

Safety Measures While You Are In An Abusive Relationship

If your client is living with a person who is battering them, here are some things they can do to ensure their safety, as well as their family's safety.

- 1. Have important phone numbers memorized:** Friends and relatives whom you can call in an emergency. If your children are old enough, teach them important phone numbers, including when and how to dial 911.
- 2. Keep domestic violence information in a safe place:** Where your batterer won't find it, but where you can get it when you need to review it.
- 3. Keep change for a pay phone with you at all times.**
- 4. If you can, open your own bank account.**
- 5. Stay in touch with friends:** Get to know your neighbors. Resist any temptation to cut yourself off from people, even if you feel like you just want to be left alone.
- 6. Rehearse your escape plan until you know it by heart.**
- 7. Leave a set of car keys, extra money, a change of clothes and copies of the following documents, with a trusted friend or relative:**
 - ✓ You and your children's birth certificates
 - ✓ Your children's school and medical records
 - ✓ Bankbooks
 - ✓ Welfare identification
 - ✓ Passports or green cards
 - ✓ Your social security card
 - ✓ Lease agreements or mortgage payment books
 - ✓ Insurance papers
 - ✓ Important addresses and telephone numbers
 - ✓ Any other important documents

Your Personal Safety Plan

If you don't have some of this information, now is the time to get it.

IMPORTANT! KEEP THIS IN A SAFE AND PRIVATE PLACE WHERE YOUR BATTERER CANNOT FIND IT!

1. Important Phone numbers:

Police: _____

Hotline: _____

My Attorney: _____

2. I can call these friends or relatives in an emergency:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

3. These neighbors will call the police if I have to leave my home in a hurry:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

4. I can go to these places if I have to leave my home in a hurry:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

5. I have given copies of the documents checked below to a friend for safekeeping:

My birth Certificates

My children's birth certificates

My social security card

- My children's school records
- My children's medical records
- Insurance papers
- My lease agreement or mortgage payment book
- Important addresses and telephone numbers
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

6. The following are hidden in a safe place:

- An extra set of car keys
- Some extra money
- An extra change of clothes for me and my children
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

7. To ensure my safety and independence, I will review and rehearse my safety/escape plan once a month on the following dates:

_____.

8. Other things I will do to ensure my safety and independence:

Suggestions for Increasing Safety When the Relationship is Over

I can change my locks; install security systems, smoke detectors, and outside lighting.

I can tell (1) _____ and (2) _____ at school/work/other about my situation and ask them to screen my calls/visitors.

I can alert my neighbors to let me know if they see anyone stalking me or prowling around my apartment/home.

I can obtain a protective order and keep it with or near me at all times as well as leave a copy with _____.

I will talk to (1) _____ and (2) _____ about my need for support when I feel frightened or don't think I can successfully keep the person who is violent towards me away from me.

I can go stay with (1) _____ or (2) _____ if I have to be safe.

I can use an answering machine and the following other safety measures to keep the person who is violent towards me from being able to contact me.

If I feel "down", and ready to return to a potentially abusive situation, I can call _____ for support, or attend workshops and support groups to strengthen my relationship with other people.

Lethality Checklist and Safety Plans

Some batterers are life endangering to their partners and families. It is impossible to accurately predict whether an abusive person is likely to kill him/herself, a partner, and/or other family members. However, there are predictors, which should be noted by anyone attempting intervention.

The following are indicators to be used in making an assessment of a batterer's potential to kill:

- **Threats of homicide or suicide:** The batterer who has threatened suicide or to kill a partner, the children, or other relatives must be considered extremely dangerous.
- **Fantasies of homicide or suicide:** The batterer, who has developed a fantasy about who, how, when, and/or where to kill, is more dangerous. The batterer who has previously acted out part of a homicide or suicide fantasy may be invested in killing as a viable "solution."
- **Depression:** A batterer who has been acutely depressed and sees little hope for moving beyond the depression may be a candidate for homicide and/or suicide. They can even be more of a risk as the depression is lifting due to the increase in energy they have to act on their plan.
- **Weapons:** A batterer who possesses or has access to weapons and has used them or has threatened to use them in the past has increased potential for lethal assault.
- **Obsessive-ness about partner and family:** A person who is obsessive about a partner, who idolizes and/or feels that (s)he can't live without the partner or is entitled to the partner, no matter what, is more likely to be life-endangering.
- **Centrality of the battered partner:** If the loss of the partner represents or precipitates a total loss of hope for a positive future, a batterer may choose to kill.
- **Rage:** The most life-endangering rage often erupts when a batterer believes that their partner is leaving.
- **Drug or alcohol consumption:** Consumption of drugs or alcohol when in a state of despair or fury can elevate the risk of lethality.
- **Pet Abuse:** Those batterers who assault and mutilate pets are more likely to kill or maim family members.
- **Access:** What s(he) can locate, (s)he can kill.

How Will I Know If My Partner is Getting Better?

You may be wondering how you can tell if your partner is getting better. While it is indeed possible for people to change, it will not happen quickly or easily. It requires a strong commitment to change on his/her part; and asking for help is the first step. However, the fact that he/she has sought help is not an indication that change has occurred. Please remember that you are the best judge of whether his/her behavior is an effort to abuse or control you.

The following questions can, however, help you to evaluate your safety:

1. Has he/she stopped being physically violent?
2. Are there still implied threats in his/her words, gestures, or movements, which cause you fear?
3. Is he/she less critical, less manipulative, and less controlling? (Gondolf, 1989:56)
4. Can you disagree with him/her without fear? Can you act independently of him/her without any hassles?
5. Does he/she permit you to get help and support for your safety and well-being?
6. Does he/she express anger without being physically or verbally abusive?
7. Does he/she regularly attend any program to assist him/her with change, such as a batterer's program, counseling, or Alcoholics Anonymous? (Gondolf, 1989:55)
8. Has he/she acknowledged his/her previous acts of violence and pattern of control? Does he think he is cured, or does he acknowledge his potential for future violence?
9. Does he/she more openly admit his/her wrongs and his/her limitations? (Gondolf, 1989:56)
10. Is he/she openly concerned about your safety and the safety of his/her children? Does he/she take concrete steps to assure your safety, e.g., taking time out to cool down? (Gondolf, 1989:55)
11. Can he/she empathize with you? Can he empathize with your pain and your joy?
12. Is he/she associating with new friends who do not support violence? (Gondolf, 1989:56)