



Neighbours, Friends & Families

Safety Planning

Safety planning is a top priority, whether a victim/survivor chooses to remain in the home or leave. Making a safety plan involves identifying actions to increase the safety of the victim/survivor and their children, if they have any. It is always best to get help from a professional to develop a safety plan. A good place to start is the local shelter. It's not necessary to live at the shelter to get help with a safety plan. You can find a shelter near you on the [Sheltersafe](#) website.

Here are some suggestions that you can share with the person you are concerned about. Take one action at a time. Start with the one that is easiest and safest.

Increasing safety while living with an abuser:

- Suggest that the victim/survivor think about their partner's past use and level of force. This will help to predict what type of danger the survivor and their children are facing and when it might be safest to leave if that is what they choose to do.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor tell their children that abuse is never right, even when someone they love is being abusive. Tell them the abuse isn't their fault and that they did not cause it. Teach them it is important to keep safe when there is abuse.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor plan where to go in an emergency and that they teach their children how to get help. Tell the children not to get between their parents if there is violence. Plan a code word to signal they should get help or leave.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor not to run to a place where the children are, as the partner may hurt them as well.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor plan to get out of their home safely and practice it with the children.
- If the survivor lives in an isolated location, encourage them to find somewhere outside they can get to quickly if they need to hide from their partner. They can tell their children about it and make sure they know not to tell the abuser about it.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor ask neighbours, friends and family to call the police if they hear sounds of abuse and to look after the children in an emergency.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor move to a space where they can get outside easily if an argument is developing.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor avoid rooms where there is access to potential weapons (e.g. kitchen, workshop, bathroom).
- Suggest that the victim/survivor protect their face with their arms around each side of their head, with fingers locked together if they are being hurt. Explain that they should not wear anything that the partner can grab, such as scarves or long jewelry or hair in a ponytail.
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- Suggest that the victim/survivor parks their car by backing it into the driveway and keep it fuelled
- Suggest that the victim/survivor hide their keys, cell phone and some money near an escape route.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor have a list of phone numbers to call for help and that they call the police if it is an emergency.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor make sure all weapons and ammunition are hidden or removed from their home, if it is safe for them to do so.
- Let the victim/survivor know that the local shelter or police can provide the survivor with a panic button/cell phone.

Getting ready to leave

Here are some suggestions if a victim/survivor is planning to leave:

- Suggest that the victim/survivor contact the police or a local women's shelter and tell that they intend to leave an abusive situation and that they need support in safety planning. If they contact the police, advise them to ask for an officer who specializes in domestic abuse situations (information shared with the police may result in charges being laid against the abuser).
- Suggest that the victim/survivor go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened if they are injured and ask them to document the visit.
- If the victim/survivor is injured, advise them to go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened. Ask the medical professionals to document the visit.
- Suggest that, if it is safe for them to do so, the victim/survivor gather important documents: identification, bank cards, financial papers related to family assets, last Canada Income Tax Return, keys, medication, pictures of the abuser and the children, passports, health cards, personal address/telephone book, cell phone, and legal documents (e.g. immigration papers, house deed/lease, restraining orders/peace bonds).
- Suggest that the victim/survivor make copies of these documents and leave them with someone they trust if they can't keep these things stored at home for fear their partner will find them. The local women's shelter will also keep copies of important documents.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor consult a lawyer. Advise them to keep any evidence of physical abuse (such as photos) and to keep a journal of all violent incidents, noting dates, events, threats and any witnesses.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor put together pictures, jewelry and objects of sentimental value, as well as toys and comfort items for the children.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor arrange with someone to care for their pets/farm animals temporarily until they get settled. A shelter or veterinary clinic may help with this.



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Leaving an abusive partner

Here are some suggestions to help a victim/survivor stay safe as they are leaving:

- Suggest that the victim/survivor leave when the abuser is away from the house.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor request a police escort. Police will often provide an escort without laying any charges unless the abusive partner or ex-partner breaks the law in the presence of police.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor ask a friend, neighbours, or family member to accompany them when they leave if they do not want to involve police. Ask them to be ready to call the police should violence erupt.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor contact a local women's shelter. It may be a safer temporary spot than going to a place the partner knows about. Find the local shelter on the [Sheltersafe](#) website.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor ask the local women's shelter to help find a safe temporary place if they are a man or do not identify as a woman.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor not tell their partner they are leaving.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor leave quickly.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor have a back-up plan if their partner finds out where they are going.

After separating:

- Suggest that the victim/survivor consider applying for a restraining order or peace bond that may help to keep the partner away from them and their children.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor apply for a restraining order by going to the family court in the municipality where the victim/survivor or the other party lives. If the application involves parenting arrangements, they can start their case in the municipality where the children live.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor get information and guidance to apply for a restraining order.
- Let the survivor know they can go to the criminal service counter of the local provincial courthouse to apply for a Peace Bond.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor get information and guidance to apply for a Peace Bond.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor keep the restraining order or peace bond with them at all times.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor provide police with a copy of any legal orders they have.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor consult a lawyer or legal aid clinic about actions to protect themselves or their children.
- If the victim/survivor has a family lawyer, advise them to let the lawyer know if there are any Criminal Court proceedings.



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- Suggest that the victim/survivor consider changing any accounts (i.e., utilities, cell phone, bank, etc.) that you share with their ex-partner.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor obtain an unlisted telephone number, get caller ID and block their number when calling out.
- Advise the victim/survivor to make sure their children's school or day care centre is aware that they have left their partner and that they have copies of all relevant documents.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor carry a photo of the abuser and their children.
- Offer to look after the victim/survivor's children in an emergency or suggest that the survivor ask someone else to look after the children in an emergency.
- Advise the victim/survivor to take extra precautions at work, at home and in the community and to consider telling their supervisor at work about their situation.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor think about places and patterns that their ex-partner will know about and try to change them. For example, they could use a different grocery store or place of worship, take a different route to work and if possible, change work hours.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor ask a neighbour, friend or family member to accompany them if they feel unsafe walking alone.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor not return to the home they shared with the abuser unless accompanied by the police and to never confront the abuser.
- If the victim/survivor hasn't already involved the police and they want to now, suggest they visit the closest police station and ask to speak to an officer who specializes in domestic abuse cases.
- Suggest that the victim/survivor remember that a shelter can help with ongoing safety planning, even if they do not stay there. Find a local shelter on the [Sheltersafe](#) website.