

# Safety Planning

## Podcast Transcript

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Did you know that some estimates suggest that as many as one in four women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime? Whatever its extent, domestic violence is one of the most underreported crimes. As a victim of domestic violence, you may feel a sense of responsibility, that leaving will destroy your family. You may also believe that given “one-last chance,” your partner will, as promised, change and never hurt you again. Although research overwhelmingly supports the fact that abusers continue to abuse without intervention and abuse often escalates over time, even thinking about leaving a relationship may seem difficult and frightening.

Whether you are actively planning to leave a relationship, trying to decide if leaving is right for you, or planning to stay, safety planning is essential. A safety plan is a written plan to help increase the personal safety of you and your children. It outlines the steps you can take if further abuse occurs and you need to get to a safe place. Leaving a relationship is often the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence, so you need to have a plan to protect yourself.

A basic safety plan includes several key steps. Identify safe areas of your house and practice how you would get out safely. Avoid the bathroom, garage, kitchen and areas with weapons. Find a safe place to keep your personal belongings in the event you need to access them quickly and leave. You may also want to find a place outside your home where you can keep a spare set of keys and important documents. Find someone you can trust to tell about the violence, and request that they call the police if they suspect you are in a dangerous situation.

Plan 1-2 places you can go if you see signs that your partner is getting agitated and may resort to physical violence. If you have children, teach them how to use the telephone to contact the police and the fire department, and how to report violence or other problems. Make sure they know they should not get involved during an abusive incident. Plan a code word to signal them to leave the house immediately and get help.

If arguments occur, move to your safe area of the house. If you sense that your abuser may become physically violent, try to leave. Do not talk to your abuser about leaving or threaten to leave; just leave. Use your judgment and intuition to protect yourself until you are out of danger. If violence is unavoidable, make yourself a small target. Move into a corner and curl up into a ball with your face protected and arms around each side of your head, fingers entwined.

Remember, you are not alone. Reach out to a trusted friend, neighbor or victim advocate. If you are on or near a military installation, victim advocates are available to respond and can help you create a safety plan. They can also provide you with information you need to access services that can help keep you and your children safe. In most cases, victim advocates can provide confidential services under the military’s restricted reporting policy. This enables you to receive medical care and assistance with safety planning

without an abuse investigation or notification to the abuser's command if you do not want to report the incident.

To find a victim advocate, call the installation operator or Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, and ask for the number of the domestic abuse victim advocate. Immediate assistance is also available through the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE. Call now. A victim advocate is standing by to help.

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For more information, visit Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>, an official Department of Defense website.