

# Safety Plan

--Adapted from the US Department of Defense Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate Program.

## **(DO NOT LEAVE THIS SAFETY PLAN WHERE YOUR PARTNER MIGHT FIND IT!!!)**

I know that leaving an abusive person is not easy, and potentially dangerous, for myself and my children. Each situation is unique. My safety plan is what I think is will work best for me and may be different than someone else's safety plan. I will edit, delete or add as I see necessary to make this safety plan right for me.

### **Some of the things I can do are:**

<p><b>INCREASING MY OVERALL SAFETY.</b> I may not always be able to avoid violent incidents. In order to increase my safety, I may use a variety of strategies. I can use some of the following strategies:</p>
<p>If I decide to leave, I will: (I will practice how to get out safely. What doors, windows, stairwells or fire escapes would I use?)</p>
<p>I can keep my personal belongings (purse, car keys, documents, etc.) ready and put them _____ in order to leave quickly.</p>
<p>I can tell _____ and _____ about the violence and request they call the authorities if they hear suspicious noises coming from my home.</p>
<p>I can teach my children how to use the telephone to contact the police or other help, and how to report violence or other problems.</p>
<p>I will use _____ as my code word with my children or my friends so they can call for help.</p>
<p>If I have to leave my home, I will go to: _____. (I should decide this even if I don't think there will be a next time.) If I cannot go to the location above, then I can go to: _____ or _____.</p>
<p>I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.</p>
<p>When I expect we are going to have an incident, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as: _____ or _____.</p> <p>I will try to avoid incidents in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons or in rooms without access to an outside door.</p>
<p>I will use my judgment and intuition. If the situation is very serious, I can give my abuser what he/she wants to calm him/her down. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.</p>
<p><b>PROTECTING MYSELF DURING AN INCIDENT OR IF PLANNING TO LEAVE.</b> If I am planning to leave, I should do so without telling my abuser. If I have to leave quickly (during an incident), I WILL JUST LEAVE. I will not talk with my abuser about it. If I am going to leave at another time, I will leave when my abuser is not home and get to a safe place.</p>
<p><b>SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE.</b> I may decide to leave the residence I share with my abuser. I must have a careful plan for leaving in order to increase my safety. My abuser might strike out and become more violent if he/she believes that I am leaving the relationship. I can use some or all of the following strategies:</p>

I will leave money and an extra set of keys with _____ so I can leave quickly.																																				
I will open a savings account by _____ (date), to increase my independence. I will use _____ as the mailing address so that the monthly statement is not sent to my home. I can also open a PO Box.																																				
Other things I can do to increase my independence include:																																				
The AT&T access code for my country of residence (if outside the USA) is: _____. I can dial this code, and then call American Domestic Violence Crisis Center at <b>866-USWOMEN</b> (879-6636). I can seek shelter locally by calling this number: _____.																																				
I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, cell phone, or home phone the following month the telephone bill will tell my abuser those numbers that I called before or after I left. <i>(Note: if you call AODVC via the AT&amp;T access code, it will not appear on your phone bill but will use minutes if you are on a cell phone).</i> To keep my telephone communication confidential, I must either use coins or a pre-paid phone card or I might get a friend to allow me to use his/her telephone or phone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.																																				
I will check with _____ and _____ to see who is able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.																																				
I can leave extra clothes with:																																				
I will sit down and review my safety plan every _____ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence. (domestic violence advocate or friend) _____ has agreed to help me review this plan.																																				
I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.																																				
<b>ITEMS TO TAKE WHEN LEAVING.</b> If I decide to leave my abuser, it is important to take certain items with me. I may also want to give an extra copy of papers and an extra set of clothing to a friend just in case I have to leave quickly.																																				
Items on the following list are the most important to take. If there is time, I might take other items or store them somewhere outside my home so I can get to them easily.																																				
These items might best be placed in one location, so that if I/we have to leave in a hurry, I can grab them quickly. The most important items are in <b>bold</b> . When I leave, I should take:																																				
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**SAFETY IN MY OWN RESIDENCE.** If I no longer reside with my abuser or if I have my own residence, there are many things that I can do to try to increase my safety in my own residence. Depending on my residence, it may not be possible to do all the measures that are listed here or to do them all at once, but I will take all of them into consideration to protect my safety. Safety measures I can use include:

- I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, and electronic security system, etc.
- I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.
- I can make sure that my name does not appear on the mailbox or resident directory
- I can make sure that if I receive mail at my home, the mailbox is secure/locked
- I can teach my children how to use the telephone to make a telephone call to me and:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (friend/clergy person/police/other) in the event that the abuser takes my children.
- I can tell people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children. The people I can inform about pick-up permission include:  
School:  
Day Care Staff:  
Babysitter:  
Sunday School/Religious Teacher:  
Teacher:  
Others:

- I can inform the following people that my abuser no longer resides with me and that they should call the police if he/she is observed near my residence:

Neighbor:  
Friend:  
Pastor/Religious Leader:  
Landlord:

- I can limit access to my personal information; get a post office box, change my phone number and make it unlisted, and not give out my Social Security number easily. *To ensure that your address is confidential, talk to your utility companies, banks, Department of Human Services (in the US), Department of Motor Vehicles, other creditors, friends, and family. Also make sure the courts have a reliable address to reach you. In the USA, you do not have to put your address on court documents your abuser will see, but the courts must have an address for you.*
- I can get caller ID and block my ID when I make outgoing calls (push \*67 in the USA before you dial), or I can get an answering machine to screen my calls.
- I can request that my credit card and bank accounts be changed in case my abusers has those numbers and uses them to track me.
- I can change all my passwords/pin numbers (email, bank, credit cards).
- I can request a password be used for all credit card and utility accounts.

**SAFETY WITH A PROTECTION ORDER.** (Note: Depending on the county, it might not be possible to apply for a protective order for abuse that occurred overseas. Some countries will have protective orders, but many throughout the world do not.)

My abuser should obey protection orders, but I can never be sure. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and/or the courts to enforce my protection orders. The following are some steps that I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

I will keep my protection order at (location):

I will always keep a copy of my protection order with me. If I change purses/wallets, that's the first thing that should go in.

I can also give a copy of my protection order to \_\_\_\_\_ (friend/family member) and keep a copy in my car.

I will give a copy of my protection order to police departments in the community where I work, in those communities where I usually visit family or friends, and in the community where I live.

There may be a county registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm a protection order. I will check to make sure that my order is in the registry. The telephone number for the county registry of protection orders is:
For further safety, if I often visit other counties, I might file my protection order with the court in those counties. I will register my protection order in the following counties:
I can call my local domestic violence program if I am not sure about how to register my protective order in other counties or if I have some problem with my protective order. Their phone number is:
I will inform my employer, my closest friends, my clergy person, and _____ that I have a protection order in effect.
If my abuser destroys my protection order I can get another copy by going to _____ located at:
If my abuser violates my protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.
If law enforcement doesn't help, I can contact my advocate or attorney and can file a complaint with the chief of the law enforcement department.
I can also file a private civil complaint in the jurisdiction in the US where the violation occurred. I can charge my abuser with a violation of the protection order. (I can also ask if the jurisdiction where the violation occurred permits the filing of private criminal complaints.) I can call my domestic violence advocate to help me with this.
If my abuser is in custody and I want to be notified of his/her release, I will call _____.
<b>SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC.</b> I may decide to tell others that my abuser is abusive and that I may be at continued risk.
I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and _____ at work of my situation.
I can ask _____ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
If there is a security officer at my work I can ask to be escorted to my car or public transportation.
When leaving work, I can:
When driving home, if problems occur, I can:
If I use public transit, I can:
I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those when I was residing with my abuser.
I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my abuser.
I can change my doctor, dentist, or other professionals my abuser is familiar with.
I can also:
<b>SAFETY AND DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE.</b> <i>(Note: Laws in your country of residence may vary. While living in another country you are subject to its laws.)</i>
The use of any alcohol or other drugs can reduce my awareness and ability to act quickly to protect myself from my abuser. Alcohol or drug use may also affect the way my abuser responds to different situations. Therefore, in the context of drug and alcohol use, I need to make specific safety plans. If drug or alcohol use has occurred in my relationship with my abuser, I can enhance my safety by some or all of the following:

If I am going to use alcohol, I can do so in a safe place and with people who understand the risk of violence are committed to my safety.
I can also:
If my abuser is using, I can:
I might also:
To safeguard my children, I might:
<b>MY CHILD(REN)'S SAFETY.</b> During a violent incident, the most important thing my child(ren) can do is to keep themselves safe. In order to help them do this, I will go over the following with them:
I know that the best thing my children can do for me during a violent episode is to get away and protect themselves. I can tell them to _____ if they see me being abused.
I can teach them to pick a safe room like _____, preferably with a lock and access to a telephone. It is important to me and to them that they get out of the room where the abuse is occurring as soon as possible.
I will teach them how to call for help. If they cannot safely get to a telephone in my home, I will talk to them about using our neighbor's _____ phone or the nearest payphone, which is located at _____.
I will make sure they know they don't need money to dial an emergency number. If I have a cell phone, I will teach them how to dial 9-1-1 or local emergency number.
I will make sure they know their name and address if they need help.
I can rehearse what my children will say when they call for help. For instance we can practice how to contact the police like this: Dial 911 (or local emergency number) An operator will answer: "Police, Fire, Ambulance" Your child says: "Police." Then your child says: My name is _____. I am ____ years old. I need help. Send the police. Someone is hurting my mom. The address here is _____. The phone number here is _____.
I will pick a safe place such as _____ to meet my children outside our home after the situation is safe for me and for them (so we can easily find each other). I will teach my children the safest route to the planned place of safety for them.
We will review and revise our safety plan every _____.

<b>SAFETY AND MY EMOTIONAL HEALTH.</b> The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by abusers is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes much courage and incredible energy.
To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to avoid hard emotional times, I can do some of the following:
If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can:
When I have to communicate with my abuser in person or by telephone, I can:

I can try to use "I can..." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
I can tell myself: "_____" Whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.
I can read _____ to help me feel stronger.
I can call _____, _____, and _____ as other resources to be of support to me.
Other things I can do to help me feel stronger are:
I can attend workshops and support groups at my local domestic violence program (in the US), or: _____ or _____ to gain support and strengthen my relationships with other people.
<b>SAFETY FOR WOMEN IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.</b>
If I am living in a rural area or a country with few or no domestic violence shelters or agencies, I can find a toll-free number for the closest agency or shelter so my abuser cannot track me down using the long-distance phone bill.
If I cannot leave my home because of disabilities, I will contact _____ to make arrangements for transportation when my partner is not there.
If I do not feel comfortable speaking the primary language spoken where I am living, I will ask _____ to translate or help me find someone to talk to me in another language.
If I do not know the primary language spoken where I am living, I will practice a few important phrases, such as "I need help," "I need the police," "I am an American, my husband is physically hurting me, please help me," "My name is _____," "My address is _____," "Do you speak English?" Here are some other phrases that may be important for me _____
I can ask _____ if I am concerned about my animals' welfare should I leave.
If I cannot take my animals with me at this time, I can leave them with _____ or I can call _____ (agency/organization) who can help me keep my animals safe.
<b>I SHOULD NOT KEEP THIS PLAN WITH ME. I SHOULD DISCUSS WITH MY VICTIM ADVOCATE WHERE AND WITH WHOM THIS PLAN SHOULD BE KEPT.</b>
<b>I SHOULD DETACH THE PHONE LISTING ON THE LAST PAGE AND KEEP IT WITH ME.</b>

# PHONE LIST

**DETACH AND KEEP WITH YOU AT ALL TIMES.**

## TELEPHONE NUMBERS I NEED TO KNOW:

Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center: (AT&T access code for my country of residence: \_\_\_\_\_)  
**866-USWOMEN (879-6636).**

Police: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE: AODVC's crisis line is toll free from overseas, however the following numbers are only toll free if calling from within the US. If I call the following numbers from overseas, I understand that they will appear on my monthly phone bill and may be viewed by the abuser.**

US Department of State: **1-888-407-4747** EST(during business hours) or **202-647-5225** EST (after hours)

(USA) National Domestic Violence Hotline: **1-800-799-SAFE**

(USA) National Sexual Assault Hotline: **1-800-656-HOPE**

Local Domestic Violence Hotline: \_\_\_\_\_

Domestic Violence Advocate/Program: \_\_\_\_\_

US Embassy (in my country of residence) \_\_\_\_\_

County Registry of Protective Orders (in USA only): \_\_\_\_\_

Religious Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's Home Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Attorney: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Daycare: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Friend: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Member: \_\_\_\_\_

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