

Safety Planning

When attempting to break the cycle of violence, intimidation, fear and coercive control, you may find yourself in unfamiliar territory. Setting up a new space for you and your children, building personal boundaries and developing a new confidence can be both empowering and terrifying. It feels very different to what you have been conditioned to both know and feel during the abusive relationship, and most women fear retaliation and consequences for walking away from a violent relationship.

Using some of the tips below, tailor a safety plan to suit your own needs and circumstances. We recommend connecting with a support service to help you talk through any specific concerns.

Personal Safety:

- Speak to neighbours that you trust. Ask them to call 000 if they hear violence or abuse.
- Have a space place to go if you need to leave. Talk to a trusted friend and ask for their support if you need a place to stay in an emergency.
- Have a small bag packed that you can grab in a hurry. Or, keep a packed bag at a friend's house.
- Plan and practice the quickest way to leave your home.
- Keep a set of spare keys in a safe place, or with friend's/family members, in case your partner takes the main set of car/house keys from you.
- Copy important documents and keep them at your workplace, or with a trusted friend.
- Park on the street so that the perpetrator cannot block your car in the drive way and prevent you from leaving.

Technology

- Change all internet passwords, including banking, My Gov, Centrelink and social media.
- Turn off Location Services on your mobile phone, laptop and iPad.
- In your purse or phone keep a list of important contacts you can call. These can be listed under fake names.
 - 1800 Respect (1800 737 732)
 - Link to Home (emergency accommodation) 1800 152 152
 - Taxi : 13 CABS (13 22 27)
 - Police Assistance Line 131 444
- Get a PO Box for mail redirection. Australia Post offers free 12 month redirection for special circumstances (including family violence) and free use of a PO Box for 22 months.
- Download the Daisy App if it is safe to do so.



Planning for custody change over.

- Avoid exchanging custody at your home or your partner's home. When trying to establish personal boundaries after abuse, having an ex-partner come to your home may create issues. Our clients report that ex-partners assert their authority and dominance by walking uninvited into their home, or making comments on furniture and assets in an attempt to exert further control and intimidation.
- Meet in a safe, public place such as a restaurant, a bank or other area with lots of cameras. Many people use McDonalds for this reason.
- Bring a friend or relative with you for support. Often when we are in situations that create fear and anxiety our rational brain shuts down and we can't think clearly. Talk to your support person about how they can best help you at change over.
- Consider having change over at school, as this eliminates the chances of seeing each other.

Helping Children

- Talk to your children about where they can go to if something happens in the home. This can include friendly neighbours they know and what to do if the neighbours are not home. Reiterate this can be in case of fire, or if someone gets hurt, or any other emergency.
- Help them make a list of 5 safe people that they may wish to talk to.

If you are concerned for your child's physical safety when they visit your ex-partner, developing a safety plan for while they are visiting can be beneficial.

- Brainstorm with your children (if they are old enough) to come up with ways that they can stay safe using the same model as you would for your own home. Have them identify where they can get to a phone, how they can leave the house, and who they can go to.
- If it is safe to do so, some parents give their child a basic mobile phone that they can access when at the other parent's home.
- Let the school or day-care know that you are going through a separation. Many schools are understanding and while they cannot prevent the other parent from taking the child from school grounds you can request that you be notified if this was to occur during school hours.

Helping Pets

- Find out from your Vet whose name the pet is registered in, and take the steps to change ownership to your name if possible.
- Ask your Vet for any recommendations about pet safety and family violence. They may have local links with agencies who can help if your pet needs a temporary home.
- Look into NSW RSPCA's Safe Bed for Pets program.