



SAFETY PLANNING

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

One in four women in the United States – and one in three in Texas – will know domestic violence (DV) during her lifetime. We call domestic violence an equal opportunity epidemic because it affects women of every ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status and neighborhood. You may be unsure if what you're experiencing is abuse, particularly if physical violence is not currently present. However, physical violence is only one type of abuse: other forms of domestic violence include emotional, verbal, sexual, financial, spiritual and technological. **If you feel afraid in your relationship, this can be a strong indicator that abuse is taking place.** It is also important to note that abuse escalates; verbal/emotional abuse can and very frequently does escalate into physical violence.

Being abused is not your fault. You are also not responsible for fixing the situation or ending the abuse. However, you do have the right to protect yourself. The following information could be helpful in increasing your safety during and after an abusive relationship. This information is not for everyone. We recognize that every abusive situation is complex and certain ideas listed below may not be of benefit to you. **You are the expert of your own situation and we encourage you to listen to your instincts about what feels safe.** You don't have to do this alone – please consider working with an agency like Genesis to create a customized safety plan for your specific circumstances.

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A safety plan is a guide that may lower your risk of being hurt by your abusive partner or ex-partner. It includes information specific to you and your life that can help keep you and your family safe. Safety planning helps you think through practical changes you can make that may increase your safety in various settings and stages of your life. Working with an expert or a DV agency such as Genesis is a great resource for gathering more DV information and exploring all of your options. Read the options below, take them in and see which feels right for you and your circumstances.

The following suggestions are not for everyone. Please consider reaching out to Genesis or another agency to help walk you through your unique situation and devise an individualized safety plan for you.

Call our 24-hour emergency hotline at 214.946.HELP (4357).

One of our counselors can work with you to create a safety plan personalized to your needs. All our services are free and confidential.



SHORT-TERM SAFETY PLAN

DURING AN EXPLOSIVE INCIDENT

If you are in a violent situation where your physical safety is at risk, we strongly encourage you to **call 911**. Calling the police can be scary, embarrassing, intimidating and/or feel unnecessary for some, but you have a right to safety and this option is available to you.

- If there is an argument, try to be in a place that has an exit and stay out of rooms such as kitchens, bathrooms or other rooms that may have items that could be used as weapons.
- Practice getting out of your home safely beforehand so that you can identify which exit(s) to use.
- Have a packed bag ready at a friend's or relative's house.
- Identify one or more neighbors who will call the police if a disturbance is coming from your home.
- Devise a code word or sign (such as turning on a particular light) to use with your children, family, friends and/or neighbors when you need them to call 911.
- Having an idea of where you could go and who you could stay with before an explosive event is very valuable. Consider what you would do in the event you needed to leave quickly.

LONG-TERM SAFETY PLAN

IF LEAVING A RELATIONSHIP

Women are **75% more likely to be killed** when leaving an abusive relationship. Because the danger is so high during this time, safety planning is critical. Take your time to consider when you might leave the relationship, where you would go, who you would stay with, how long you could stay there, where would you go afterwards, how much money you would need, and how you would keep your leaving a secret from your partner. This kind of planning takes time and we encourage you to reach out to an agency like Genesis to help guide you in this process.

- Open a checking or savings account and a post office box in your own name.
- Leave money, a set of keys, copies of important documents, extra clothes and medicines in a safe place or with someone you trust.
- Identify a safe place where you and your children can go, or someone who can lend you money.
- Keep the Genesis Women's Shelter & Support 24-Hour Hotline number (214.946.HELP) and some change or a calling card with you for emergency phone calls.
- If you have children, we encourage you to do everything possible to bring your children with you. This can be very difficult and is not always an option, but it is common for abusers to use children as leverage against the mother later on. This can manifest in custody issues and further abuse.
- See the page 4 for important items you may consider bringing with you if you leave.



AFTER SEPARATING

IN YOUR HOME

Ongoing experiences of abuse is common after separation. The possibility of abuse escalation still exists and the following suggestions may help.

- If you are living in the same place where the abuse was occurring or if the abuser currently knows where you live, lock your windows and change locks on your doors as soon as possible.
- If you feel unsafe and need to break your lease, call Genesis; there may be options for you to leave without paying required fees.
- Develop a safety plan with your children for when you are not with them.
- Consider technology and devices you use. Turn off GPS tracking and explore other ways to prevent hacking or other technological invasions of privacy.
- If you feel safe to do so, inform neighbors and/or the landlord that your partner no longer lives with you, and ask them to call the police if they see him near your home.
- If possible, keep your address confidential.
- Request an unlisted/unpublished phone number from the telephone company.
- Know you have the right to seek legal assistance during this time. If you have a protective order or divorce papers that require the abuser to stay away from you or your property, keep these on hand and give a copy to your landlord. Officers require to see a physical copy of these papers before they can enforce these rulings.

IN PUBLIC SPACES

Consider public places you would frequent such as your job, gym, family and friends' homes, church, school or grocery store. If your abuser knows your routine, he/she may attempt to find you at one of these locations. Think about ways you might minimize his/her ability to find you at one of these places.

- If you have someone at work that you trust and feel comfortable with, consider telling them about your safety concerns. You are not obligated to tell them everything.
- Office building security could be helpful. You could provide them with a picture of your abuser in the event that he/she attempts to harass you at work.
- Have someone escort you to and from your car, the bus or the train if you ever feel threatened.
- Try to use a variety of routes to come and go from home.
- Be cautious when posting your activities on social media or anywhere that your abuser might be able to see where you are or what you're doing.



IF LEAVING A RELATIONSHIP

ITEMS TO CONSIDER TAKING WITH YOU

☐ IDENTIFICATION

- Driver's license
- Birth certificate (yours and your children's)
- Social Security cards

☐ FINANCIAL

- Money
- Credit cards (only if they are in your name)
- Checking and savings account books and information

☐ LEGAL PAPERS

- Protective order
- Lease/rental agreements, and/or house deed
- Car insurance and registration
- Health and life insurance papers
- Medical records for you and your children
- School records
- Work permits
- Green Card, Visa
- Passport
- Divorce and custody papers
- Marriage license

☐ VALUABLES

- Jewelry
- Address book
- Pictures
- Keepsakes

☐ OTHER

- Medications (yours and your children)
- House and car keys
- Change of clothes for you and your children