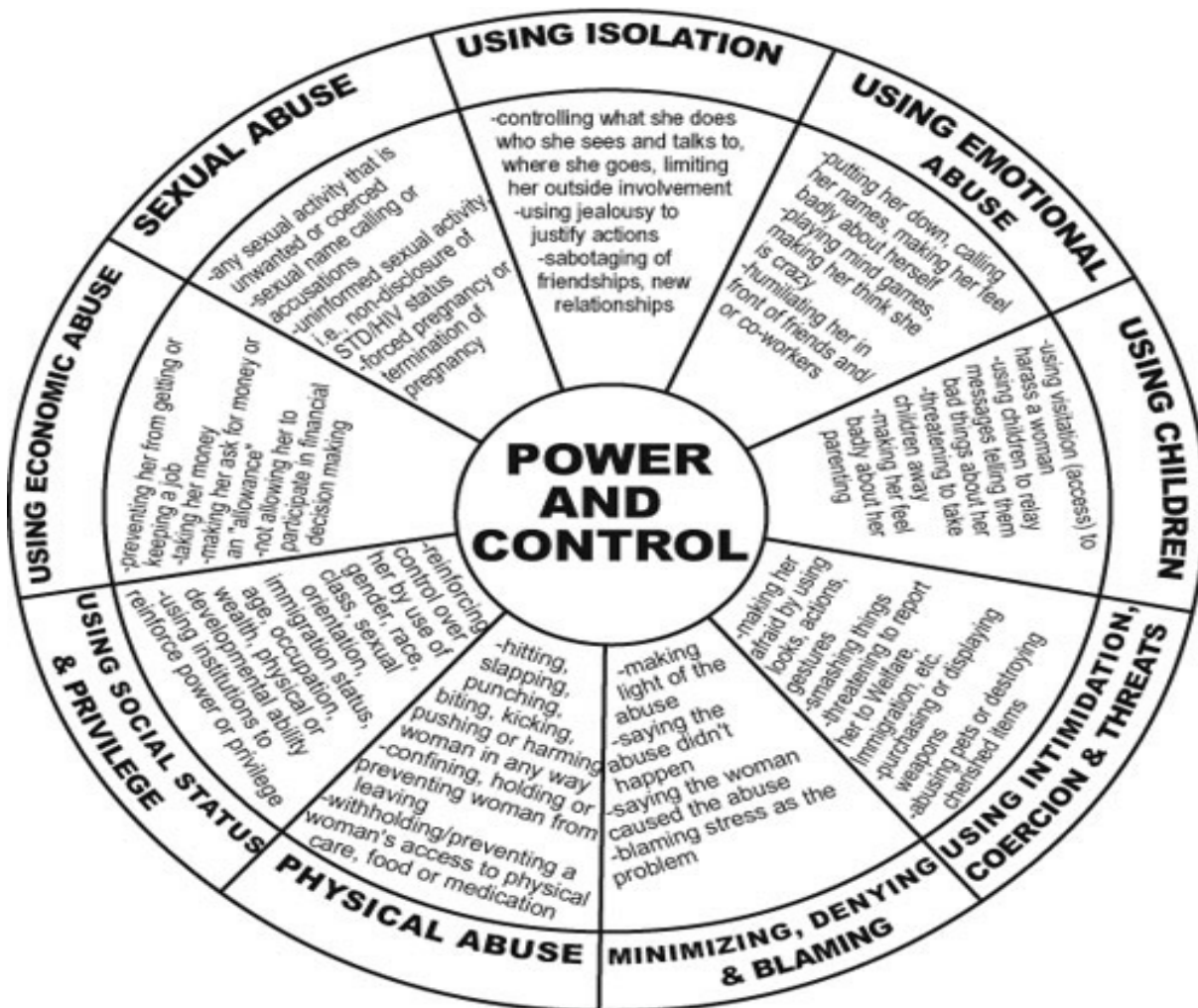
A safety plan represents possible strategies that can increase your safety and prepare yourself in advance for the possibility of a violent situation. A safety plan is needed whenever the potential for abuse is identified.

## Creating a Safety Plan

It is important to know that although you do not have control over an abuser's violence, it is possible that you can increase your own, as well as your children's, safety when being subjected to abuse. A safety plan is needed whenever the potential for abuse is identified and is specifically designed for actions you can take. Abusive situations and risk factors can change quickly so be familiar with and change your plan regularly.

## The Power and Control Wheel

This is a visual tool that can help one understand the various tactics an abuser can use to maintain power and control over a woman.



## Safety Plan (Living With or Without a Partner)

### **Leaving a Relationship is the most dangerous time for an individual who is being abused.**

- 1) **Remember...the individual who is abusive is responsible for the abuse.**
- 2) Look at the past patterns of abuse for cues to alert you to the occurrence of abuse.
- 3) Evaluate what ways you have protected yourself in the past. What worked? What did not work?
- 4) Plan escapes-always know where the exits are; know which rooms have doors that lock, a window and phone; ensure you have hidden keys and have cash/cards hidden.
- 5) Ensure the children know how to protect themselves (when and how to escape) and told when/how to phone for help.
- 6) Memorize (and, if safe, post) emergency phone numbers (police, women's shelters, crisis lines.)
- 7) If in danger leave the room or go to a shelter, friends, family.
- 8) If necessary, to protect yourself consider giving the abusive person what he/she wants during an incident to calm him/her down until you get to safety.
- 9) Get to know your neighbours and develop a support system. Have a pre-arranged signal with neighbours (e.g. if they see blinking lights or hear screams, call 911.)
- 10) Screen phone calls (get an answering machine.)
- 11) Change your routines. Do not be predictable. Discover what you can do to increase your safety when walking to and from places.
- 12) Change locks, phone numbers and address (if necessary.)
- 13) Park where it is well lit. Do not let your car get boxed in. Always lock your car.
- 14) Make sure your windows are secure, blinds cover every window and close the blinds at night.
- 15) Journal – reflect on what coping statements you can use to keep yourself calm and focused.
- 16) Post reminders (in safe places) of self-nurturing behaviours you can engage in when stress is increasing.
- 17) Let the school or other professions (day care) know who can pick the children up.
- 18) Take a self-defence course.
- 19) Think of alternative ways to keep safe if the police do not respond right away.
- 20) Consider installing a security system (some shelters can loan alarm systems.)
- 21) Get a cell phone. Any cell phone, whether it is activated or not, can be used to dial 9-1-1.

### **In addition, if you are living with a partner who is abusive:**

#### **Store a packed suitcase with a friend or neighbor. Aside from clothes include:**

- |                  |                |                |                  |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| ✓ money          | ✓ medications  | ✓ credit cards | ✓ house/car keys |
| ✓ identification | ✓ address book | ✓ cheque book  |                  |

If you have children pack something meaningful for them (e.g. stuffed toys).

#### **Make Photocopies of :**

- ✓ Bank statements including partner's financial records (if possible)
- ✓ drivers license                      ✓ birth certificate and/or SIN card for all family members
- ✓ medical records                      ✓ important financial records (e.g. rent receipt & car title).

#### **Open a checking/savings account in your own name.**

## Other things to consider

- 1) Stand up for yourself! Let your partner know you will stand up for yourself and your rights, and you will not tolerate abusive behaviour. Be assertive.  
*Caution: If the partner who is abusive is used to getting his/her own ways and you giving in, he/she may abuse you even more if you try to stand up for yourself. If you are afraid this may happen, try to get support from family or counsellors before you make a stand. Do not try it when you are alone with him/her. Make sure you have a safe place to go and easy access to it if you need to go.*
- 2) Denial is dangerous. Denial is a part of survival when you are forced to stay in a bad situation.
- 3) Trust your instincts and judgements when feeling unsafe.
- 4) Be aware of pills, alcohol, and drugs. Some individuals use these items for coping, but they will not help in the long run. It keeps you helpless.
- 5) Avoid wearing scarves or long necklaces that could be used to choke you.
- 6) Relax and Play. Learn ways to free your mind of anxiety and freeing your body of tension. Yoga, medication, reading, walking, and crafts are some ways you can achieve this. Exercise, such as yoga and walking, help you to have a better sense of well-being.
- 7) Do not Isolate Yourself. Keep your friends. If you do not have friends, now is the time to make new ones.
- 8) If you have children tell them that violence is never right even when someone they love is being violent. Explain to them it is not your fault or their fault that the abuse is happening. Develop a safety plan with each of your children.
- 9) Decide what to do if your children find out you are planning to leave and they tell your partner.
- 10) If you need to serve your partner with legal papers, ask someone you trust to do it or look under the yellow pages for “process servers.”

## Personalized Safety Plan

The following steps represent my plan for increasing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I am not responsible for my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him/her and how to get myself and my children to safety.

### Step 1: Safety When Returning Home With or Without a Partner/When Moving Into a New Place and During a Violent Incident.

- A) When I sense a violent incident is about to happen, I notice the following in my partners behaviour or words \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- B) I notice in myself \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- This can trigger me to knowing a violent incident is about to occur. I can leave before the violence occurs.
- C) If I need to get out of a dangerous situation, I will \_\_\_\_\_  
(think about and plan how to get out, i.e. doors, windows, stairwells etc.) I will take the time to get out safely.
- D) During an abusive incident it is important to stay as safe as possible during that time. There are places in my home that are less safe than others. If I am in an unsafe place during an incident I will move to a safer place such as \_\_\_\_\_. I can also go to \_\_\_\_\_ where there is a phone and lock the door.
- E) I can keep my purse/wallet and keys handy, and always in the same place (\_\_\_\_\_), so that I can locate them easily if I need to leave in a hurry.
- F) I can trust telling the following people about the violence \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in case I need help.
- G) I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with these people so they will know to call for help or know that I need help if I use that word.
- H) I will speak to and teach my children a safety plan specifically for them during an abusive situation. I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children to let them know they need to begin their safety plan.
- I) I will practice emergency exiting with my children on \_\_\_\_\_ (days) to make sure we are well prepared. I will tell my children we practice this in case of an emergency such as a fire.
- J) Safe places that I can go if I need to leave my home are:
- i. A place to use a phone: \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ii. A place I could stay for a couple of hours: \_\_\_\_\_.
  - iii. A place that I could stay for a couple of days: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Step 2: Safety Plan When Preparing to Leave

Women planning to leave an abusive incident must keep their safety in mind. Leaving the relationship is the most dangerous time for an abused woman. Partners who are abusive tend to become more abusive and controlling when they sense their partner is about to leave.

- A) I will photocopy all important documents by \_\_\_\_\_ (date).  
Examples of important documents are:
- Identification for myself and the children (birth certificates, driver license)
  - School records for the children
  - Bank statements, financial documents
  - Prescriptions
  - Lease/rental agreements, separation/divorce documents, protection order documents
  - Immigration/citizenship documents
  - Address book, pictures
- B) I will have an extra set of keys cut by \_\_\_\_\_ (date).
- C) Should I need to leave quickly, it will be helpful for me to leave some emergency cash, an extra set of house and car keys, and extra clothing with \_\_\_\_\_.
- D) I will open an individual bank account at \_\_\_\_\_ (bank). I will keep my money in a safe place \_\_\_\_\_. I will notify the bank to not send any correspondence to my home address.
- E) I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ (name) and \_\_\_\_\_ (name) to see if I can stay with them temporarily in case all shelters are full.
- F) These are the people I could ask for assistance from:
- a. Money: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Childcare: \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Support attending appointments: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Transportation: \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- G) Telephone Numbers I need to know:
- a. Police Department: \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Women's help line (24 hours): \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Emergency Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- H) I will review my safety plan regularly \_\_\_\_\_ (weekly, monthly) in order to plan the safest way to leave my home, as circumstances can change.

### Step 3: Safety Once I Have Left the Relationship

Even though I have left the relationship I am may still be at risk. The following at some safety measures I have considered.

- A) I can inform these people \_\_\_\_\_, whom all live around me or are involved in where I live (landlord), that my partner and I have separated and ask that they call the police if my (ex) partner is seen near my residence.
- B) I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a call to me and to \_\_\_\_\_ in the event that my partner takes them.
- C) If financially possible I will change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible. I have looked under "Locksmiths" in the phone book and contacted a few. Here are the companies, numbers, costs, and addition information I found out:
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
- D) I will tell the individuals who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and whether or not my partner is permitted to. Those I need to inform are:
  - i. School: \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. Day Care Staff: \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_
  - iv. Others: \_\_\_\_\_
- E) Other protective actions I can take are:
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 4: Safety in Public

Each abused woman must decide if and/or when she will tell others that her partner has abused her and that she may still be at risk. Friends, family, and co-workers may be able to help protect women. Carefully consider which people to recruit to help secure your safety.

- A) If I use public transit I can use it at the busy times of the day. I can also change the times or route of travel if I suspect my partner will be watching for me.
- B) I will carry a cell phone with me in case I need to call 9-1-1.
- C) I will use different grocery stores, malls, and banks to vary my routine.
- D) If comfortable to do so, I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ if it is okay for me to notify him/her when I am leaving my house, where I will be going, and when I expect to return to my house.

**Step 5: Safety with a Restraining Order or No Contact Order**

- A) I will carry a copy of the restraining/no contact order with me at all times.
- B) If my partner destroys my protection order, I can get another copy from the courthouse, my lawyer or leave a copy with \_\_\_\_\_ (relative, friend, safety deposit box), in case I lose my copy.
- C) It is important for me to know the specifics and limitation of my protection/no contact order. I will find out the conditions and what they mean for my safety.
- D) I will call the police if my partner violates the order. The police station number is \_\_\_\_\_.
- E) If the police do not help, I can call the Duty Sergeant immediately at the police station and express my concern. I will get the officers badge number to give to the Duty Sergeant.

**Step 6: Safety and my Emotional Health**

Being subjected to abuse is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of surviving requires much courage and incredible energy. To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to support myself I can do the following.

- A) Whether or not I choose to return to my partner, I will remind myself my feelings are important and I always deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.
- B) If I have left the relationship and I am experiencing loneliness or manipulative tactics from my abusive partner, I can take care of myself by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- C) When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can emotionally prepare myself by \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- D) I will end the conversation if \_\_\_\_\_ occurs.
- E) I can call \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as other resources to support me.
- F) Other strategies I can do are:
  - i. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ii. \_\_\_\_\_
  - iii. \_\_\_\_\_