

# My Safety Plan



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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

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# Table of Contents

<b>Navigating this Safety Plan</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Colored Boxes</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Woman Warrior Mindset</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>General Safety Planning Guidelines</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Safety at Home</b>	<b>13</b>
While Living With your Partner	14
Preparing for an Explosive Incident	14
During an Explosive Incident	17
While Living Alone	18
<b>Safety When Preparing to End the Relationship</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Ending the Relationship</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Safety Planning with Police</b>	<b>24</b>
Connecting with the Police	24
Services Offered by Police	25
Things to Know	26
If you are making a police report	27
If the police have come to your home	28
<b>Sexual Safety Planning</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Medical Safety Planning</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Immigration Safety Planning</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Safety in your Routine</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Building and Getting Support from your Village</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Technological Safety Planning</b>	<b>34</b>
Authentication/Logging in	35
Using the Internet	36
Accounts	37
Helpful Devices, Providers and Apps	37
Social Media	38
Tracking	40

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

Other	40
<b>Safely Storing Documents and Evidence</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Financial Safety Planning</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Legal Safety Planning</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Safety Planning for Court</b>	<b>48</b>
Getting to the courthouse	48
Inside the courthouse	49
Leaving the courthouse	49
Zoom Court Hearings	49
<b>Safety at Work</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Safety at School</b>	<b>52</b>
While in the Relationship	52
If You have left the Relationship	52
<b>Safety with Children</b>	<b>53</b>
While living in the home with your partner and children	53
While living separately from your partner and sharing custody of your children	55
Safety Planning in the home and school	55
Safety Planning Children’s Technology	55
The Custody Order: Anticipating the loopholes	57
Safety Planning for Custody Exchanges	58
Safety Planning for Supervised Visitation	59
Safety Planning for Unsupervised Visitation	59
Safety Planning for Escaping with Children	59
<b>Safety Planning while Pregnant</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Safety And Emotional Health</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Spiritual Safety Planning</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Safety Planning with Animals</b>	<b>63</b>
While you are living with an abusive partner	63
If you are planning to leave an abusive partner	63
While living alone	64
<b>Escape Plan: For Survivors Fleeing the Home</b>	<b>68</b>

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

<i>Preparation</i>	68
Shelter	68
Transportation	69
Advocate/Safety Planning	69
Basic Supplies	69
Medical	70
Technology	70
Documentation	70
Pet	72
Finances	72
Legal	73
Legal: Filing for divorce	73
Work	73
Children	74
Gathering Your Village	74
Self-care	74
<i>Day Of</i>	75
Basic Supplies	75
Medical	75
Documentation	75
Legal	75
Children	76
Financial	76
Transportation	76
Technology	77
Insurance	77
Self-care	77
<i>After the Escape</i>	77
Shelter	77
Children	78
Accounts	78

info@womensv.org | 833-WOMENSV/833-966-3678 | [www.womensv.org](http://www.womensv.org)

P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

Legal	78
Gathering Your Village	78
Self-care	78
<b>Escape Plan: For Survivors Remaining in the Home</b>	<b>79</b>
<i>Preparation</i>	79
Preparing to Fortify Your Home	79
Transportation	80
Advocate/Safety Planning	80
Basic Supplies	81
Medical	81
Technology	81
Documentation	81
Pet	83
Finances	83
Legal	84
Legal: Filing for divorce	84
Children	84
Gathering Your Village	84
Self-care	85
<i>Day Of</i>	85
Police/Process Server	85
Fortifying Your Home	85
Technology	86
Financial	86
Insurance	87
Self-care	87
<i>After He is Served and Removed</i>	87
Accounts	87
Children	87
Pet	87
Legal	88

info@womensv.org | 833-WOMENSV/833-966-3678 | [www.womensv.org](http://www.womensv.org)

P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

Technology	88
Gathering Your Village	88
Self-care	88

info@womensv.org | 833-WOMENSV/833-966-3678 | [www.womensv.org](http://www.womensv.org)

P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

## **Navigating this Safety Plan**

### **Who is this for?**

This safety plan is for victims of abuse and coercive control of any age who may be abused by/be afraid of their spouse or partner, boyfriend or girlfriend, adult child or family member.

### **A note about language**

We use “victim” in the sense of crime victim because abuse is a crime, along with kidnapping, human trafficking, and identity theft. Coercive control has elements of all three. You may not have been beaten but that doesn’t mean your covert abuser is any less dangerous.

We will also use the term “survivor,” but survivor and victim are not always interchangeable because not all of them survive. They are always the victim but they are not always the survivor.

This document uses the pronouns “she/her” when referring to a survivor and the pronouns “he/him” when referring to a perpetrator. We do this because research shows that coercive control is a gendered-based crime, mostly perpetrated by men against women. WomenSV specializes in serving victims of domestic violence who identify as women. That being said, all sexes and genders can perpetrate abuse and anyone using this safety plan can adapt it to fit their needs by changing the pronouns.

### **Why create and review a safety plan?**

Safety planning helps develop tools in advance of potentially dangerous situations. Safety planning allows you to assess your safety, can increase your confidence, and help you to see areas where you may be vulnerable.

### **Leaving can be the most dangerous time!**

Keep your exit plans confidential. Do not share your plans in advance with your partner. Once your partner realizes they are losing control of the relationship, danger escalates. The less they know in advance, the safer you will be.

### **Content Advisory**

The topic of this document is safety planning for victims of abuse and coercive control, these are difficult subjects for many readers. Please be kind to yourself, read it with an advocate or friends, take breaks, and listen to your gut while reading. If at anytime you wish to speak to someone you can call:

The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233

9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

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EIN: 81-5015102

### **This is not legal advice**

The creators of this document are domestic violence advocates, not lawyers, therapists, or physicians. We actually conduct training for these providers because they receive so little education on coercive control. This document is not telling you what to do! Consider this part of your brainstorm, here you will find suggestions, and start to form questions you can ask providers and advocates. Always, in the end, the final decision about which course of action to take rests with you--it's part of the journey in taking back your own power and control. Choose only the suggestions listed here that make sense for your set of circumstances.

### **When you see a product or service**

The products and services we mention are suggestions only. WomenSV is not affiliated with any of them.

## **Colored Boxes**

### Yellow Boxes

Throughout this safety plan you will see yellow boxes; these are checklists for survivors planning their escape. It can be useful to read through them no matter where you are in your journey.

### Purple Boxes

You will also see purple boxes, they provide a space for you to write down important aspects of your safety plan so that you can review it regularly. Only fill out the information that fits your set of circumstances.

### Pink Boxes

You will see pink boxes throughout this document, these "SAFETY CHECKS" are filled with strategies, suggestions, and ways to set your intention depending on the section/setting/provider.

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EIN: 81-5015102



## Green Boxes

You will see green boxes throughout this document, these “Kaizen” are little steps that you can take if you are looking for a place to start.

### **Woman Warrior Mindset**

Imagine you are in the situation room, not thinking as “distracted wife” but as “woman warrior” preparing for battle with a formidable foe.

You are about to take some significant risks. But you have also heard the call to freedom. You cannot answer it without taking risks. You can begin by mentally preparing yourself. Can you imagine a home that is truly a home, a safe sanctuary decorated just the way you like and where you are free to come and go and live as you please, not live to please a partner who will never be pleased with anything less than perfection, the definition of which will keep shifting? If you are reading this, you have come to a fork in the road. To the left lies more of the same. To the right, a new world. It will mean operating way outside your comfort zone. Are you thinking: Better the devil I know than the devil I don’t know? But the devil you know is the reason you’re here. Isn’t the devil you know slowly draining the life out of you? If that’s the case, it’s time to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Because your comfort zone could end up killing you.

And if there’s a devil you don’t know, there are also angels you don’t know.

Which brings us to our motto:

*You must do the thing you think you cannot do. Then doors will open that you never knew existed, and friends and allies will appear to guide you on your way.*

--Inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt and Joseph Campbell

Let’s begin...

### **Safety Check**

Keep your safety plan in a place where your partner cannot find it, and to have a plan in the event that they do. Even a safety plan can put you at risk if it falls into the wrong hands.

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## **General Safety Planning Guidelines**

### **Kaizen**

Always remember...

1. The less an abuser partner knows about your plans, the safer you will be.
2. Remember, you deserve to live in peace and safety in your own home. You never cause anyone to be abusive and you never deserve to be abused.
3. You don't have to do this alone. There are people and resources to help you find your way. With enough information, support and resources, you can break free of the abuse and turn your home back into the sanctuary you deserve.
4. Self-care. It is important that you take care of yourself through this process.

### **Confronting an abusive partner.**

Be careful confronting your partner with the truth when you catch them in a lie. Covert abusers don't do well with the truth and are very shame averse. That's when they can become truly dangerous and potentially deadly.

### **Intimacy effect**

Someone saying if a disgruntled voter says "someone should put an end to Trump", although that threat should be looked at, when a husband says to his intimate partner "someone should put an end to you" that threat should be taken more seriously and not dismissed as an "idle threat."

### **Safety Check**

Make allowances for "trauma brain." You will get your memory and clarity back. In the meantime compensate by taking extra notes (and keeping them in a safe place). Look behind you before leaving a public area, in case you left something important behind. Slow down, take a beat before responding or signing something. Be fully present while driving. Check that you have your keys before leaving your home. Keep an eye on your gas gauge.

### **Safety devices**

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Consider purchasing a sound grenade, Kubotan, cat spike keychain, mace, or pepper spray. (WIP)

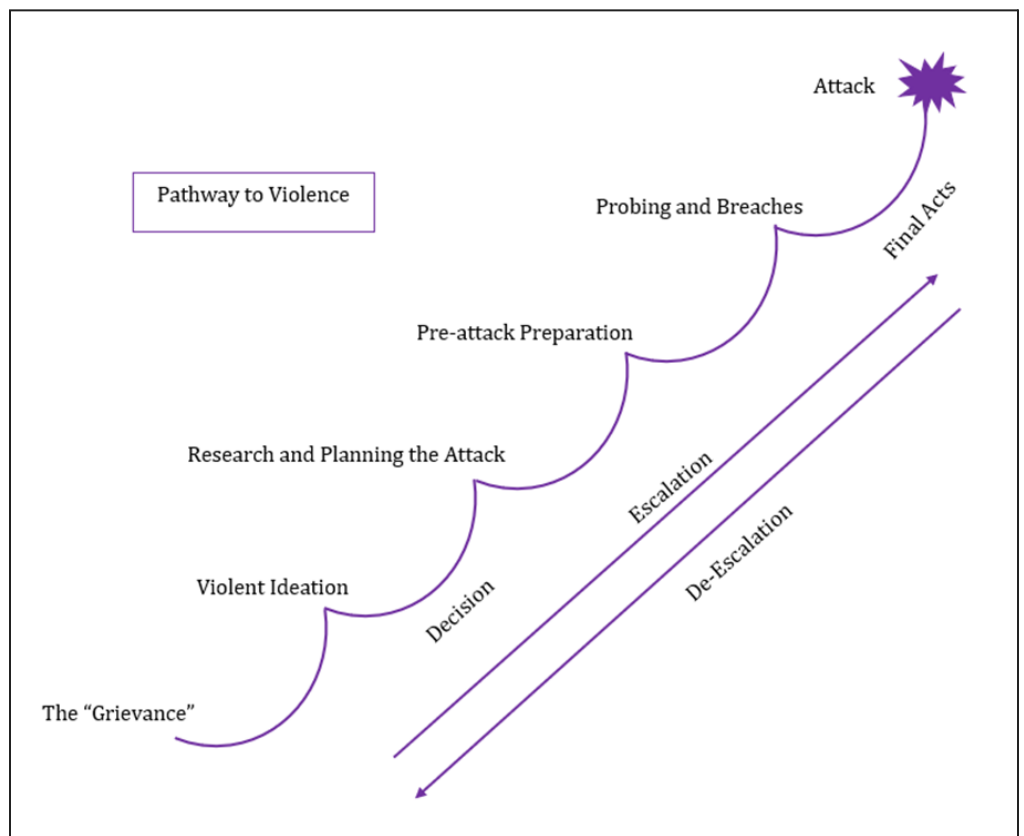
### Pathway to Violence

Although the pathway to violence varies for each person and situation, consider this a framework for how an abuser might move from having a “grievance” to attacking. Becoming familiar with the Pathway to Violence can help you anticipate potential escalation of aggressive and violent acts and better prepare to protect yourself against them. The road to violence begins with a grievance which justifies plans for vengeance.

### Example

In the **Grievance Stage**, you get a restraining order against your partner, which your partner feels is unjustified. This may enrage your ex and they may begin thinking about ways to get “justice”/revenge.

In the **Research and Planning Stage**, you may find out that your partner has been googling “ways of getting rid of your partner by making it look like an accident”. Or you may hear that your partner is planting seeds to convince court providers that you have mental health issues, an addiction, or are unsafe around the children in order to frame you, get a restraining order against you or take the children away. It is not always murder; attacks can come in a lot of different forms.



In the **Pre-attack Preparation Stage**, you may find out that your partner has purchased a weapon, you may get a call from CPS, or your children’s teacher expressing concerns about your parenting.

In the **Probing and Breaches Stage**, if you have left the relationship and moved into a new place you may find your partner driving by your home, or showing up at your workplace, or at functions that involve the children when your partner has not been invited. They often want to test boundaries to see what they can get away with, and to do a dry run/rehearsal prior to the attack.

The **Final Attack** can range from a surprise visit from CPS or the police, a surprise restraining order against you, an emergency screening all the way to the brakes suspiciously failing in your car, tampering with medication, neglect in an emergency to driving dangerously, to attempted murder. Remember it is not just guns, knives or weapons that can threaten your life or safety. Anything in the hands of an abuser (e.g.: rope, screwdriver, car, beach towel, eye drops) can become a weapon.

For more information, check out:

<https://www.dcjs.virginia.gov/sites/dcjs.virginia.gov/files/training-events/4193/summaryofproximalanddistalwarningbehaviors.pdf>

### Safety Check

Abusers stay rooted in the past. They nurse their grievances which can last for years, even decades. It’s important to think twice, always, before opening the door to your abuser once the relationship has ended. You may have moved on, but that doesn’t mean your abuser has. Abusers often think “this relationship is over when I say it’s over” and “if I can’t have you, no one else will either.” Your children and pets are also at risk as they will often destroy what means the most to you.

### Colors of Awareness

When you are out in the world you may want to imagine your safety level on a spectrum from white to black. If you can get in touch with your perception of danger while it’s still in the yellow zone and take action, there or in the orange zone you will reduce the risk of ending up in the red or black zone where it is too late to run and you could end up getting hurt.

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Scenario: *When you are downtown for lunch with a friend chatting on the sidewalk and you notice a car pull up across the street.*

Green: You are aware of your surroundings and feel you are safe.

White: A car pulled up and you are oblivious to anything else but the conversation i.e. unaware of any potential harm.

Yellow: You are engaged in the conversation yet still aware of your surroundings. So, you notice when a car pulls up across the street. The driver sits in the car and is staring in your direction. How do you respond? Ignore and continue the conversation while keeping an eye on the driver? Or do you interrupt the conversation now and ask your friend to go into the nearest store with you?

Orange: He gets out of the car and starts walking towards you. This is when your spidey sense may begin to tingle. Now your internal alarm is going off, what do you do? Do you walk away, do you dip into a store, do you interrupt the conversation? Remember safety trumps etiquette, don't be afraid of appearing rude, safety first!! This is the second decision point because your Safety Check Color is about to turn red and you will have to engage.

Amber: He is at arm's-length and there is no avoiding some kind of confrontation, what do you do? Defend yourself, turn and walk away, back away slowly, or say to your friend "let's go" or put out your hand and say "stop" or just turn and run? Your options are more limited now because you didn't take action sooner.

Black: Evasive actions have not been taken. The attack is in progress. Now it's too late, this time it's game over (ex: he served you with a Restraining Order, police arrested you, he is attacking you). You lost this round. Now it is time for damage control, self-defense classes, and lessons learned to better prepare yourself for next time.

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EIN: 81-5015102

## My Plan

If a stranger asks you a question, you don't have to answer it. If someone asks you for the time, directions, or if you live in the neighborhood and you are walking you can pretend you didn't hear them and say nothing or, "No", or "No thank you!" Or "No capish!" And keep walking.

What is something you would be comfortable saying in this situation? \_\_\_\_\_

What are different actions you might take at each decision point in the Spidey Sense Colors?

Green: \_\_\_\_\_

White: \_\_\_\_\_

Yellow: \_\_\_\_\_

Orange: \_\_\_\_\_

Amber: \_\_\_\_\_

Black: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Safety at Home**

*Note: If you have children, read through our Safety Planning with Children section below for information on safety planning at home with them.*

### **Your lease**

Victims of Domestic Violence can break their lease without penalty. To read the law and information on the procedure see Civil Code 1946.7.

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV&sectionNum=1946.7](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV&sectionNum=1946.7)

### **Locks on a rental property**

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EIN: 81-5015102

You should be able to change your locks even if you are renting, after your abuser moves out, or after you end the relationship if he has been in your home.

### ***While Living With your Partner***

#### **Preparing for an Explosive Incident**

##### **Keep your phone handy**

Keep your phone charged and with you at all times.

Consider adding the local police department's phone number to your contact list.

Call 9-1-1, a friend or a neighbor, if possible. Inform them if there are weapons in the home. You can also send a text message to 9-1-1 or your local police department.

Consider memorizing key phone numbers in case your partner takes your phone or destroys it. (*See Safety Planning with Police section for more information*)

##### **Other ways to contact emergency services**

Consider getting an Apple Watch (or smart watch with the same capabilities)—since it's wearable and can be used to call 9-1-1 quickly. It can also be used to discreetly record (speak to an attorney about your right to record if a crime is in progress or you feel your life is being threatened). Some survivors prefer to risk sanctions if it means gathering important evidence.

Consider downloading the eBodyGuard app which will allow you to store information about your abuser, dial 9-1-1 using a verbal command, and will transfer your information to the police.

Know the location of the nearest public phone, in an emergency is there a business nearby that would let you use the phone to call the police?

##### **Have a packed bag ready**

Keep cash, legal documents, medical records, prescriptions, etc. in your bag. (See Checklists for Leaving throughout this document to create a complete list for yourself.) Keep it hidden in a handy place (i.e. at work in your office, with a trusted friend and/or at a storage unit) in order to leave quickly, or leave the bag elsewhere if your abuser searches your home.

You could consider packing earthquake, fire preparedness, or any natural disaster preparedness bag for yourself, your kids and even your partner to disguise your go bag.

##### **Communicate with members of your residence**

Consider speaking with anyone else who lives in your home including your children about what to do in an emergency. Consider creating signals for when they should call for help, or when they should leave the house. [i]

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### **Weapons in the home**

If it is possible, consider locking away guns and knives. Consider avoiding articles of clothing or jewelry that can be used to harm you, for example a scarf or necklace. Anything in the hands of an abuser can become a weapon: a beach towel that could be wrapped around your neck, a sock down your throat, or a screwdriver to stab you, or a garbage bag over your head, etc.

### **Preparing your vehicle**

Consider backing into your driveway and keeping your gas tank fueled, that way you can drive away quickly. (See *Technological Safety Planning* section)

### **Know your escape route**

Practice how to get out of your home safely. Visualize your escape routes. There are rope ladders you can purchase for fire safety. Is this something that could help you based on the design of your home (the number of stories in your home)?

### **Identify a “safe room”**

This would be a room that you could lock from the inside. Consider secretly storing a cell phone and charger there. This is where you can go if you need to call or wait after calling 9-1-1 and cannot leave the home.

### **Identify a place to go when you do not feel safe**

Consider identifying a place you could go to stay safe in the event that you do not feel safe at home. This can be a local domestic violence shelter, a hotel, a friend or family member’s home.

### **Identify a place to go in an emergency**

Identify a safe location near your home where you could go in an emergency. Identify a place you could go on foot, for example a nearby 24-hour store or restaurant. Identify the nearest police station and consider committing the route there to memory.

## **Safety Check**

Forensic psychologist Reid Meloy says, “Beware the intimacy effect, the closer the relationship the more seriously you should take the threat.”

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## My Plan

My local police department's phone number is: \_\_\_\_\_

The 3 phone numbers I will memorize are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Methods of contacting emergency services other than my cell phone are (e.g.: iWatch, iPad/tablet, laptop, security system): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I give this signal the other members of my residence will know that it is time to leave without alerting my partner. (e.g.: With your children you can say, "Did you see that new pair of socks I got you?"): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I give this signal the other members of my residence will call emergency services (e.g.: "Did you finish reading that book I lent you?"):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When I do not feel safe I can go to (e.g.: my cousin's home, whole foods, a mall):

\_\_\_\_\_

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In an emergency I can go to (e.g.: the hospital, the police station, the nearest public space with a phone):

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### **During an Explosive Incident**

#### **In an emergency call or text 9-1-1**

It is not always wise to give your partner a heads up that you are going to call the police if their behavior continues to be threatening. Your partner may end up calling the police before you do and accuse you of the very abuse that they have committed. If you feel threatened you can discreetly dial 9-1-1 and the call will be recorded as soon as the dispatcher picks up. (*Recording will not be available if you are texting, but you will have a record of the text exchanges*).

#### **Go to an area that has an exit**

Not a bathroom (near hard surfaces with only one entrance/exit), kitchen (knives), or near weapons. Keep in mind anything can become a weapon in the hands of an abuser.

#### **If you cannot exit, put barriers between you and your abuser**

While you wait for the police to arrive, put as many doors/locks between you and your abuser. This could mean getting into your locked car (as long as he doesn't have a key to the car), or going into the locked bathroom in a locked bedroom.

#### **Trust your judgment**

Consider anything that you feel will keep you safe and give you time to figure out what to do next. Sometimes it is best to flee, sometimes to placate the abuser - anything that works to protect yourself and your children. It can be easy to ignore warning signs when you have been brainwashed by your partner. Practice listening to your gut instincts and signals that you are in danger. Many women who have ended up getting killed by their partner have significantly underestimated the amount of danger that they are in. It is better to over-compensate and risk being embarrassed than risk losing everything including your life.

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### **If violence cannot be avoided.**

Consider positioning your body so that you are as small as possible. Consider moving into a corner, curling up into a ball and protecting your face and head with your arms on each side of your head, intertwining your fingers.[ii]

### **Emotional Safety During an Explosive Incident**

How can you guard your heart, mind and spirit from being completely destroyed? Art of Living, prayer, meditation to help lower the stress response threshold. What if he is trying to provoke you to get you arrested, how can you avoid taking the bait and doing something that you will regret later? What to tell yourself while he is verbally abusing you? How to counter that silently? “Zip up” if you hear him walking down the hall angrily. Imagine that you are zipping up a protective shield for your heart and spirit. Telling yourself “I don’t deserve this, I can’t respond right now, just because he says it doesn’t make it true”. Using flight survival response as a tool: can you, in your mind, go somewhere safe and tell yourself that this too shall pass and one day you will be free, it will not always be like this. There is hope.

### **Safety Check**

If you are being verbally attacked feel free to take a beat before responding. Watch out for your trauma triggers that could make you go into fight, flight, freeze mode. He may be trying to bait you to get a reaction which he will then film and use against you. You could tell yourself while he is ranting at you that he is often describing himself, that none of what he is saying is true, this is abuse, this is using words as weapons, this is violence, it could become grounds for a restraining order, you are an innocent victim of this crime, in your heart you are already free if you can recognize this, be careful not to verbalize any of these truths, just use them to help motivate you to escape.

### **Safety Planning Post Separation**

#### ***While Living Alone***

Safety planning must continue after the relationship ends—in fact most domestic violence incidents, including murder, happen AFTER the relationship ends! So take some time to celebrate your freedom—just keep in mind that the price of freedom from any kind of oppression is vigilance and attention to safety.

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## Safety Check

Think of your home as your castle and fortress, you want to shore up all potential points of access/vulnerability.

### **Upgrade your security system**

Change the locks on doors and windows as soon as possible. Consider installing a monitored security service, outside lighting and cameras with motion detectors such as the Ring Doorbell. Consider having the cameras look out into the street in case a car or a person goes by your house consistently.

### **Parking**

If your partner ever had access to your garage, change the code on your garage door opener. Do you have a carport or garage, or do you park outside on the street? When you are entering the garage make sure that no one has slipped inside behind you. You can pull into the garage, turn your car off while the door remains locked. Watch and make sure that the garage door closes before exiting your car. If you have a sliding door or gate, make sure it closes before turning any corner in the garage. Where do you park relative to the entrance to your home or work?

### **If you go away for an extended period.**

Consider setting indoor lights, television, and radio on a timer for times where you are leaving the home so that it appears that someone is still in the house.

### **Emergency equipment**

Do you have a functioning smoke detector, carbon monoxide detector and fire extinguisher?

### **Have a versatile safety plan**

Safety plan for as many scenarios as you can imagine. Think through what you would do in each scenario. Consider writing down what you would do. Even though you live alone, safety plan for explosive incidents and prepare your home as though your partner is trying to get inside, and consider what you would do if they got inside. *(See Safety Planning Section, While Living With your Partner)*

### **If your partner comes to your door**

If your abuser shows up at your front door and demands to be let in, you don't have to respond. If you feel threatened, consider calling 9-1-1. You don't have to let them in and it could be very dangerous, if you do. If they are claiming they need medical help, why did they come to you and not to a hospital? Consider telling them that the ambulance is on its way and stay inside with the door locked.

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EIN: 81-5015102

### **Talk to your neighbors and landlord**

You can let them know your abuser no longer lives with you and ask if they would consider calling the police if they see your ex near your home while you are away. For example, if you are on vacation and your ex knows you are away for an extended period, he may choose that time to plant a GPS device on your car, install a hidden camera or a device to intercept your Wi-Fi.

### **Restraining Orders**

If you have a Restraining Order against your ex, consider sharing a copy of the restraining order and a photo of your ex with your children's school, your employer, or security at your apartment if applicable. You can also keep a copy of the restraining order in your purse and in the glovebox of your car.

### **Protect your address**

In California, the Safe at Home program is administered by the Secretary of State's office and can help to keep your address confidential. They offer a free post office box and mail forwarding service.[iii] Similar programs exist in most states, you can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) and ask them about services in your area.

For more information on the Safe at Home Program:

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/registries/safe-home/about-safeathome>

### **USPS Informed Delivery**

Register yourself for USPS Informed Delivery. Once one person is registered another person should not be able to sign up. If your abuser signs up as you they will be able to see scans of the mail you are receiving.

#### **Checklist for leaving Fortifying your home**

- Change the locks and windows
- Install new cameras and/or security system
- Consider if a Restraining Order is best in your situation
- Apply for Safe at Home Program

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

## **Safety When Preparing to End the Relationship**

*“Be a duck on the water with a gopro on your head” – Ruth*

### **Should I stay or should I move?**

When considering whether to stay in the home and get a restraining order with a kick out clause or leave the home, take into account the additional safety planning required with a partner who will perceive you to be stealing his territory. *(Take a look at the Checklists for Escaping by WomenSV)*

### **Have a safe place to escape to**

Make sure it is a place that is prepared to protect you and your children (e.g.: a shelter or safe house). If it is with a family member or friend, consider safety planning with them in their home as your abuser may know where they live or learn where they live. E.g.: do they have security cameras, has your abuser had access to their home, keys, garage or another entrance? *(See the Safety at Home section)*. Another safe place to escape to could be a hotel, get the contact information and addresses of several hotels in case one is booked up.

### **Call a domestic violence victim services program**

Find out which services and shelters are available as options if you need them. Keep their address and phone number close at hand at all times.

### **Consider meeting with a police officer**

Meet with a police officer, preferably one who has a background in domestic violence to discuss safety recommendations and to build support. Let them know you are not in immediate danger, there is no crime in progress so they do not end up interviewing your partner. Focus on gathering safety information, resources, and support for the days ahead, and for after you escape. *(See section below on Safety Planning with Police)*.

### **Technological safety planning**

You may need to use technology to leave your abuser, and you will need it afterwards, but your technology may be compromised. *Consider using the Technological Safety Planning section below to prepare.*

### **Financial safety planning**

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

You will have the most access to financial information before you signal to your partner that you are leaving. *Consider creating a Financial Safety Plan using the section below to prepare.*

### **Find someone you trust**

Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents and clothing with them in advance, so you can leave quickly, if necessary. *See the Checklists for Leaving throughout this document, and the Building and Getting Support from your Village section.*

### **Review your safety plan**

Study and check your plans as often as possible to know the safest way to escape your abuser and maintain safety afterwards. Safety risks will fluctuate based on multiple factors so revise regularly.

### **Consider what to do if your partner discovers your plans**

Make a plan for what you will do if your partner learns that you are planning on leaving.

#### **Checklist for leaving Basic Supplies**

*See all sections for related checklists.*

- Clothes, shoes, toiletries, etc.
- Personal items such as family heirlooms and photographs
- Keys
  - House keys
  - Car keys (spare keys too!)
  - Storage keys
  - Safe deposit keys
  - Keys to a home safe
- A disposable camera

#### **My Plan**

My local domestic violence agency is: \_\_\_\_\_

When I leave I will be staying with: \_\_\_\_\_

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

Hotels I may be able to stay at are: \_\_\_\_\_

The name, badge number and phone number of the police officer I spoke with are:

I can leave important things with this trusted person: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Ending the Relationship**

### **A time for increased safety planning**

“Three risk factors for femicide are the “presence of firearms”, the couple separating after having lived together, and whether an abuser was highly controlling in addition to being violent”. [iv] In the United States 70% of reported domestic violence injuries happened after the couple had separated. [v]

### **Safety above all else**

Ending the relationship is a dangerous time, consider being far away from your partner when they learn that you are ending the relationship. Is there a time in your routine that you could pack a bag and drive to a safe location? If you need to speak to your partner, consider writing notes about what you want to say, and practice with a trusted person. Consider saying it on the phone and not meeting in person. If you need to go back to a shared space to get something, consider asking your local police station for a civil standby, or having a few trusted people come with you. If you do decide to meet in person, do it in a public place and consider having a trusted person with you, or nearby in case you need them.

### **Back away slowly**

Consider avoiding assertive statements, getting him to admit he is wrong, arguing back, confronting him with the truth/any truth. Covert abusers are highly shame sensitive. They want their dark deeds to remain hidden and can become dangerous when confronted with the truth. Consider using the “gray rock” method of communicating. Consider that anything in the hands of an abuser can become a weapon, even your honesty; choose your safety above honesty. The less your partner knows, the safer you will be.

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102



For more information on the “gray rock” method, check out: [www.onemomsbattle.com](http://www.onemomsbattle.com)

### **Preparing what to say**

If you need to speak to your partner verbally, over the phone or on a video chat consider writing out the main points you want to say. Consider role playing with a trusted person. This is not your usual breakup; this is an escape. Be prepared for persuasive arguments, and possibly multiple tactics try to stop you from leaving. They may become kind, they may seem hurt, they may become angry and threaten you, they may call you names, promise to change, or promise to do something they know is important to you. Keep your goal in mind, or write it down, along with the main reasons you are ending the relationship.

### **Some abusers will threaten to kill themselves**

An abusive partner threatening or trying to commit suicide increases the danger to their partner as suicidal thoughts can turn to homicidal thoughts. Remember that you are not responsible for this person’s wellbeing. Threatening to kill themselves may be a way to manipulate you into staying. It is not your duty to keep your adult partner alive; it’s theirs. If they are truly suicidal and actively expressing thoughts of harming themselves, consider calling 9-1-1 and letting professionals intervene.

*Note: if your partner is put on a 5150 psychiatric hold, you risk their anger and retribution when they come home.*

### **Safety Check**

Afterwards it is normal to feel lonely. It is likely that your partner has become a huge part of your life, it is normal to feel nostalgic about good times that you had and to miss them. Reach out to trusted friends, family, and advocates and confide in someone to get support. Be gentle with yourself.

### **Safety Planning with Police**

#### **Kaizen**

1. You can text 9-1-1 if you aren’t able to talk.
2. You can speak with officers to have high-level safety planning and create an incident report with concerns about your abusive partner.
3. You can request things like a civil standby and a female officer.
4. Make sure the police know if he has any weapons.

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

## ***Connecting with the Police***

### **Calling the police for information**

Consider calling the police and asking to speak to someone about safety planning at any stage in your journey and potentially build rapport with an officer. If you do not want them to investigate, be sure to tell them that there is no crime in progress, you aren't in imminent danger, and that you are calling for information. Avoid giving your full name, address or any other identifying demographic details in case you say something during the conversation that will force them to do an investigation before you have your exit plan in place. Some police departments allow you to request security planning with an officer online, check out their website for information.

### **Texting the police**

You can text 9-1-1 in an emergency. It is preferred that you call if you can, but the police will respond to your text message. The conversation will not be recorded and stored if you text.

### **If you are calling the police**

Consider telling them about any allegations your partner is making against you. For example, that you are a danger to yourself or others and need a psychiatric hold, or that they are going to request protective orders against you.

### **Police Events**

Many police stations offer events where they connect with the public. These events are often geared towards families and are good opportunities to meet police and to ask questions.

## ***Services Offered by Police***

### **Requesting a Civil Standby**

You can request a civil standby from a police officer if either you or your partner need to return to the home you shared to retrieve personal property. Be prepared to wait for an officer to be available as this is considered a "non-emergency." *Note: they are only there to maintain peace, they are not there to determine property rights.*

### **Meeting with a police officer**

You can request for a police officer to meet you somewhere other than the police department if you fear you are being tracked. This could be Whole Foods or Trader Joes, or another location that you already frequent.

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

### **Welfare check**

You can request the police department conduct wellness checks on your child while they are with your partner. Police recommend that this be used sparingly as it can be used against you. If there are frequent safety checks and nothing is found by police, your ex partner can say that you are calling for welfare checks to harass him. He may also use the welfare checks to accuse you of disparaging him to the kids, trying to set him up to look like an abuser, and trying to alienate the children from him.

### **Filing an incident report**

Some police stations allow you to file an incident report, this allows you to document verbal, financial, technological abuses, etc. It is different from a crime report. If the police officer does not want to file a report, ask to speak with their supervisor. In Los Altos, CA you are entitled to have your report written and filed. In Los Altos you are allowed to file anonymous incident reports, you can keep the incident report number and if you are ready to come forward some day you can use the incident numbers to demonstrate that you have been documenting the abuse and safety planning with the police.

### **Police escorts**

You can call and request a police escort if you need to leave the house and are barred from leaving or afraid to leave. If you are worried that the presence of the police will make your situation worse, consider calling a trusted person to try and de-escalate the situation and help you leave safely.

### ***Things to Know***

#### **Mandated reporters**

Police are mandated reporters, if you tell them that a crime is in progress or that you are in imminent danger, they are obligated by law to file a report and/or investigate the crime. If you want to talk to the police, but fear them questioning your husband, you could consider only giving them your first name while also making it clear that there is no crime in progress, you aren't in immediate danger, and you are looking for high-level safety planning about your situation.

#### **Restraining orders in other states**

Restraining orders are enforced by police nationally. You can go to another state's courthouse and have paperwork registered at the clerk's office.

#### **Requesting a female officer**

You have the right to request a female officer, but it may take longer to receive service.

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

## **Keeping documents on you**

It is recommended that you always keep a physical copy, or photo, of the first page of any RO or custody orders.

## **Using your cell phone**

In California, if a person tries to take your phone away from you or to destroy your phone when you are trying to call for help, that is a misdemeanor[vi].

*PC 591.5 “A person who unlawfully and maliciously removes, injures, destroys, damages, or obstructs the use of any wireless communication device with the intent to prevent the use of the device to summon assistance or notify law enforcement or any public safety agency of a crime is guilty of a misdemeanor.” [vii].*

In other states it could even be considered a felony if a person tries to take your phone in order to prevent you from calling the police. Check your local laws!

## **Recording**

In California, you are allowed to record another person, but they have to know that they are being recorded. However, there is no right to privacy when in a public area. Please consult with your attorney about the laws around recording as they vary from place to place.

## ***If you are making a police report***

### **Consider bringing a support person**

Consider having a support person with you. This could be a trusted friend, family member or domestic violence advocate. If someone has witnessed the violence or abuse and can corroborate your experience, consider bringing them.

### **Calming exercises**

Recounting traumatic experiences can be distressing, consider taking a deep breath or using a breathing exercise to center yourself. One breathing exercise you can try is “straw breath,” take a deep inhale through your nose, and then exhale from your mouth as though you are blowing into a straw. Make your exhale soft as if you were blowing on a flame without putting it out.[viii]

### **Relevant information**

Police officers will try to determine what kind of crime has been committed and the lethality of the situation. Relevant information may include but not be limited to:

If your partner has warrants

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

- If your partner use any aliases
- If your partner has a restraining order against them
- If your partner has any weapons
- If your partner has strangled or choked you[ix]

### **Signing documents**

You do not have to sign any documents that you do not understand or cannot read. Consider consulting with your attorney before signing anything.

### ***If the police have come to your home***

#### **Being interviewed**

You have the right to request that you are interviewed separately from your partner. You can ask the officer discreetly if you don't want your partner to know that you asked to speak separately.

#### **Firearms in the home**

You should tell the police about any firearms you or your partner may own[x]

#### **Consider asking for victim services**

You can ask the officer for information and local resources including if there is a domestic violence unit or victim service advocate connected to their police force. You can ask the police officer to stay with you while you call for services or for help.[xi]

## **Sexual Safety Planning**

### **What is sexual abuse?**

Sexual abuse is anything that pressures or coerces you into doing something sexual that you do not want to do.[xii]

In California, spousal rape was once covered under Penal Code 262, but is now treated and punished the same as non-spousal rape (see Assembly Bill 1171).

For more information on spousal rape, go to:

<https://www.shouselaw.com/ca/defense/penal-code/261/#8.3>

<https://openstates.org/ca/bills/20212022/AB1171/>

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

## **Surviving**

Doing what you need to do to survive in the moment is not the same as giving consent. Follow your instincts and make your safety your priority.

## **Reproductive coercion**

Coercing you into a decision about your reproduction is grounds for a protective order in California as per FC 6320. You have a right to make your own decisions about reproduction. If your partner won't allow you to use birth control, consider speaking to your doctor about your options, as there are many forms of birth control today. Do what makes you feel safest.[xiii]

## **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)**

If you are concerned that you may contract an STI from your partner, talk to your doctor about ways to protect yourself.

## **Strategies to avoid sexual activity**

The National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) offers strategies to avoid sexual activity such as trying to stay in public, have friends around, or avoid times of day sexual abuse usually occurs. If you live with your partner the NDVH suggests sleeping in a separate room, staying at a friend's house, giving a medical excuse to avoid intercourse, or pretending to be ill. These are temporary strategies. If you are not able to avoid sexual activity, it is not your fault, and not trying these strategies is not consenting to have sex with your partner.

## **Private photos of you**

If your partner is forcing you to be photographed nude or to send nude photos, consider trying to keep your face and any other identifying information about you (birthmarks, tattoos, scars etc.) out of the picture. If you can, consider anything else in the photos background that could identify you and try to keep it out of the picture.[xiv]

*It is illegal for anyone to have or share sexual photos or videos of people under the age of 18.*

## **Non-consensual intimate images**

*See Technological Safety Planning for more information on the use of NCII to abuse you online.*

### **Safety Check**

Check on your emotional safety. Consider speaking with a trauma-informed counselor or therapist,

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

a sexual assault hotline, or joining a support group. You are not alone; there are providers and other survivors who can connect with you and support you wherever you are in your healing journey.

## **Medical Safety Planning**

### **Kaizen**

1. Have hard copies of your medical records and keep them in a safe place.
2. In case of a medical emergency, always call 9-1-1 for an ambulance.
3. If you have been a victim of strangulation, seek medical attention.

### **Medical records**

Consider obtaining hard copies of your medical records and keeping them with a friend or trusted person.

### **Medications**

If you have prescription medications, consider being vigilant about taking them. If your partner tries to control your medication, consider setting a boundary. If you need support taking your medication, consider looking to someone who supports your autonomy and will call you with reminders/check-ins.

### **Allergies**

If you have life-threatening allergies consider keeping your epi-pen with you at all times and having more than one in areas around the home where you eat.

### **Immediate medical attention**

If you need immediate medical attention, consider calling 9-1-1 for an ambulance instead of having your partner drive you to the hospital. There have been reports of abusive partners driving excessively slow when their partner needs to get to the hospital as soon as possible.

### **Strangulation**

If your partner has put their hands on your throat, tried to smother you or cut off your breathing, talked about strangulation as sex “play”, or threatened to strangle/choke you, take this very seriously.

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

“Victims of non-fatal strangulation are at a higher risk of being re-assaulted by their abuser/perpetrator and 750% more likely to be killed by their abuser. If the abuser/perpetrator has access to firearms the risk of being killed increases to 1100%.”[xv]

If you have been the victim of a non-fatal strangulation, consider speaking with a doctor as there can be health consequences days, months, and even years later.

Alliance for hope Strangulation Safety Plan:

<http://www.familyjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Safety-Plan-Brochure-Gen.pdf>

### **Visiting the Emergency Room**

Doctors should see you without your partner present, especially if you are coming in with injuries. Many abusers try to join in the doctor's office so that you are not safe to talk about how the injuries occurred. Consider discreetly asking your doctor to speak with them privately, knowing they need to take the blame for getting your partner out of the room.

### **Documenting Physical Injuries**

As a reminder, no part of this safety plan is legal advice. Always talk to your attorney about how best to document incidents.

You could consider taking pictures of physical injuries with a friend's phone, a disposable camera, or even your phone. If you use your phone, consider getting them printed immediately and deleting them off your phone (if you have an iPhone, also delete them from your “Recently Deleted” folder). Also, make sure to clear your history if you got the prints done online. Consider storing these pictures with a trusted friend or family member.

If taking pictures doesn't work for you, you could also consider journaling about the incident and making sure the journal is stored in a secure location. *See Safely Storing Documents and Evidence for more information.*

#### **Checklist for leaving Medical Safety**

- Medications
- Glasses, hearing aids, dental equipment, etc.
- Prescriptions

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102



Vaccination records

## **Immigration Safety Planning**

### **Concerns about immigration status**

You may qualify for immigration help under a law called the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Talk to an immigration expert (not INS) or your local domestic violence victim services program for more information.

You could also reach out to a Family Justice Center or other free legal clinics in your area that offer legal consultations from immigration attorneys.

The US Citizenship & Immigration Services states:

*The family-based immigration process generally requires U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to file a petition for their noncitizen family members. Some petitioners may misuse the immigration process to further abuse their noncitizen family members by threatening to withhold or withdraw the petition in order to control, coerce, and intimidate them.*

*With the passage of the Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (VAWA) and its subsequent reauthorizations, Congress provided noncitizens who have been abused by their U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident relative the ability to independently petition for themselves (self-petition) for immigrant classification without the abuser's knowledge, consent, or participation in the immigration process. This allows victims to seek both safety and independence from their abusers.*

*Spouses and children of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents, and parents of U.S. citizens who are 21 years of age or older, may file a self-petition for immigrant classification with USCIS. A noncitizen filing the self-petition is generally known as a VAWA self-petitioner. If USCIS approves the self-petition, VAWA self-petitioners may seek legal permanent residence and obtain a Green Card. This can be done either by consular processing if the approved self-petitioner is outside the United States or by applying for adjustment of status if the approved self-petitioner is in the United States.*

For more information, go to:

<https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/abused-spouses-children-and-parents>

## **Safety in your Routine**

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

*“Stalking is the most dramatic form of tracking and the most common behavioral component of coercive control next to assault.” – Evan Stark*

### **Varying your routines**

To defend yourself against stalking, you could consider shopping at different stores, going to different restaurants, leaving your home at varied times, changing gyms or your gym schedule and driving to work using different routes.

Be aware of your surroundings when you leave home. Be vigilant and listen to your instincts.

### **Traveling with another person**

If you can, consider traveling with another person. This could be carpooling with a coworker, running or exercising with a friend, or shopping with another person. [xvi]

### **If you feel you are being followed in your car**

If you are being followed in your car, make sure all your doors are locked and windows are closed, and consider driving to the nearest police station. Consider calling 9-1-1 on route to the police station, the 9-1-1 operator can stay on the line with you. 9-1-1 calls are recorded, too.

When you get to the police station, stay in your vehicle and if you haven't already, call 9-1-1 so that an officer can come to your car. If you cannot access your phone honk your car's horn until an officer comes out to you.

If you are out in public and feel you are being followed, consider calling the police or security to escort you to your car or home.

### **Technology and safety in your routine**

If you are varying your routine and you are still being followed and stalked, it is possible that your abuser is using technology to track you. *See our Technological Safety Planning section for more information.*

## **Building and Getting Support from your Village**

*“Controllers isolate their partners to prevent disclosure, instill dependence, express exclusive possession, monopolize their skills and resources, and keep them from getting help or support.” -Evan Stark*

### **Building your village**

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

A defense against isolation is building your village. When it is safe to do so, you could reach out to trusted people and service providers such as doctors, therapists, advocates, law enforcement, attorneys, teachers, and colleagues. Community could help protect you against the isolation your abuser has designed around you. Your village can be a part of your safety planning, your plan to escape, the new life you have designed for yourself and your journey to healing.

**Consider telling trusted neighbors and friends**

Develop a plan with them for when you may need help. Consider giving them clear instructions on what you would like them to do, and who you would like them to call or not call, including law enforcement.[xvii]

**Devise a code word or signal**

Consider devising a code word, signal or phrase you can use in a phone call, text message, video chat or social media post to ask your friends, family, or neighbors for help without your partner knowing.

**Identify someone you can call when you do not feel safe being alone**

Consider writing this person’s phone number down and keeping it in a safe place so that you can reach them if you cannot access your cell phone and need to use someone else’s.

**A note on mandated reporters**

Keep in mind that teachers, police officers, social workers, firefighters, doctors, therapists, child visitation monitors, and clergy members must file a report if they learn of or suspect any child abuse.[xviii] Be careful who you speak with and what you share while you are planning your escape.

**My Plan**

When I do not feel safe being alone, I can call: \_\_\_\_\_

When I need emotional support, I can call: \_\_\_\_\_

My local domestic violence agency’s 24-hour hotline: \_\_\_\_\_

The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

## **Technological Safety Planning**

### **Kaizen**

If it is safe to do so, you could:

1. Turn off location sharing
2. Check your car for Airtags or Google tiles
3. Change your passwords
4. Complete a hard reset of your phone and computer to take off any spyware that may have been put on your technology

### ***Authentication/Logging in***

#### **Creating and storing passwords**

If you think an account has been compromised, consider changing the password. The best passwords are at least 8 characters long (longer is better), contain upper- and lower-case letters, numbers and symbols.[xix]

Consider using different passwords for different accounts as once one is discovered all your accounts will be vulnerable. Be wary of sharing your password with anyone.

Check out this link for more information: <https://www.techsafety.org/passwordincreasesecurity>

#### **Password management**

Consider using a password management tool, it will remember all of your passwords and all you have to remember is the master password.[xx]

Many password managers can also be protected with multi-factor authentication (*see below*). Consider changing your Internet browser settings so that it does not remember any of your passwords or credit card information. *Note: if you use a password manager, you may risk your abuser getting your password to the management tool, and then they would then have access to all of your passwords.*

#### **Security questions**

Your partner may know the name of your first pet, the name of the high school you went to, and your mother's maiden name. Consider making up answers to these questions that you will be able to remember so that your information and accounts are secure from people who know you.[xxi]

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### **Multi-factor authentication**

Many online accounts offer two-factor authentication; a way of identifying yourself once with a password and then a second time with another authentication method. This second kind of authentication is often a code sent to your phone, a physical key, or even your fingerprint.[xxii]

Popular keys are YubiKeys or Titan Keys. You can set up a key as a necessary authentication step when logging into accounts. That means that you need to physically have this key in order to log into the account.[xxiii]

Be sure to set up two keys and store one in a safe place. If you lose the key and do not have a backup you will be locked out of your account.

### **Signing in with your Google, Facebook, Instagram, etc. account**

Be careful using your Google, Facebook, Instagram etc. account to sign into another service. If ever one account is compromised, the other accounts will be vulnerable as well.[xxiv]

## ***Using the Internet***

### **Personal devices**

Your personal devices (computer, laptop, tablet, phone, etc) may be monitored. Consider acting as though they have been compromised when you are doing sensitive work and research. Your computer stores information about your web activity and that information can be retrieved. Consider avoiding using technology shared with your partner to research anything you would not want your partner to discover.

If you are on a shared cellular plan with your partner, or you share the same cell phone carrier, consider switching to a carrier where they do not have an account.

### **Safer computers**

These can be found at your local library, shelter, workplace, or computer technology center. Consider using a trusted person's device, keeping in mind they may learn what you are searching and doing on their device.

If it is safe to do so, you could consider purchasing a Google Chromebook as these have a “power wash” feature. This function would allow you to basically have a brand new computer every day as it

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EIN: 81-5015102

would wipe the computer of any spyware. Google Chromebooks also are extremely hard to hack into when they are closed shut.

### **Your Internet router at home**

When choosing your router, consider finding one that has network level protection, that updates automatically, has signed firmware updates, and device quarantine. Try to find a router that is easy to navigate and control. Other features that can be useful are parental controls, and guest networks so that you can keep your network private from anyone needing an internet connection in your home.[xxv]

If you have children that come and go from your home to dad's house, you could consider getting a separate network for your kids. This way your technology is still more secure if your kids' technology is being monitored by dad.

### **Virtual Private Networks (VPN)**

Free public Wi-Fi may not be a safe option. A VPN can provide security when you are using your device outside of your home. A VPN creates a private network within the public Wi-Fi that you are using by masking your IP address. This can help to keep your web activity private.[xxvi]

### ***Accounts***

#### **Netflix and other streaming services**

Netflix allows you to control who is using your account. If your ex is using your account, you can go into your settings and remove them. After removing them, safety plan because this is another indication that you are taking back your power and he is losing control.

<https://www.indiewire.com/2022/11/netflix-password-sharing-account-access-1234782617/>

### ***Helpful Devices, Providers and Apps***

#### **Burner phones**

If you believe your phone has been compromised, consider getting a burner phone such as "Tracfone" from BestBuy, Target, Amazon, anywhere that sells burner phones. This is a phone that is not connected to you in any way. You can purchase data for the phone by purchasing a "minutes card." Consider making these purchases in cash or using a prepaid credit card.

#### **Charging cords**

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EIN: 81-5015102

There are charging cables that also act as recording devices, so you could consider getting your charging cord from the company of your phone. You could add an identifying mark on the cable you know is safe (something subtle like a pin prick).

If you are in the home that you shared with your abusive partner, you could consider getting rid of all charging cords that aren't yours.

### **Thumb drives**

Know what you are buying. Buy reputable brands that are from reputable stores.

### **Phone Settings**

When you update your system, check your settings again. Make a note of what they are so you don't have to figure it out again.

Also, know what apps are on your phone. Delete any apps that don't look familiar to you and double check that the apps are what they say they are. Sometimes, apps can be disguised as the "calculator," for example even though its purpose is something completely different.

### **iWatch/Smart Watch**

If your partner has your iWatch and knows where you live, they can come around your home and connect the watch to your phone then track your location using the watch.

If you have your iWatch on you it can be a helpful device as you can call 9-1-1 and record quickly.

### **Faraday bags**

These are bags that block radio frequency signals from being sent or received from your device. If you suspect your technology is being hacked remotely, consider keeping your cell phone or burner phone turned off and in a faraday pouch. [xxvii]

### **Signal**

Consider downloading the Signal app for encrypted calling and texting. *Note: Be careful. If your partner has Signal, he will get a notification. Don't allow Signal to have access to your contacts to make sure other people in your contacts (if they have Signal) don't get notified that you also downloaded it.*

### **ProtonMail**

ProtonMail is an email provider that uses encryption to secure emails. [xxviii]

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EIN: 81-5015102

## ***Social Media***

### **Social media settings**

Consider going into the settings of your social media apps and switching your accounts to private mode. You can block people on many social media sites, but consider that this may hinder your ability to know if abuse is escalating or your ability to document the abuse.[xxix]

### **Posting on social media**

Consider that posting in real time where you are or what you are doing can give your abusive partner clues as to where you are. Consider posting when you have changed locations. You may also want to avoid tagging the locations from where you are posting as this can give an abusive partner information about your routine.

### **Removing images from social media**

The State of California Department of Justice lists how to have images removed from Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Yahoo on their website:

<https://oag.ca.gov/cyberexploitation/appendix>.

Consider consulting a cybersecurity expert for more help removing images from the Internet.

California laws on non-consensual sexual images:

**CRIMINAL:** California penal code 647 (j)(4) states it is a misdemeanor to post sexually explicit images or videos of a person online, without permission...

For more information: <https://www.shouselaw.com/ca/defense/penal-code/647j4/>

**CIVIL:** California Civil Code Section 1708.85 provides an individual with the right to bring a private cause of action against any person who, without consent, intentionally distributes nude or sexual imagery of that individual where the person should have known that there was a reasonable expectation that the imagery would remain private and the individual suffers damages (including, for example, loss of reputation, shame, hurt feelings and damage to profession or occupation). The statute also provides that the action may be brought using a pseudonym and that injunctive relief is available.

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EIN: 81-5015102



For more information:

<https://withoutmyconsent.org/50state/state-guides/california/statutory-civil-law/#civil-revenge-porn-law>

## ***Tracking***

### **Location sharing**

If you are sharing your location with your partner and it is safe to do, consider going into your phone settings and disabling sharing. Just turning off your iPhone does not disable the visibility of your location.

*Keep in mind that turning off your location sharing may signal to your partner that you are taking control back.*

If it is not safe to disable location sharing, consider parking far away from a location you would not want your partner to know you were visiting, such as a police station or attorneys office, and then keeping your phone in the trunk of your car.

### **Tracking devices**

Apple AirTags, AirPods, and Google tiles can be used to track your location. If you suspect you are being tracked with an AirTag, the AirGuard – AirTag protection app is one way to check if there are AirTags hidden around you.

### **Hiring a private investigator with tech expertise**

Consider hiring a private investigator with tech expertise to scan your car for tracking devices, hidden cameras or recording devices.

GDPR <https://gdpr-info.eu/> (?)

### **Features on your car**

Does your car have a “smart” radio, OnStar, is it a Tesla, or does it have an app on it created to track car thieves? These can also be used to stalk you. If your car does have emergency features, check with your car provider who they contact in an emergency and make sure that all the information they have is yours.

A dashboard camera can be tampered with and used as a recording device.

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EIN: 81-5015102

*Other*

**Impersonating you via email, text message, and social media**

If your abuser or one of his “flying monkeys” is impersonating you online, you could consider:

Reporting the page/account

Asking friends and family to report the page as well

Making a post of your own, alerting your friends not to accept anything from this page (if it is safe to post about the fake account)

For more information:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/what-should-you-do-someone-tries-impersonate-online-suryawanshi/>

For more tips on technology safety planning see:

<https://nnedv.org/content/technology-safety/>

<https://goaskrose.com/>

<https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors>

**My Plan**

Safer device I have access to: \_\_\_\_\_

The encrypted communication app I will use is: \_\_\_\_\_

The two-factor authentication tool I will use is: \_\_\_\_\_

I checked my car for tracking devices and found: \_\_\_\_\_

## Checklist for leaving Technology

- Preparing
  - Get any and all USB sticks, SD cards, or hard drives
  - Take your cell phone, laptop, tablet, etc.
  - Consider buying a burner phone
  - Take any old cell phones you can find
  - Consider making a list of your most used Internet accounts, for example social media accounts and email accounts.
- Once you escaped
  - Change passwords
  - Change Internet router
  - Create Protonmail
  - Check car for tracking devices
  - Purchase burner phone

## Safely Storing Documents and Evidence

### Technology as evidence for a legal case

If you believe your technology has been compromised, consider reaching out to a cybersecurity expert with a private investigator's license that can do a forensic analysis of your device and then store the evidence and testify in court. Talk with your attorney about the role a private investigator can play in your case.

### Where to store your documents

Consider keeping your documents somewhere your partner cannot access like at a trusted person's home, at work, in a safety deposit box, a storage unit, or a PO Box. Beware of statements being sent to your address. Consider using a trusted person's address as your own.

### Executive Summary

WomenSV can provide you with tools to document incidents and allegations and then distill your case into a one-to-two-page summary you can adapt to the audience of your choosing. This summary can include background information, a summary of the abuse, your main concerns and your goals in

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EIN: 81-5015102

communicating with your audience. The process can help you with how to organize your information and evidence.

### **Getting copies of documents**

If you are living with your partner and preparing to escape, you could consider making copies of important documents if it is safe to do so. You could hide these copies with a trusted person, at work, or even hiding them in plain sight in a binder labeled something he would not be interested in (ex: labeling a binder as “Poetry”). Ask your attorney what documents might be important to make copies of.

### **Checklist for leaving Documentation**

- Find a safe place to store documents.
- Make copies of documents when you can't take originals. Be sure to replace the documents exactly as you found them.
- Get all personal documents for you, your partner and your children:
  - Birth certificates
  - Marriage certificate
  - Passport, children's passports, copy of your partner's passport
  - Immigration documentation (Visa, green card, etc.; copy of your partner's immigration)
  - Driver's license, copy of your partner's driver's license
  - Social security card, copy of partner's card or number
  - Health insurance cards for you and your children
  - Copy of partner's health insurance card or medical record number
  - Family accountant's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
  - Your medical records, your children's, any medical record info you have on partner
  - Your family financial adviser's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
- Credit and Debit Cards
- School records
- Rental agreement
- Car title, registration, insurance

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EIN: 81-5015102

- Property deed/title
- Insurance information
- Your bank information (account and routing number)-joint and personal
- Your partner's bank information
- Legal papers, TRO, etc.

## **Financial Safety Planning**

*“Perpetrators deprive partners of money and other vital resources in more than half of all abusive relationships.” – Evan Stark*

### **Gather financial records**

Consider gathering financial records and storing them in a secure location or with a trusted person.

These records include but are not limited to:

- Bank statements
- Credit card statements
- Insurance records

Documents you will need to open bank accounts:

- Driver's license
- Passport
- Social security cards for you and your children

### **Opening a bank account in your name**

If it is possible, consider opening a bank account in your name and putting in any money that you can, no matter how small.

When choosing a bank try to find one neither you or your partner have relationships with to avoid accounts linking or any sharing of information you haven't consented to. Consider choosing a bank where you can speak with the manager and explain that you need the account to remain private from your spouse.

Consider setting the account to paperless and giving either a P.O. Box number or a trusted person's address as your address.

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EIN: 81-5015102

Consider having a plan if your partner discovers that you have this account.[xxx]

### **Line of credit and credit card**

Consider opening a line of credit in case of an emergency, or getting a credit card that's entirely your own through your new bank. This will help you develop your credit score.

Your PG&E bill establishes a residence and it can help you build your credit.

### **Legal Trust**

You can start a trust and put your assets such as a car into it and your abusive partner can't find them. You name the trust and you can give it a name that your abusive partner would not know.

### **Certified Divorce Financial Analysts (CDFAs)**

A Certified Divorce Financial Analyst (CDFA) can help you navigate the financial aspects of separating from your partner. They can help you estimate what a settlement might look like, how assets could be distributed and then help you with short-term and long-term financial planning.

### **Secure your accounts**

Consider securing all your financial accounts. *See the Technological Safety Planning section.*

Accounts may include but are not limited to:

- Online banking
- Utilities
- Government websites
- Online portals for accounting firms

You can also request that your bank change your account numbers, any other access codes or security questions associated with the account.[xxxi] Remember, the answers to security questions do not need to be true, especially when your abuser would know your mothers maiden name, your elementary school, the town you were born in, etc.

### **Victim Compensation Programs**

In California, if you have been the victim of a crime, you may be eligible for assistance with costs related to the crime. A Victim Advocate at the District Attorney's office can assist you with applying for compensation. Examples of costs it can assist with include medical and counseling bills or installing security cameras in your home.[xxxii]

### **Consider asking your attorney about finances**

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EIN: 81-5015102

You can ask that your partner pays for your legal fees. You may be entitled to spousal support payments, child support payments, restitution for damages, use of the residence, and can also ask to put a hold on your partner's access to accounts and assets.[xxxiii] Protection orders can include economic relief in some jurisdictions.[xxxiv]

### **Estate planning**

If you have left your partner, consider reviewing all your estate planning documents and making changes so that they do not have any rights, powers or benefits in the case of your death.[xxxv] Consider being specific about how children can use the money they inherit so that it cannot be stolen by the abusive parent.

### **Consider taking funds when you leave**

Consider taking half of the funds immediately when you leave. You could consider taking more than half if you are leaving with your children. Speak with your attorney about documenting this and being transparent with the court system. Document any use of this money as you may be asked to account for it later.[xxxvi] This is about being able to access money that could be moved and hidden from both you and the court later making it difficult to fight for an equitable division of assets.

### **Direct deposits and automatic payments**

If you have income that goes directly into an account that your partner has access to, consider changing the direct deposit information at the time you leave.

Make a list of automatic payments that your partner may cancel and make any changes you need to ensure that important payments go through after you have separated from your partner.

### **Change Personal Identification Numbers (PINs)**

Consider changing PINs on existing account access cards.

### **Insurance policies**

Reach out to insurance companies (car, life, home, renters, medical, etc.) and let them know that no changes should be made until the divorce is final.

### **Checklist for leaving Finances**

- Consider making a list of your most used online financial accounts, for example,

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EIN: 81-5015102

Bank websites, IRA/Roth websites, Brokerage website

- ATM cards
- Credit cards
- Checkbook
- Cash cards/Prepaid credit cards
- Cash (withdraw cash slowly, or take as much as you can the day you leave)
- Arrange for your income to be deposited in an account your partner does not have access to.
- Gather and/or make copies of income tax returns for the past 5 years.

## **Legal Safety Planning**

### **Get legal advice from an attorney**

Find a lawyer knowledgeable about domestic violence to explore custody, visitation and divorce provisions that protect you and the children. Consider reading WomenSV’s guide “Finding the Right Attorney,” when interviewing attorneys and figuring out if that attorney understands coercive control.

### **Free or sliding scale legal advice in your community**

Consider contacting your local domestic violence Victim Services Program at the District Attorney’s office, the Self-Help Center at the courthouse, or a Family Justice Center. There are also non-profits that give legal advice or representation to victims of domestic violence. Consider speaking to an advocate about resources in your area.

### **Consider the pros and cons of getting a restraining order**

Discuss getting a restraining order as an option with either your attorney or one of the free or sliding scale legal resources mentioned above. You could make a list of pros and cons to obtaining a RO and discussing what is best in your situation.

PROS	CONS

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EIN: 81-5015102




### **Batterers Intervention Programs**

Your abuser may be ordered to attend a Batterers' Intervention Program. Talk with the program to find out more about potential risks to you while your partner or ex-partner participates.

#### **Checklist for leaving Legal**

- Do you have any evidence of the abuse?
- Take copies of any proof you have
- Make backups and store them in a secure location
- Are you considering a Restraining Order (RO)? Do you have a trusted person who can help you draft RO pleadings on their computer?
- Are you considering filing for divorce? If you are secretly interviewing attorneys, consider trying to pay them in cash so that there is no paper trail.

### **Safety Planning for Court**

#### **Kaizen**

1. Consider having a friend, Uber, or Lyft take you to the courthouse
2. Bring a support person and stay with them throughout the day
3. Speak with the bailiff voicing your concerns for your safety
4. Increase safety planning if you have a win in court

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EIN: 81-5015102

## *Getting to the courthouse*

### **Transportation**

Consider having a friend or family member drive you to the courthouse in a car your partner would not recognize. If you cannot have a friend or family member drive you consider taking a taxi, Uber, or Lyft so that you do not have to park and/or walk to the courthouse alone.[xxxvii]

### **Who can be there to support you?**

Consider bringing a friend, family member or domestic violence advocate for support and added safety in the courthouse. You can also ask your local police department if they can meet you somewhere other than the courthouse and walk you inside. Once you are inside, you can ask them to wait with you until you can find the bailiff or the courthouse security and let them know your safety concerns. Consider trying to sit near the court officers/security guards if you can.

## *Inside the courthouse*

### **Stay with your support person**

Even if you are going to the washroom, consider asking your support person to come with you or wait outside the washroom for you.

### **Knowing the layout**

You can go to your courthouse in the days or weeks before your court date and walk around, find your courtroom, and locate the security desk. You can even listen to other court cases appearing before your judge. Or you can find someone who knows the courthouse well like a domestic violence advocate and ask them about places you can sit and wait and where the exits are.[xxxviii]

### **Communicating with the bailiff**

You can ask the bailiff or the courthouse security to keep your abuser away from you. You can tell the bailiff or courthouse security if your abuser is harassing you or sitting near you. Restraining orders are still in effect in the courthouse so if they violate the restraining order you can report it.[xxxix]

## *Leaving the courthouse*

### **Increase safety planning**

If you have won anything in court, no matter how small, your abuser could perceive this as a loss of power and control. Even if you have not won, any changes to custody, support, a restraining order etc.

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EIN: 81-5015102

brings new potential vulnerabilities. Increase vigilance and safety planning in all areas of your life after any success you have in the courtroom.

**Avoiding your partner at the courthouse**

After the hearing you can ask that your abuser be detained so that you can leave the courthouse safely. If this is not granted, consider asking a police officer or security officer to walk you to your car, or asking a friend or family member to meet you at the courthouse and either drive you home or walk you to your car.[xl]

***Zoom Court Hearings***

**Post-its**

If seeing your partner on Zoom is triggering or stressful for you, consider putting a post-it over their square. Anything you can do to increase your comfort so that you can focus on the information you are hearing, is important!

**My Plan**

I will travel to the courthouse safely via: \_\_\_\_\_

A trusted person who can accompany me is: \_\_\_\_\_

Safety measures I will take after the hearing are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I will leave the courthouse safely via: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

## **Safety at Work**

### **Consider telling someone**

Decide whom at work you will inform of your situation, especially if you have a Restraining Order. This may include office security, if available. Provide a picture of the abuser if possible. It is your right to request and expect confidentiality from those you disclose to.

<https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/domestic-violence-and-the-rights-of-domestic-violence-victims.html>

### **Screen your calls**

Arrange to have someone screen and log your phone calls if possible.

### **Make a safety plan**

Create a safety plan for when you enter and leave your workplace. Where do you park your car? The closer you are to the entrance the safer you will be. Is it well lit? Is there security at your workplace and if so, do you have their direct line in case you need to call for help? Can you have someone escort you to your vehicle? Is Lyft or Uber or some other ridesharing/carpooling an option?

### **Sharing a workplace with your partner**

If you and your abuser work at the same place, consider discussing your options with your supervisor regarding scheduling, safety precautions, employee/family benefits.

### **Legal rights in the workplace**

Your employer must allow you to use vacation days, personal leave days, or compensatory time so that you can take actions to protect yourself, for example you may need to take time off work to file a restraining order. You also have the right to request reasonable accommodations to ensure your safety at work if you are the victim of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.[xli]

### **Individualized safety planning with an advocate**

Every workplace is unique and has different strengths, resources and vulnerabilities. For this reason, consider contacting your local domestic violence victim program to receive additional information about workplace safety and individualized safety planning.

### **Warning about app-based services such as DoorDash**

Does your work allow people to come into the building to deliver food? This is an area of vulnerability if your abuser is trying to get into the building to harm you or your colleagues. Schools have begun to

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EIN: 81-5015102

restrict such food deliveries because of security concerns, this might be something to discuss with management and security where you work.

### **Checklist for leaving Work**

- Any items you need for your job that are currently in your home:
  - Documents
  - Uniform
  - Equipment
  - Identification
  - Keys
- School transcripts, any documents you need to apply for work

## **Safety at School**

### ***While in the Relationship***

#### **Has your partner changed your relationship with school or your career aspirations?**

If your partner is finding subtle or overt ways to discourage your academic success, your relationships with mentors, teachers, and counselors, this is a red flag. If it is safe to do so, consider setting a boundary, telling your partner what is important to you and your future. Does your partner respect that boundary and support your plans for your future?

### ***If You have left the Relationship***

#### **What support and services does your school offer?**

Schools are aware that intimate partner violence and abuse happens and should have support and policies in place to protect students. Can you inquire, or have a trusted friend inquire about what your school can do to help?

#### **Consider changing your route and traveling with a trusted person**

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P.O. Box 3982, Los Altos, CA 94024

EIN: 81-5015102

If possible, consider varying the way you get to school, what route you take and how you get to class. If possible, consider commuting with a safe person.

**Who can you spend time with between classes?**

Consider spending time with someone between classes so that you are not alone.

**Safer spaces in school**

Consider what spaces in school feel safe for you? Is there a counselor's office that is open to you? A space in the library that is near an exit and usually busy with students? A lounge that is well monitored by your school's security?

**Who can come and get you?**

If you need to leave school immediately, who can come and pick you up or accompany you home? Consider writing down this person's name and contact information and keeping it somewhere separate from your phone in the event you cannot access your phone.

**My Plan**

The person I can talk to at school about resources and accommodations is: \_\_\_\_\_

The person I can spend time with between classes is: \_\_\_\_\_

A space I can go to feel safe at school is: \_\_\_\_\_

In case of an emergency, I can call: \_\_\_\_\_

Their contact information is: \_\_\_\_\_

**Safety with Children**

**Safety Check**

Your partner will typically not be thinking of the best interest of the child, rather they will be

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EIN: 81-5015102

thinking about destroying you, taking everything, and using the children as pawns, spies, tools, resources, and trophies of war.

### **Consider connecting your child with other trusted adults they can talk to**

If your partner does something to your child and they speak to a therapist, counselor, or teacher about it, that person can become another advocate for the safety of your child.

### **Consider reminding your children that you are there for them.[xlii]**

Abusive partners sometimes try to divide and isolate family members. Consider creating grounding moments where you remind your children that you are there for them and love them.

### ***While living in the home with your partner and children***

#### **Consider talking to your children about what to do in an emergency.**

**WHO** should they contact in an emergency?

This can be a trusted family member, friends, neighbors, or local service providers.

**HOW** can they reach them?

Do they have access to a phone, could they go to a neighbor's, do they have a computer or tablet they can use to message an emergency service or trusted person?

**WHEN** should they reach out for help?

Consider talking to them about different kinds of emergencies, and planning with them when they should leave the home and go to a predetermined safe location, and when they should call for help.[xliii]

#### **Consider creating code words**

Code words can be established as a signal to leave the house and to call for help. Consider making sure that children know the code word is secret and should not be shared with anyone.

#### **Identify a safer/comforting space**

Consider identifying a place in the house that your children can go to if they are afraid. Consider placing things in this space that can distract and comfort your child so that they can focus on being comfortable. Consider instructing them to stay away from higher risk areas such as the kitchen and bathrooms. [xliv]

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**Consider teaching them not to intervene in violent situations**

They may want to protect you and intervene in violent situations. Consider telling them that their primary responsibility is their own safety. The safest intervention they can perform is getting to safety themselves and calling for help.[xlv]

**Consider what you will do if your children tell your partner your plans**

Make a plan for what you will do if your children share what you have told them with your partner. Consider that they should never be blamed for their response to your partner’s abusive behavior.[xlvi]

**My Plan**

In an emergency my children know to contact: \_\_\_\_\_

They can contact them via: \_\_\_\_\_

An alternative way they can contact them is: \_\_\_\_\_

When my children are afraid, a safer space in the home is: \_\_\_\_\_

When I say the code word, my children know to leave the house and walk to: \_\_\_\_\_

***While living separately from your partner and sharing custody of your children***

Safety Planning in the home and school

**If your ex shows up at the door unannounced**

You may want to have a safety planning conversation with your children to let them know that no one is allowed in the house without your permission, not even the other parent. If the other parent shows up knocking at the door demanding to be let in, they are immediately to come and get you. If you are not at home, they are not to allow the other parent into the home. If your children are very young, you

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EIN: 81-5015102



may want to install electronic locks on the inside of doors that lead to the outside world. Locks that only you have the passcode to. Even if your children agree in advance to follow your directions, sometimes they can be persuaded by a controlling parent to open the door, even if it means disobeying you.

### **If your ex shows up at school to pick up the kids unplanned**

Talk about if dad shows up at school to pick you up unplanned. For example, if dad shows up at school to pick you up unexpectedly, tell him you forgot a book and need to run into the school to grab it, and then call your safe parent from school.

## Safety Planning Children's Technology

### **Devices going back and forth**

Do devices travel from your ex-partner's house to yours? You could consider setting a separate Internet account for your kids. That way, your ex isn't able to get on your WiFi if he were monitoring the kids' technologies. *See Technological Safety Planning for more information.*

### **Tracking Devices**

If your abusive partner is tracking your children's devices, you could consider asking the kids to turn that feature off if your ex doesn't know where you live. You could ask your attorney how to get that in a court order, allowing you to turn your kids' locations off when they are with you, if you are worried that he may use that against you in court.

If you would like to track your kids while they are with their dad to ensure they are safe and where they should be, you could consider downloading the Find My Kids app, using Apple Airpods as a tracking device, or getting them an iWatch or Gizmo watch depending on their age.

Have a safety plan in place if your abusive partner found Apple Airpods or other tracking devices in the childrens' backpacks.

### **What to do if your ex asks the kids to turn location settings on**

Talk to your kids about what to do if dad asks them to turn on their location services, so that he can track them.

### **Downloading safety app**

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EIN: 81-5015102

Your kids could also download the e-bodyguard app. *See Safety at Home – Preparing for an Explosive Incident.*

### **My Plan**

My kids will do this if dad shows up at the door: \_\_\_\_\_

My kids will do this if dad comes to school unplanned: \_\_\_\_\_

My kids will say this if dad asks them to turn location services on: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Custody Order: Anticipating the loopholes

#### **Phone calls**

Consider including details in the custody order about when ex-partner can call the house to speak with the children. For example if the order is vague and it is a call once a week your ex-partner may call Saturday at 11pm or Monday at 6am and if the children don't come to the phone, they can accuse you of gatekeeping. If this is happening already consider keeping a detailed phone log.

#### **Asking the kids where mom lives**

If your ex doesn't know where you live, he may be asking the kids where they live with you, asking about what's close-by, the number on the house, how long does it take to drive to school, etc. You could consider letting your attorney know this tactic and having it explicitly stated in the court order that he is not allowed to ask questions about your whereabouts.

#### **Contact at custody exchanges**

Even if there is a RO in place, you could consider writing out details about the custody exchanges. Maybe stating things like his car must remain "x" amount of feet from yours, he cannot approach your

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EIN: 81-5015102

car, he cannot engage in intimidating behavior. If the kids are old enough, you could consider writing out that the kids can walk to and from your car to his. If they are not old enough, you could write out that your trusted person who comes with you to exchanges will walk them to and from your car. If you do not have a trusted person, you could ask that he remain in the car while you walk the kids to and from your car. Talk to your attorney about recording these exchanges.

### **Communication on Our Family Wizard, Talking Parents, etc.**

You may be court-ordered to speak with each other about the kids on apps like Our Family Wizard or Talking Parents. He may use this to bombard you with messages at all hours of the day and not about the kids. He then may accuse you of parental alienation if you do not respond immediately. You could make sure the custody agreement states that you will respond to his messages on Sundays, you have 48-hours to respond to his message – whatever you are comfortable with and works best for your situation. You could talk with your attorney about what is best for you.

*See [Ending the Relationship](#) for more information on the “gray rock” method when communicating with him.*

### [Safety Planning for Custody Exchanges](#)

#### **Consider making exchanges in a safer location**

Although your home or your partner’s home provides the convenience of only one parent traveling, it can create situations where you or your children are vulnerable. Consider meeting in a safer place that is public and has cameras outside such as a restaurant, store, or even your local police station.

#### **Consider bringing a trusted person**

You can also consider asking a trusted person to make custody exchanges for you.[xlvi]

#### **Custody exchanges without interacting with your partner**

Consider finding a way to exchange children without seeing your partner. One way is to use school pick up and drop off to do exchanges.[xlviii]

## **Safety Check**

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EIN: 81-5015102

Exchanges can create anxiety and distress. Consider planning to do something before exchanges to calm nerves you and your children may be feeling. Consider planning something afterwards for yourself and/or your children that is fun and distracting. [xlix]

### **My Plan**

I can call this person when I need support doing exchanges: \_\_\_\_\_

Before making an exchange my children and I can calm our nerves by: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

After making exchanges my children and I can have a fun and distracting time by: \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

After I drop off my kids, I can do this as self-care: \_\_\_\_\_

---

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### Safety Planning for Supervised Visitation

#### **Court order**

Consider having it written in the court order that your ex-partner has to have left the area before the survivor enters it.

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EIN: 81-5015102

## Safety Planning for Unsupervised Visitation

### **Make a safety plan with your children**

Consider safety planning with them in the same way you would for your home. How can they safely exit? Help them to identify the closest public phone, who they can contact in an emergency, where the closest safe place to go on foot is, or the closest trusted neighbor.

### **Consider giving your children access to a phone/device**

If it is possible, consider giving your children a cell phone that can be used in emergency situations. Tablets and certain smart watches also have the ability to call emergency services. If they cannot have a phone or Tablet, you could consider getting something like a Gizmo watch. These watches have text features, so they can communicate with you, have GPS tracking services, and your children would be able to contact emergency services. *See Children and Technology for more information.*

## Safety Planning for Escaping with Children

### **Filing a Good Cause Report**

If you are fleeing domestic violence with your children, consider calling your District Attorney's office to file a Good Cause Report. This could help prevent your ex from being able to accuse you of parental kidnapping.

The Santa Clara County's District Attorney's Office states:

*"If you are fleeing domestic violence with your children, you must file a "good cause report" with the District Attorney's Child Abduction Unit within ten days of leaving your home with the children. This report lets the authorities know that you are fleeing domestic violence and are not merely abducting your children. You may request a "Good Cause" Reporting Form by calling (408) 792-2921"*

For more information in Santa Clara see the Parental Child Abduction and Parental Visitation Violations pamphlet:

<https://countyda.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb1121/files/Child%20Ab%20ENG%20VER%200421.pdf>

For more information in other counties, check with your District Attorney's office.

### **Checklist for leaving With your Children**

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EIN: 81-5015102

- Comforting items and toys
- Documents (see checklist above)
- Medical necessities (see checklist above)
- Financial documents (see checklist above)
- Technology they need
- Anything they need for school, uniforms, books, etc.
- Good Cause Report

## **Safety Planning while Pregnant**

### **In your home**

If you live in a home with stairs, try to spend your time on the first floor. Increase safety planning in the home (*see Safety Planning at Home*).

### **If you cannot avoid violence**

Pregnancy is a time of heightened risk for violence. If violence is unavoidable and you are not able to escape, assume the fetal position and cover your stomach with your arms. This can help to protect you and your pregnancy.[i]

### **Your medical team**

Doctors are mandated reporters. If you have decided that you are ending the relationship, a health care provider may be able to assist you in your plans to leave.[ii]

### **Doctors' visits**

If your partner goes to doctor's appointments with you and you would like to speak with your doctor alone, consider asking the receptionist to help you by providing an excuse why you need to speak with your doctor alone.[iii]

### **Prenatal classes**

If you can, consider finding a prenatal class that limits attendance to the person giving birth. This has the potential to be a safer space for you to discuss pregnancy and may give you the opportunity to speak with the instructor privately.[iiii]

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EIN: 81-5015102

## **Safety And Emotional Health**

### **Kaizen**

It's time to take care of yourself. Here is a few tips how:

1. See a trauma-informed and coercive-control-informed therapist
2. Attend support groups filled with sisters just like you
3. Speak to a domestic violence advocate to discuss more ways to take care of yourself
4. Set aside time to do something for you
5. Remember you can't pour from an empty cup

### **Self-care**

Everyone should practice self-care, but especially people who have experienced abuse and trauma. Consider any practice that gives you energy, increases positive emotions, makes you feel connected to others, and helps you stay healthy self-care. Your mind, body and soul come under attack when you are being abused by an intimate partner, consider self-care activities that heal each part of yourself. WomenSV has a handout full of self-care ideas if you don't know where to start.

### **Practice positive self-talk**

You don't deserve to be hit or threatened. You deserve to be treated like an equal, with respect. You deserve to be emotionally and physically safe in your own home, at school, online and anywhere else you go. You are worthy of love, respect, success, and safety. You may not believe all of those things right now because of the brainwashing and thought reform that happens during abuse. The more you hear positive talk, the more you will believe it. The more you believe it, the better your mindset. Thus, a better chance at success of whatever your next step is.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/01/31/the-power-of-positive-self-talk/?sh=17303e753a15>

### **Learn about intimate partner violence and abuse**

Ask your local domestic violence victim services program and public library for materials that deal with domestic violence. Go to [loveisrespect.org](http://loveisrespect.org) or [thehotline.org](http://thehotline.org) to read about healthy relationships, intimate partner violence and more safety planning.

### **Get support**

Call a domestic violence crisis help-line to connect with advocates (online, by text, or by phone), join a support group, and learn more about yourself and your relationship.

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EIN: 81-5015102

### **Do what is safe for you**

If you have to communicate with your abuser, arrange to do so in a way that makes you feel safe whether by phone, mail or in the company of another person.

### **Take good care of yourself**

You are in a fight for your freedom and deserve to live in peace and be safe in your home and so do your children. We are glad you found us. You are not on this road alone anymore – we can't travel it for you but we can be there alongside you for as long as you want and we will do everything we can to support you every step of the way.

## **Spiritual Safety Planning**

### **Spiritual Center/Place of Worship**

If your partner is a member of your spiritual or religious community consider finding another community that you can join if/when you leave.

Keep in mind that if you speak with the clergy about your situation and detail incidents of child abuse, they must file a report with social services. Clergy are mandated reporters.

## **Safety Planning with Animals**

### ***While you are living with an abusive partner***

#### **Consider registering your pet as an emotional support animal**

This will allow you to bring your pet with you to a safe location such as a shelter.

#### **Consider keeping emergency provisions**

This will help in the event your abuser withholds the resources you need to care for your pet.[liv]

#### **Know your nearest emergency clinic**

Consider saving the phone number and address of the nearest 24-hour emergency veterinary clinic in a safe place.

#### **Establish proof of ownership**

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EIN: 81-5015102



Having your pet vaccinated in your name, having veterinary records in your name and licensing your pet in your area under your name will help you to prove they are your pet. If they are microchipped make sure you are the contact associated with the chip.[lv]

### ***If you are planning to leave an abusive partner***

#### **Identify temporary care**

Speak to your veterinarian, family and friends about finding temporary care if you are planning to leave your abuser. There are services that can assist domestic violence survivors with sheltering their animals.[lvi]

Resources for Escaping with a Pet

[About Safe Havens \(safehavensforpets.org\)](http://safehavensforpets.org)

#### **Including pet on RO**

In California your pet can be included in a protective order.

California Family Code 6320-6327 - “Effective 2014, the law was amended so that, on a showing of good cause, the court may include in a protective order a grant to the petitioner of the exclusive care, possession, or control of any animal owned, possessed, leased, kept, or held by either the petitioner or the respondent or a minor child residing in the residence or household of either the petitioner or the respondent.” [lvii]

#### **Checklist for leaving With your Pet**

- Food
- Carrier
- Toys
- Bedding
- ID and rabies tag (if you have a dog or cat)
- Medications
- Copies of medical records (veterinary or vaccination records)
- Important phone numbers including your vet
- Documents of ownership (receipts from adoption or purchase, license to

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EIN: 81-5015102

establish ownership, receipts for purchases you made for the animal)

### ***While living alone***

#### **Consider changing your pet's routine**

Consider changing the locations you routinely brought them before leaving your abuser. This can include the veterinarian, the park, and the pet store you brought them to.

#### **Consider keeping your pet indoors**

If you have left, consider keeping your pet indoors, not leaving them outside alone, and picking a safe routine and time of day to walk them. [lviii]

*“We’re not on our journey to save the world but to save ourselves. But in doing that you save the world. The influence of a vital person vitalizes.” - Joseph Campbell*

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[i] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-while-living-with-an-abusive-partner/>

[ii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-while-living-with-an-abusive-partner/>

[iii] <https://www.sos.ca.gov/registries/safe-home/about-safeathome>

[iv] Stark, 2009, p. 277

[v] <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4768593/#ref1>

[vi]

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=591.5.&lawCode=PEN](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=591.5.&lawCode=PEN)

[vii]

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=591.5.&lawCode=PEN](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=591.5.&lawCode=PEN)

[viii] Sharmila SKY Breath teacher from Art of Living

[ix] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/reporting-to-police-options-tips-for-being-prepared/>

[x] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/reporting-to-police-options-tips-for-being-prepared/>

[xi] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/reporting-to-police-options-tips-for-being-prepared/>

[xii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-around-sexual-abuse/>

[xiii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-around-sexual-abuse/>

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EIN: 81-5015102

[xiv] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-around-sexual-abuse/>  
[xv] <http://www.familyjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Safety-Plan-Brochure-Gen.pdf>  
[xvi] <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/safety-tips/safety-tips-stalking-victims>  
[xvii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-while-living-with-an-abusive-partner/>  
[xviii] <https://capc.sccgov.org/sites/g/files/exjcpb1061/files/document/GBACAPCv6.pdf>  
[xix] <https://www.cnet.com/tech/mobile/9-rules-for-strong-passwords-how-to-create-and-remember-your-login-credentials/>  
[xx] <https://www.techsafety.org/passwordincreasesecurity>  
[xxi] <https://www.techsafety.org/passwordincreasesecurity>  
[xxii] <https://www.techsafety.org/blog/2019/10/31/cyber-safety-for-survivors-of-domestic-violence?rq=vpn>  
<https://ssd.eff.org/en/module/how-enable-two-factor-authentication>  
[xxiii] <https://www.yubico.com/>  
[xxiv] <https://www.techsafety.org/passwordincreasesecurity>  
[xxv] <https://www.techsafety.org/blog/2019/10/31/cyber-safety-for-survivors-of-domestic-violence?rq=vpn>  
[xxvi] <https://www.techsafety.org/blog/2019/10/31/cyber-safety-for-survivors-of-domestic-violence?rq=vpn>  
[xxvii] <https://faradaybag.com/what-is-a-faraday-bag/>  
[xxviii] <https://protonmail.com/>  
[xxix] <https://www.techsafety.org/blog/2019/10/31/cyber-safety-for-survivors-of-domestic-violence?rq=vpn>  
[xxx] <https://nnedv.org/content/financial-safety-planning/>  
[xxxi] <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/forms-abuse/financial-abuse>  
[xxxii] <https://countyda.sccgov.org/victim-services/victim-services-unit>  
[xxxiii] <https://goaskrose.com/guide-financial-security/>  
[xxxiv] <https://nnedv.org/content/financial-safety-planning/>  
[xxxv] <https://goaskrose.com/guide-financial-security/>  
[xxxvi] <https://nnedv.org/content/financial-safety-planning/>  
[xxxvii] <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/safety-tips/safety-court>  
[xxxviii] <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/safety-tips/safety-court>  
[xxxix] <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/safety-tips/safety-court>  
[xl] <https://www.womenslaw.org/about-abuse/safety-tips/safety-court>  
[xli] <https://www.womenslaw.org/laws/ca/workplace-protections>  
[xlii] <https://www.thehotline.org/plan-for-safety/supporting-your-children/>

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EIN: 81-5015102

- [xliii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-children/>  
[xliv] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-children/>  
[xlv] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-children/>  
[xlvi] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-children/>  
[xlvii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-children/>  
[xlviii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-children/>  
[xlix] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-children/>  
[l] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-during-pregnancy/>  
[li] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-during-pregnancy/>  
[lii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-during-pregnancy/>  
[liii] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-during-pregnancy/>  
[liv] <https://awionline.org/content/safety-planning-pets-domestic-violence-victims>  
[lv] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-pets/>  
[lvi] <https://www.thehotline.org/resources/safety-planning-with-pets/>  
[lvii] <https://www.animallaw.info/article/domestic-violence-and-pets-list-states-include-pets-protection-orders>  
[lviii] <https://awionline.org/content/safety-planning-pets-domestic-violence-victims>

## **Escape Plan: For Survivors Fleeing the Home**

### **Kaizen**

1. The less an abuser partner knows about your plans, the safer you will be
2. Remember, you deserve to live in peace and safety in your own home. You never cause anyone to be abusive and you never deserve to be abused.
3. You don't have to do this alone. There are people and resources to help you find your way. With enough information, support and resources, you can break free of the abuse and turn your home back into the sanctuary you deserve.
4. Remember that nothing is carved in stone. Be prepared to pivot and adjust your plans with new information and new risks.
5. Consider this your flight plan, your pilot checklist, prior to take-off and with each check, that's one more accomplishment. Pat yourself on the back! T
6. Think one small step at a time - you're on the runway to freedom!
7. Self-care. It is important that you take care of yourself through this process.
8. This checklist is meant to be a companion to WomenSV's Safety Plan. Please refer to it for more details for each of the following categories.
9. If you didn't get a chance to do a sufficient amount of preparation, but have already left or been forced to leave, please refer back to "Preparation" to double check any extra safety measures that you could take.

### ***Preparation***

#### Shelter

- Plan where you are going to go. Make sure it is a safe location (for example: a local shelter, hotel, trusted family member with a safe space for you and your children). Make sure they can be trusted not to share your plans with your partner or make well-meaning attempts to reunite you
- If you are renting, consider writing a letter to your landlord explaining that you have had to leave because of domestic violence and you are breaking your lease

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### Transportation

- Think about which car you are going to take
- If the car is being tracked, don't remove tracking device/software until the day you escape
- How many car keys exist? Can you get them all the day of?
- Who owns the car? Gather the car's registration, insurance, title, etc. (If it's not safe to do so, make copies of these documents)
- Think about having your keys changed after you escape (this can be time consuming and expensive)

### Advocate/Safety Planning

- Call a domestic violence victim services program. Find out which services and shelters are available as options if you need them. You will have to also call the day you escape to find out if there is space in a shelter. Have a back-up plan for where you can stay! Keep their address and phone number close at hand at all times
- Consider meeting with a police officer, preferably one who has a background in domestic violence, to discuss safety recommendations and to build support. Let them know you are not in immediate danger, there is no crime in progress so they do not end up interviewing your partner. Focus on gathering safety information, resources, and support for the days ahead, and for after you escape
- Consider reaching out to security at your place of employment as well as your supervisor if you have a trusted relationship to have a confidential conversation about your plans and letting them know about the RO in the future. Letting them know that you will give them a copy and a picture of him, so that he can't be on the property
- Consider finding out what your workplace protocol is for a DV. They should give you time off work to attend court. No one should be fired for any reasons having to do with domestic violence
- Take a look at WomenSV's Safety Plan

### Basic Supplies

- Giving a "go-bag" filled with extra clothes (for all seasons), shoes, toiletries, etc. to a trusted friend/family member. If that's not possible, gather clothes, etc. in a trash bag and make it

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seem like you are donating things for Goodwill. If you live in “fire country,” you could make it seem like an emergency kit

- Personal items such as family heirlooms and photographs. Make a list of personal items that you will take with you the day of your escape if you aren’t able to safely bring them to a trusted friend/family member in advance
- Keys: make copies DISCREETLY of keys you will need
  - House keys
  - Car keys (spare keys too!)
  - Storage keys
  - Safe deposit keys
  - Keys to a home safe

### Medical

- Consider calling your doctor and OBGYN to have a confidential conversation about your plans. This way your partner can’t call asking where you are, acting concerned about your health and well-being

### Technology

- Consider buying a burner phone, buying it with cash and using a pseudonym
- Consider making a list of your most used Internet accounts, for example social media accounts and email accounts
- If he has access to your Cloud accounts (Dropbox, iCloud, etc.) stop backing up to your Cloud. Consider if this will raise any concerns for him, if so, move this point to your “day of” checklist

### Documentation

- Find a safe place to store documents. Hiding in plain sight in a folder labeled something he will not check (e.g. Poetry), in a fire bag to make it look like emergency preparedness, with a trusted person, at work in a locked drawer, in a storage facility
- Consider getting a burner phone and taking photos of important documents with it. Make sure you keep the burner phone in a safe place

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EIN: 81-5015102

- Consider renting a storage unit/safety deposit box/PO box but beware of statements being sent to your address
- Make copies of documents when you can't take originals. Be sure to replace the documents exactly as you found them
- Consider gathering copies of any medical/police reports from past incidents
- If you can safely do so, make copies of all personal documents for you, your partner and your children:
  - Birth certificates
  - Marriage certificate
  - Passport, children's passports, copy of your partner's passport
  - Immigration documentation (Visa, green card, etc.; copy of your partner's immigration)
  - Driver's license, copy of your partner's driver's license
  - Social security card, copy of partner's card or number
  - Health insurance cards for you and your children
  - Copy of partner's health insurance card or medical record number
  - Family accountant's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
  - Your medical records/prescriptions/vaccination records, your children's, any medical record info you have on partner
  - Your family financial adviser's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
  - Credit and Debit Cards
  - School records
  - Rental agreement
  - Car title, registration, insurance
  - Property deed/title
  - Insurance information
  - Your bank information (account and routing number)-joint and personal
  - Your partner's bank information
  - Legal papers, TRO, etc.
- Make yourself a list of the originals that you will take with you on the day you leave.

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- Make an Executive Summary\* that can help you to communicate your goals and concerns with the audience of your choosing. (Planting seeds with family, friends, children's network, doctors, or filing for a restraining order, or hiring your attorney)

\*An Executive Summary is a brief 2 page, bullet-point summary of the abuse you have experienced which can be adapted depending on the provider or person you are reaching out to for support and understanding.

### Pet

- Gather documents that prove you are your pet's owner (receipts from adoption or purchase, license to establish ownership, receipts for purchases you made for the animal) proof that you are the pet's owner
- Consider including your pet in your RO
- Food
- Carrier
- Toys
- Bedding
- ID and rabies tag (if you have a dog or cat)
- Medications
- Copies of medical records (veterinary or vaccination records)
- Important phone numbers including your vet
- Consider calling your vet to have a confidential conversation about your leaving with your pet. This way he can't call acting concerned about you and his pet and asking where you are
- Consider calling your local human society to see if they can house your pet to see if they can take care of your pet while you set up your new home

### Finances

- Consider making a list of your most used online financial accounts, for example, Bank websites, IRA/Roth websites, Brokerage website
- ATM cards
- Credit cards
- Checkbook

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EIN: 81-5015102

- If it's possible, stock up on cash cards/Prepaid credit cards like Vanilla Visa cards to have money to spend after you escape
- Cash (withdraw cash slowly, or take as much as you can the day you leave)
- Arrange for your income to be deposited in an account your partner does not have access to
- Gather and/or make copies of income tax returns for the past 5 years
- Consider opening a private bank account (ex: First Republic)
  - Stress the importance of keeping your information confidential. You will need a physical address to open the account. Ask that no paper/electronic statements be sent. Arrange for your paycheck to be direct-deposited in your separate account. Gather/copy income tax returns or copies of them for the past 5 years

### Legal

- Do you have any evidence of the abuse? (This could be organized with your Executive Summary)
- Take copies of any proof you have
- Make backups and store them in a secure location
- Are you considering a Restraining Order (RO)? Do you have a trusted person who can help you draft RO pleadings on their computer?
- Secretly interview attorneys
- Consider trying to pay them in cash so that there is no paper trail
- Read WomenSV's Finding the Right Attorney handout

### Legal: Filing for divorce

- Consider filing for the RO at the same time as the divorce. He will be served with both papers at the same time
- If you can do so safely, consider reading Splitting by Bill Eddy (Safe ways include, at a friend's house, at the library, on a secret electronic device)

### Work

- Any items you need for your job that are currently in your home:
  - Documents
  - Uniform

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- Equipment
- Identification
- Keys
- School transcripts, any documents you need to apply for work

### Children

- Be careful about sharing plans with your children. They will be eager to know especially as they get older. The less they know right now the better. Let them know that you are taking care of things and the only thing they need to worry about is being a child and taking care of themselves
- Consider buying a burner phone for your child as well (if you need assistance getting a burner phone, let an advocate know)
- Comforting items and toys
- Documents (see checklist above)
- Medical necessities (see checklist above)
- Financial documents (see checklist above)
- Technology they need
- Anything they need for school, uniforms, books, etc.
- Plan out what you will say to your children on the day you escape. How much information do they need to know beforehand?

### Gathering Your Village

- Start planting seeds with trusted people if you are able to safely do so
  - Doctors/pediatricians
  - Therapists
  - Trusted friends and family
  - Getting a domestic violence advocate
- Attending support groups

### Self-care

- Without letting on that you are making changes and feeling stronger as you make plans, take care of yourself and fill up your cup.

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- If it's possible, stock up on cash cards for massages, spa treatments, and other self-care remedies

## ***Day Of***

*Note: Reorder this list so that it makes the most strategic sense given his routine. How much time do you have to go to the bank before he is served? Once he has been served how quickly do you need to send messages to insurance providers? How much time will you have to gather your belongings? Etc.*

### Basic Supplies

- Clothes, shoes, work uniform, toiletries
- Personal items like family heirlooms and photographs
- Keys
- Phone, laptop, chargers

### Medical

- Medications, take prescription names and numbers for you, your children and your partner
- If you have any spare meds, take those with you
- Glasses, contact lenses/solution, hearing aids, dental equipment, etc.
- Prescriptions
- Vaccination records

### Documentation

- Gather the original documents and the ones you made photocopies of (birth certificates, passports, marriage certificates, vaccination records etc.)
- Sending a letter to the landlord you wrote in preparation letting them know that you have escaped domestic violence and are breaking the lease

### Legal

- If you can, have him served with the divorce papers and the RO the day that you leave. Make sure he doesn't know where you are at that moment
- Good Cause Report if you are taking children

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- Make sure the police take his guns/weapons if he is served with RO. Also tell the police about any guns he may have access to (e.g. his best friend, brother, etc.)

### Children

- Make a plan for where your children will be. Can they stay with a trusted person?
- If you are escaping on a school day, try to have him served with the RO at the same time you take the children out of school
- Notify the school of the RO. Consider speaking with the principal, bringing a copy of the RO and a picture of your partner

### Financial

- Consider taking as much money out of the joint account as you can. Keep in mind that banks have cut off times for money withdrawals and limits on the amount of money you can transfer depending on if it's online or in-person. Also be prepared for them to ask you why you are withdrawing so much to ensure there's no fraud (one possible answer could be that you all are just moving some money around for investments, etc.). Also be cautious that he may be alerted/notified on his phone if a certain amount of money is withdrawn from the account. Place it in an account that only you have access to, and talk to your attorney about proving to the court that it was not stolen, only placed there for safe keeping
- Alert your bank that you are in a different area and ask that they don't have a fraud alert to freeze your account. Have cash on hand in case your card is frozen and you need to pay for necessities (gas, groceries, etc.)

### Transportation

- Are you going in your car?
- Have you checked for GPS trackers (e.g. Airtags, AirPods and Google Tiles)? You can use the LightBlue App to search for bluetooth signals. Be careful about removing them prior to your escape as this will tip him off. Act as if you were being followed during the planning stage, park several blocks away from sensitive appointments and leave electronics in trunk
- Is your car from 2018 or more recent? It may give your partner the ability to track or record you

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- Do you have a Tesla or other car where he may have an app originally created to track car thieves but that can also be used to stalk you? He may also have the ability to change the cars functions while you drive (e.g. open and close the windows)
- Check with your car provider to see what contact information they have for an emergency, make sure ALL of it is you, your email, your phone
- Does your car have a dashcam? Consider getting a new one as it can be used a recording device

### Technology

- Get any and all USB sticks, SD cards, or hard drives
- Take your cell phone, laptop, tablet, etc. and their chargers
- Turn on multi-factor authentication on all of your online accounts
- Change passwords (When you can, consider using password management software like Lastpass)
- Take any old cell phones you can find

### Insurance

- Write to insurance agencies and tell them they cannot cancel any of your plans in the coming weeks

### Self-care

- Make plans to be with a trusted person if you aren't going to a shelter
- If you are going to a shelter, do something comforting and to give yourself some love
- Go to church, pray, read, whatever fills your soul

## ***After the Escape***

### Shelter

- To avoid publicly disclosing your new address, consider applying for a Safe at Home address through the Secretary of State for mail to be sent and to substitute for your residential address when registering/applying/filling out paperwork

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EIN: 81-5015102

- If you need to go back to the home to get more things, consider calling the police non-emergency number and scheduling for a civil standby. You will have to wait for an officer to be available, but safety is of the utmost importance

### Children

- In your new home, consider getting an internal, electronic lock like Simple August that you only have the passcode to. This way the children won't be able to unlock the door if dad comes to it demanding to be let in

### Accounts

- Consider changing:
  - Phone carriers
  - Medical insurance policy
  - Car insurance (if it was shared)
  - Email (Protonmail)

### Legal

- Change your will so that he is not the beneficiary of your estate

### Gathering Your Village

- Attending support groups
- Continuing relationship with domestic violence advocate

### Self-care

- You can now practice self-care openly!
- Therapy
- Art of Living
- Exercise (joyful movement)
- Fun with friends and family
- See self-care ideas handout

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## **Escape Plan: For Survivors Remaining in the Home**

### **Kaizen**

1. The less an abuser partner knows about your plans, the safer you will be
2. Remember, you deserve to live in peace and safety in your own home. You never cause anyone to be abusive and you never deserve to be abused.
3. You don't have to do this alone. There are people and resources to help you find your way. With enough information, support and resources, you can break free of the abuse and turn your home back into the sanctuary you deserve.
4. Remember that nothing is carved in stone. Be prepared to pivot and adjust your plans with new information and new risks.
5. Consider this your flight plan, your pilot checklist, prior to take-off and with each check, that's one more accomplishment. Pat yourself on the back!
6. Think one small step at a time - you're on the runway to freedom!
7. Self-care. It is important that you take care of yourself through this process.
8. This checklist is meant to be a companion to WomenSV's Safety Plan. Please refer to it for more details for each of the following categories.
9. If you didn't get a chance to do a sufficient amount of preparation, but have already left or been forced to leave, please refer back to "Preparation" to double check any extra safety measures that you could take.

### ***Preparation***

#### Preparing to Fortify Your Home

- Calling a locksmith and arranging for them to come the day your partner is served to change your locks and the garage door opener. Make it clear to these professionals that they are not to leave a voicemail for you if you do not pick the phone up
- If you can, have a security alarm company come and inspect your home, schedule them to come the day after you plan on serving your partner with divorce/RO papers. Again, make it

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clear to these professionals that they are not to leave a voicemail for you if you do not pick the phone up

- Back Up Plan with “Escape Plan: Leaving the Home” in case you must leave unexpectedly

### Transportation

- Think about which car you are able to keep
- If the car is being tracked, don't remove tracking device/software until the day he is served papers
- How many car keys exist? Can you get them all the day of?
- Who owns the car? Gather the car's registration, insurance, title, etc. (If it's not safe to do so, make copies of these documents)
- Think about having your car keys changed once he is kicked out (this can be time consuming and expensive)

### Safety Planning with a DV Advocate

- Call a domestic violence victim services program. Find out which services and shelters are available as options if you need them. You will have to also call the day you escape to find out if there is space in a shelter. Have a back-up plan for where you can stay! Keep their address and phone number close at hand at all times
- Consider meeting with a police officer, preferably one who has a background in domestic violence, to discuss safety recommendations and to build support. Let them know you are not in immediate danger, there is no crime in progress so they do not end up interviewing your partner. Focus on gathering safety information, resources, and support for the days ahead, and for after you escape
- Consider reaching out to security at your place of employment as well as your supervisor if you have a trusted relationship to have a confidential conversation about your plans and letting them know about the RO in the future. Letting them know that you will give them a copy and a picture of him, so that he can't be on the property
- Consider finding out what your workplace protocol is for DV. They should give you time off work to attend court. No one should be fired for any reasons having to do with domestic violence

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### Basic Supplies

- Keys: make copies DISCREETLY of keys you will need
  - House keys (for all properties)
  - Car keys (spare keys too!)
  - Storage keys
  - Safe deposit keys
  - Keys to a home safe
- Consider packing clothes for all seasons in case you need to leave the house to wait for him to be served papers. You could disguise the packed clothes as being prepared for an emergency like a fire

### Medical

- Consider calling your doctor and OBGYN to have a confidential conversation about your plans. This way your partner can't call asking where you are, acting concerned about your health and well-being

### Technology

- Consider buying a burner phone, buying it with cash and using a pseudonym
- Consider making a list of your most used internet accounts, for example social media accounts and email accounts
- If you have a place to hide a router, you could purchase one in advance (black out the password on the box, so your partner can't identify it and try to copy it) that way you can switch it out the day that he is kicked out of the house with the RO
- Make yourself a list of his technology to ensure that everything belonging to him can be removed the day he is served
- If he has access to your cloud accounts (dropbox, icloud, etc.) stop backing up to your cloud. Consider if this will raise any concerns for him, if so, move this point to your "day of" checklist

### Documentation

- Find a safe place to store documents. Hiding in plain sight in a folder labeled something he will not check (e.g. Poetry), in a fire bag to make it look like emergency preparedness, with a trusted person, at work in a locked drawer, in a storage facility. Even if you are staying in your home,

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consider that he may try and scoop these documents before you have a chance to have him removed

- Make copies of documents when you can't take originals. Be sure to replace the documents exactly as you found them
- Consider gathering copies of any medical/police reports from past incidents
- If you can safely do so, make copies of all personal documents for you, your partner and your children:
  - Birth certificates
  - Marriage certificate
  - Passport, children's passports, copy of your partner's passport
  - Immigration documentation (Visa, green card, etc.; copy of your partner's immigration)
  - Driver's license, copy of your partner's driver's license
  - Social security card, copy of partner's card or number
  - Health insurance cards for you and your children
  - Copy of partner's health insurance card or medical record number
  - Family accountant's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
  - Your medical records/prescriptions/vaccination records, your children's, any medical record info you have on partner
  - Your family financial adviser's contact info (be careful of how much information you share regarding your plans)
  - Credit and Debit Cards
  - School records
  - Rental agreement
  - Car title, registration, insurance
  - Property deed/title
  - Insurance information
  - Your bank information (account and routing number)-joint and personal
  - Your partner's bank information
  - Legal papers, TRO, etc.

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EIN: 81-5015102

- Make yourself a list of the originals that you gather in a safe place or with a safe person on the day he is served
- Make an Executive Summary\* that can help you to communicate your goals and concerns with the audience of your choosing. (Planting seeds with family, friends, children's network, doctors, or filing for a restraining order, or hiring your attorney)

\*An Executive Summary is a brief 2 page, bullet-point summary of the abuse you have experienced which can be adapted depending on the provider or person you are reaching out to for support and understanding.

### Pets

- Gather documents that prove you are your pet's owner (receipts from adoption or purchase, license to establish ownership, receipts for purchases you made for the animal) proof that you are the pet's owner
- Consider including your pet in your RO
- Documents of pet ownership (receipts from adoption or purchase, license to establish ownership, receipts for purchases you made for the animal)
- Pet medical records
- Consider calling your local human society to see if they can house your pet to see if they can take care of your pet while you set up your new home.

### Finances

- Consider making a list of your most used online financial accounts, for example, Bank websites, IRA/Roth websites, Brokerage website
- ATM cards
- Credit cards
- Checkbook
- If it's possible, stock up on cash cards/Prepaid credit cards like Vanilla Visa cards to have money to spend after he is served and kicked out
- Cash (withdraw cash slowly, or take as much as you can the day he's served)
- Arrange for your income to be deposited in an account your partner does not have access to.
- Gather and/or make copies of income tax returns for the past 5 years

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EIN: 81-5015102

- Consider opening a private bank account (ex: First Republic)
  - Stress the importance of keeping your information confidential. You will need a physical address to open the account. Ask that no paper/electronic statements be sent. Arrange for your paycheck to be direct-deposited in your separate account

### Legal

- Do you have any evidence of the abuse? (This could be organized with your Executive Summary)
- Gather copies of any proof you have that you stored in a safe place or safe person
- Make backups and store them in a secure location
- Are you considering a Restraining Order (RO)? Do you have a trusted person who can help you draft RO pleadings on their computer?
- Secretly interview attorneys
- Consider trying to pay them in cash so that there is no paper trail
- Read WomenSV's Finding the Right Attorney handout

### Legal: Filing for divorce

- Consider filing for the RO at the same time as the divorce. He will be served with both papers at the same time
- If you can do so safely, consider reading Splitting by Bill Eddy (Safe ways include, at a friend's house, at the library, on a secret electronic device)

### Children

- Be careful about sharing plans with your children. They will be eager to know especially as they get older. The less they know right now the better. Let them know that you are taking care of things and the only thing they need to worry about is being a child and taking care of themselves
- Consider talking to your attorney about buying a burner phone for your child as well so they have access to you if you are sharing custody and your ex is making it difficult for your child to get in touch with you. You could consider making this part of the custody orders where you are the Admin on the account and solely responsible for it.

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### Gathering Your Village

- Start planting seeds with trusted people if you are able to safely
  - Doctors/pediatricians
  - Therapists
  - Trusted friends and family
  - Getting a domestic violence advocate
- Attending support groups

### Self-care

- Without letting on that you are making changes and feeling stronger as you make plans, take care of yourself and fill up your cup
- If it's possible, stock up on cash cards for massages, spa treatments, and other self-care remedies

### ***Day Of***

*Note: Reorder this list so that it makes the most strategic sense given his routine. How much time do you have to go to the bank before he is served? Once he has been served how quickly do you need to send messages to insurance providers? Etc.*

### Police/Process Server

- Have him served with the RO and the divorce papers while he is away from the home.
- Make sure the police gather his guns/weapons
- Make sure police are present when he gathers his belongings
- If you are renting, consider calling your landlord explaining that you are staying in the home but your husband is no longer allowed to be there because there is a restraining order in effect.

### Fortifying Your Home

- Locksmith comes to change your locks and your garage door opener
- Install security cameras yourself (e.g. Ring doorbell) or have the security alarm company come today or tomorrow to install sensors on the windows and doors connected to emergency services

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- Make sure your camera shows the street/sidewalk as well
- Removing any of his technology from the home
- Make sure the police take his guns/weapons if he is served with RO. Also tell the police about any guns he may have access to (e.g. his best friend, brother, etc.)
- If you rent your home/apartment, inform the property manager of RO and get him off the lease
- Consider throwing out all the food in case it has been tampered with

### Technology

- Get any and all USB sticks, SD cards, or hard drives
- Change internet router
- Gather your cell phone, laptop, tablet, etc. and their chargers make sure they are in a place he cannot steal them
- Turn on multi-factor authentication on all of your online accounts
- Change passwords (When you can, consider using password management software like Lastpass)
- Scan your home for any hidden cameras, Airtags, recording devices, etc. (Check in fire alarms, windows, lights, etc.)

### Financial

- Take as much money out of the joint account as you can. Keep in mind that banks have cut off times for money withdrawals and limits on the amount of money you can transfer depending on if it's online or in-person. Also be prepared for them to ask you why you are withdrawing so much to ensure there's no fraud (one possible answer could be that you all are just moving some money around for investments, etc.). Also be cautious that he may be alerted/notified on his phone if a certain amount of money is withdrawn from the account. Place it in an account that only you have access to, and talk to your attorney about proving to the court that it was not stolen, only placed there for safe keeping
- Alert your bank if you are leaving the home in order to safely wait for him to be served. Let them know that you are in a different area and ask that they don't have a fraud alert to freeze your account. Have cash on hand in case your card is frozen and you need to pay for necessities (gas, groceries, etc.)

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### Insurance

- Write to insurance agencies and tell them they cannot cancel any of your plans in the coming weeks

### Self-care

- Make plans to have a trusted person stay with you
- Something comforting/self-love
- Go to church, pray, read, whatever fills your soul

## ***After He is Served and Removed***

### Accounts

- Consider changing:
  - Phone carriers
  - Medical insurance policy
  - Car insurance (if it was shared)
  - Email (Protonmail)

### Children

- Consider getting an internal, electronic lock like Simple August that you only have the passcode to. This way the children won't be able to unlock the door if dad comes to it demanding to be let in
- Letting school know about RO and that he is not allowed to be at the school or to ask about your child

### Pet

- Consider calling your vet to have a confidential conversation about your leaving with your pet. This way he can't call acting concerned about you and his pet and asking where you are

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### Legal

- Change your will so that he is not the beneficiary of your estate

### Technology

- Check your home and car for Airtags and Tiles (you can use the LightBlue App to search for bluetooth signals)

### Gathering Your Village

- Attending support groups
- Continuing relationship with domestic violence advocate

### Self-care

- You can now practice self-care openly!
- Therapy
- Art of Living
- Exercise (joyful movement)
- Fun with friends and family
- See self-care ideas handout

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