



## SAFETY PLANNING GUIDE

Abusers often strike back when they believe that their battered partner is leaving the relationship. Leaving must be done with careful planning in order to increase one's safety. Consider the following to *prepare for leaving*.

**The questions below are not comprehensive and are meant to be a starting off point as you consider leaving. Contact Daya for in-depth safety planning and support.**

### DURING ESCALATED SITUATIONS

1. Consider the kind of cues that are present before the abuse occurs. Are there patterns such as time of day, substance abuse, discussion about money, location, friends or relatives visiting, or stress level of partner?
2. If an argument becomes unavoidable, try to have it in a room where you have access to an exit. Try to stay away from the kitchen, bedroom, or anywhere else where weapons might be available.
3. What kinds of things have you tried to protect yourself and your children in the past? Take note of which of these have worked and which would you use again.
4. Remember you have the right to protect and defend yourself until you are out of danger. You don't deserve to be hurt or threatened.

### PREPARING TO LEAVE

1. Think of a safe and accessible place to leave necessary items. Have a packed bag of the necessary items at a trusted friend's or relative's home in case you need to leave your home quickly. [See Items to take when leaving your home Checklist]
2. Keep a calling card or prepaid phone and chargers with you at all times for emergency phone calls. Contact organizations like Daya for assistance in obtaining a phone you can use for this purpose.
3. Keep the phone number for Daya, hotlines and shelters. Use pseudonyms as the contact names for these agencies in your phone. (Link to our hotlines list.) When calling from landlines, dial another number after calling an agency so that your abuser cannot use the redial function to learn who you have called. Remember your abuser may have access to your phone records. Consider using a prepaid phone when making these calls.

4. Practice how can you get out of your home safely and have alternative plans. When talking about these plans with your children, use phrases such as, “We’re practicing what to do in an emergency”.
5. Make up a code word to use with your children, family, friends, and neighbors when you need the police.
6. Consider calling ahead and verifying your 911 system is in place. Verify that law enforcement has the exact location and directions to your home. If your home is difficult to locate, apply a reflective color to your mailbox, or somewhere discrete, and make sure your house number can be seen more clearly.
7. Reach out to a trusted relative and/or friends can you can call for support, money, or a safe place to stay.
8. Read about and reach out to legal resources in your community and reach out to an organization like Daya for a consultation on your rights. \*Link to our legal services
9. Consider ways to increase your independence before you leave such as opening a bank account or a PO Box for your mail.

## **YOUR CHILDREN’S SAFETY**

1. Remember that when you’re safety planning with your children, they may tell this information to the abuser, which can make the situation more dangerous. When talking about these plans with your children, use phrases such as, “We’re practicing what to do in an emergency”.
2. Teach your children how to call 911 or make collect calls to you or a friend in the event that they are taken. Reassure them that it is okay to call someone no matter what the abuser may say to them to convince them otherwise.
3. Inform their school or daycare about who has permission to pick up your children as soon as possible.
4. Create a code or a game with your children so they know when and how to call for help.
5. Identify a room in your home they can go to when they’re afraid and what to think about when they are feeling scared.
6. Help them create a list of people they are comfortable talking to and expressing their thoughts and emotions.
7. Consider having your children receive counseling/therapy.

**SAFETY AFTER LEAVING**

1. Inform trusted neighbors, landlord, friends, and relatives that the individual no longer lives with you. Consider asking them to call the police if they see him/her near your home.
2. Carefully choose the people whom you share your new location with. Often, family and friends who do not understand the dynamics of domestic abuse may think reconciliation is a good plan. Only share your new location with trusted individuals who will not disclose your location to others, especially your abuser. Contact organizations like Daya for support in this area.
3. Check to make sure your car and phone cannot be tracked. Consider changing the locks on your car.
4. Turn off all location services on your phone and other electronic devices and screen your incoming calls.
5. Make sure to check your privacy settings on your social media accounts. Be aware that what you share and what is shared on friends' and family's accounts can reveal information about you.
6. Decide who at work you will inform of your situation. Provide a picture of the abuser if possible. Have someone escort you to your car or bus and wait with you until you are safely on your way. If possible, vary the route you use to go home.
7. Consider changing where you shop for groceries, ATMs you use and other locations you frequently go to.
8. Decide whom you can talk to freely and openly to get the support you need. Contact organizations like Daya for emotional support.
9. Consider attending support groups to gain support from others and learn more about yourself and your relationship. **You are not alone.**
10. Take care of yourself. Create a list of healthy activities that help you relax and find peace and engage frequently in self-care.

**Confidential Helpline 713-981-7645**

**dayahouston.org**