

MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL

Joseph and Wolf Lebovic Health Complex

Bright Minds. Big Hearts. The Best Medicine.



ENGLISH

Creating a Safety Plan

Many women have escaped and survived abusive situations. This information package was put together by women who have survived and offer their advice to you.



Creating a Safety Plan

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Personal notes and numbers:

Resources for Safety Planning in Toronto

POLICE

Toronto Police

Emergency	911
Non Emergency	416-808-2222
Non Emergency TTY	416-467-0493
Domestic Violence Unit	416-808-7041
Sex Crimes Unit	416-808-7474

Peel Regional Police

Non Emergency	905-453-3311
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Trillium Health Centre Sexual

Assault & Domestic Violence Services

(Documentation & treatment of injuries from domestic violence)

Toronto	416-259-6671
Mississauga	905-848-7100

24 HOUR CRISIS HELP LINES

Toronto Community Connection

(Information, referral to community, social, health, government services)

Toronto	211
Toll Free	1-800-836-3238
TTY	1-888-340-1001
Children's Aid Society	416-924-4646
Catholic Children's Aid Society	416-395-1500

Assaulted Women's Help Line

www.awhl.org	
GTA	416-863-0511
Toll Free	1-866-863-0511
TTY	416-364-8762
TTY Toll Free	1-866-863-7868
Mobile	#SAFE (#7233)
Family Transition Place	1-800-265-9178
Interim Place North	905-676-8515
Interim Place South	905-403-0864
Jewish Family & Child Services	416-638-7800
Multicultural Women Against Rape	416-597-8808
Salvation Army	
Toronto Homestead	416-921-0953
Family Life Resource Centre	905-451-6108
Sexual Assault/Rape Crisis Centre of Peel	1-800-810-0180
Street Help Line	1-866-392-3777
Toronto Rape Crisis Centre	416-597-1171
Victim Services	
Toronto	416-808-7066
Peel	905-568-1068

MOUNT SINAI HOSPITAL

Department of Social Work
416-586-4800 ext. 5201

Security

416-586-4800 ext. 5056

Human Rights & Health Equity Office

416-586-4800 ext. 7519

This Mount Sinai Hospital

Safety Plan brochure is also available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Italian, Hindi, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, Tagalog, Punjabi, Urdu and Vietnamese.

SHELTERS**Central Intake (Hostel Services)**

416-397-5637

Interim Place North

905-676-8515

Interim Place South

905-403-0864

Salvation Army

Toronto Hope Shelter 416-979-7058

The Toronto Gateway 416-368-0324

The Toronto Homestead 416-921-0953

Disabled Women's Network

<http://dawnncanada.net>

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**Ministry of Ontario Info Line**

Toronto 416-325-5666

Toll Free 1-888-789-4199

Peel Region Social Services

905-793-9200

Peel Access to Housing (PATH)

905-453-1300

LEGAL SERVICES**Legal Aid Ontario**

Toronto 416-979-2352

Toll Free 1-800-668-8258

TTY 416-598-8867

TTY Toll Free 1-866-641-8867

India Rainbow Community

Services of Peel

(Legal Clinic) 905-275-2369

Ontario Women's Justice Network

www.owjn.org

Victim Services

Toronto 416-808-7066

Peel 905-568-1068

FOOD BANKS**Daily Bread Food Bank**

416-203-0050

Muslim Welfare Centre**Halal Food Bank**

Mississauga 905-281-9730

Scarborough 416-335-9994

North York Harvest Food Bank

416-635-7771

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN**Toronto Community Connection**

(Information and referral to community, social, health and government services).

Toronto 211

Toll Free 1-800-836-3238

TTY 1-888-340-1001

African Community Services

905-460-9514

Catholic Family Services

Toronto 416-921-1163

Peel-Dufferin 1-888-940-0584

Circle of Care

416-635-2860

Family Services

Toronto 416-595-9230

Peel 905-453-5775

India Rainbow Community**Services of Peel**

905-275-2369

Jewish Family & Child Services

416-638-7800

METRAC

www.metrac.org

Toronto 416-392-3135

Toll free 1-877-558-5570

Muslim Community Services

www.islamicfinder.org

Brampton 905-790-1910

Mississauga 905-828-1328

Native Child & Family Services

416-969-8510

Punjabi Community Health Centre**of Brampton**

905-790-0808

Rexdale Women's Centre

416-745-0062

Riverdale Immigrant Women's**Centre**

416-465-6021

Sherbourne Health Centre
416-324-4180

Springtide Resources
www.springtideresources.org
Toronto 416-968-3422

South Asian Family Support
Services
416-431-4847

South Asian Women's Centre
416-537-2276

South Riverdale Community
Health Centre
416-461-1925

Women's College Hospital
Sexual Assault & Domestic
Violence Care Centre
416-323-6040

Women's Health in Women's
Hands Community
Health Centre
416-593-7655

LGBT COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

The 519 Community Centre
416-392-6874

Sherbourne Health Centre
416-324-4180

Introduction

It is important to know that although you do not have control over your (ex) partner's violence, it is possible to increase your own, as well as your children's, safety when being subjected to this abuse. Creating a safety plan involves identifying action steps to increase your safety, and to prepare in advance for the possibility of further violence. This information package offers many suggestions and ideas that we hope you will find useful. However, don't try to do everything right away. Take it a step at a time, and start with the ideas that seem most doable for you.

In creating a safety plan it is important to remember that:

- Although you cannot control your (ex) partner's violence, it may be possible to increase your own and your children's safety
- A safety plan is needed whenever the possibility of abuse is identified
- This safety plan information is specifically designed for actions that you can take
- This safety plan information also includes actions you can take to increase your children's safety
- It is important to become familiar with and to review and/or revise your safety plan regularly. Abusive situations and risk factors can change quickly

An Emergency Escape Plan

The **emergency escape plan** focuses on the things you can do in advance to be better prepared in case you have to leave an abusive situation very quickly.

The following is a list of items you should try to set aside and hide in a safe place (e.g. at a friend's or family member's home, with your lawyer, in a safety deposit box):

1. Take a photocopy of the following items and store in a safe place, away from the originals. Hide the originals someplace else, if you can.
 - passports, birth certificates, immigration papers, for all family members
 - school and vaccination records
 - driver's license and registration
 - medications, prescriptions, medical records for all family members
 - welfare identification
 - work permits
 - divorce papers, custody documentation, court orders, restraining orders, marriage certificate
 - lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage payment book

- bank books
 - insurance papers
 - address/telephone book
 - picture of spouse/partner
 - health cards for yourself and family members
 - all cards you normally use e.g. credit cards, bank cards, phone, social insurance
2. Try to keep all the cards you normally use in your wallet:
 - social insurance cards
 - charge cards
 - phone card
 - banking cards
 - health cards
 3. Try to keep your wallet and purse handy, and containing the following:
 - car/house/office keys
 - checkbook, bank books/statements
 - driver's license, registration, insurance
 - address/telephone book

- picture of spouse/partner
 - emergency money (in cash) hidden away
4. Keep the following items handy, so you can grab them quickly:
- emergency suitcase with immediate needs
 - special toys, comforts for children
 - jewelry
 - small saleable objects
 - items of special sentimental value
 - a list of other items you would like to take if you get a chance to come back to your home later
 - Open a bank account in your own name and arrange that no bank statements or other calls be made to you. Or, arrange that mail be sent to a friend or family member.
 - Save and set aside as much money as you can — out of groceries if necessary.
 - Set aside, in a place you can get to quickly, \$20 for cab fare, and quarters for the telephone.
 - Plan your emergency exits.
 - Plan and rehearse the steps you will take if you have to leave quickly, and learn them well.

- Hide extra clothing, house keys, car keys, money, etc. at a friend's house.
- Keep emergency suitcase packed or handy/ready to pack quickly.
- Consider getting a safety deposit box at a bank that your partner does not go to.

The police will bring you back to the home later, to remove additional personal belongings, if it is arranged through the local division. Take the items listed above as well as anything else that is important to you or your children.

When you leave, take the children if you can. If you try to get them later, the police cannot help you remove them from their other parent unless you have a valid court order.

Creating a Safer Environment

There are many things you can do to increase your safety. It may not be possible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Here are a few suggestions:

At Home

If you are living with your abusive partner/spouse:

- Get your **Emergency Escape Plan** in order and review it often.

- Create a telephone list with numbers of local police, nearest women's shelter, assaulted women's help line, crisis help line, family members, counselors, children's friends.
- Make arrangements with friends or family so that you can stay with them if necessary.
- Try to predict the next likely violent episode and make plans for the children to be sent to friends, family etc. (Try to anticipate his "cycle," e.g. when there is a full moon.)
- Teach the children to let you know when someone is at the door, before answering the door.
- Teach your children how to use the telephone (and your cellular phone, if you have one) to contact the police and the fire department.
- Create a code word with your children and/or friends so they know to call for help.
- Teach your children how to make a collect call to you and to a special friend if your partner takes the children.
- Plan your emergency exits, teach your children and know them well.
- Teach your children their own **Safety Plan** (See page 18).

If you are not living with your abusive partner/spouse:

- Change the locks on the doors and windows. Install a peephole in the door. Change the locks on your garage and mailbox.
- Teach your children to tell you if someone is at the door and to not answer the door themselves.
- Keep your restraining order near you at all times.
- Make sure that the school, day care and police have a copy of all court orders, including restraining orders, custody and access orders, as well as a picture of the abusive partner.
- If possible, try to predict the next likely violent incident and be prepared.
- If you have call display on your phone, be careful about who can get access to the stored numbers (example, last number dialed, etc.).
- Have your telephone number unpublished, as it is harder to track than when it is unlisted. Block your number when calling out.
- Consider getting a cellular phone and preprogram numbers of people to call.
- Contact your local Victim Services to inquire about your eligibility for the Supportlink/D.V.E.R.S. emergency response system program.

- Consider moving your furniture around so your partner bumps into it, giving you a warning they are in your home. Also put your kitchen utensils and knife block in the cupboards so they are not as accessible.
- If you live in an apartment, check the floor clearly when getting off the elevator. Look in mirrors and be aware of doorways in hallways. Speak to security, or make an anonymous call, requesting safety in your building.
- Purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from upper floors.
- If you have a balcony, consider putting wire around it.
- Replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors if possible.
- Install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers for each floor.
- Consider the advantages of getting a guard dog.
- Install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to your house.
- Do whatever you can to install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc. — anything to provide added security.

In The Neighbourhood

- Tell your neighbours that you would like them to call the police if they hear a fight or screaming in your home.
- Tell people who take care of your children which people have

permission to pick up your children.

- Tell people in your neighbourhood that your partner no longer lives with you, and they should call the police if they are seen near your home. You may wish to give them a photo and description of them and of their car.
- Ask your neighbours to look after your children in an emergency.
- Hide clothing and your Emergency Escape Plan items at a neighbour's house. Use different grocery stores and shopping malls, and shop at hours that are different from when you were living with your abusive partner.
- Use a different bank or branch, and take care of your banking at hours different from those you used with your abusive partner.
- Change your doctor, dentist and other professional services you would normally use.
- Do not put your name in your apartment building directory.

At Work

You must decide for yourself if and/or when you will tell others that your partner is abusive and that you may be at risk. Friends, family and co-workers may be able to help protect you. However, you should consider carefully which people to ask for help. If you are

comfortable, you may choose to do any or all of the following:

- Tell your boss, the security supervisor, and other key people or friends at work about your situation.
- Ask to have your calls screened at work. It would also help to have these calls documented.
- Discuss the possibility of having your employer call the police if you are in danger from your (ex) partner.

When arriving or leaving work:

- let someone know when you'll be home
- carry your keys in your hands
- get a remote or keyless entry car door opener
- walk with someone to your car
- scan the parking lot
- Walk around your car, look under the hood and check if anything has been tampered with and check brakes. Remember to keep your car seats forward, so you know if someone is hiding in the car.
- if your partner is following you, drive to a place where there are people to support you, e.g. a friend's house, police station
- if you have underground parking, consider parking across the street. Keep a sign in your car saying "call police"

- if you are walking, take a route that is populated
- change the patterns of when you arrive and leave work and the routes you take home
- if you see your partner on the street, try to get to a public place, e.g. a store
- if you see your partner on the street, call attention to yourself and request help

An Emotional Safety Plan

The experience of being abused and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of surviving and building a new life requires much courage, and incredible energy. To conserve your emotional energy, and to support yourself in hard emotional times, there are a number of things you can do:

- Attend as many Crisis Counselling group sessions as you can.
- Become involved in community activities to reduce feeling isolated.
- Take a part-time job to reduce isolation and to improve your finances.
- Enroll in school to increase your skills.
- Join support groups of other women to gain support and

strengthen your relationships with other people.

- Take time for yourself to read, meditate, play music, etc.
- Spend time with people who make you feel good and provide support.
- Take part in social activities, e.g. movie, dinner, exercise.
- Take care of your sleep and nutritional needs.
- Keep your Client Profile up to date to help you feel prepared for upcoming events.
- Keep a personal journal to write about your feelings, especially when you are feeling low or vulnerable. Keep it in a safe place or burn it.
- Take time to prepare yourself emotionally before entering stressful situations like talking with your partner, meeting with lawyers, or attending court.
- Try not to overbook yourself — limit yourself to one appointment per day to reduce stress.
- Be creative and do whatever makes you feel good.
- Write something positive about yourself everyday — your own personal affirmations.
- Do not find your comfort in excessive use of alcohol or food — it only serves to increase your depression.

- Avoid excessive shopping and impulse buying.
- Join a health club or start an exercise program. It will increase your energy level and increase your sense of wellbeing.
- It's okay to feel angry, but find positive and constructive ways to express your anger.
- Remember that you are the most important person to take care of right now.

A Child's Safety Plan

This plan was developed to help adults teach their children some basic safety planning. It is based on the belief that the most important thing that children can do for their families is to get away from the area of violence! They cannot stop the abuse, although they often try by distracting the abuser or directly interfering in the abusive episode. It is important to tell the child that the best and most important thing for them to do is keep themselves safe.

Children who experience abuse can be profoundly affected. It is very traumatic for them to be faced with violence directed at them or at someone they love. Personal safety and safety planning are extremely important and necessary for children whose families are experiencing violence.

Children should learn ways to protect themselves. There are several ways to help you develop a safety plan with your children.

- Have your child pick a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone. The first step of any plan is for the children to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
- Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not the child's responsibility to make sure that you are safe.
- Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that children know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser. This puts them at risk. Talk to your children about using a neighbour's phone or a pay phone if they are unable to use a phone at home. If you have a cell phone, teach your children how to use it.
- Teach your children a code word so they know when to call for help.
- Teach them how to contact police at the emergency number.
- Ensure that the children know their full name and address (rural children need to know their Concession and Lot #).
- Rehearse what your child/children will say when they call for help.

For example:

Dial 911. An operator will answer: **"Police, Fire, Ambulance."**

Your child says: **"Police."** Then your child says:

"My name is _____.

I am ____ years old. I need help. Send the police.

Someone is hurting my mom.

The address here is _____.

The phone number here is _____."

- It is important for children to leave the phone off the hook after they are done talking. The police may call the number back if they hang up, which could create a dangerous situation for yourself and your child/children.
- Pick a safe place to meet your children, out of the home, after the situation is safe for you and for them (so you can easily find each other).
- Teach your children the safest route to the planned place of safety for them.

Creating a Safety Plan

If you are a patient or visitor, please contact:

Mount Sinai Hospital
Department of Social Work
475-600 University Avenue
t 416-586-4800 ext. 5201

If you are a staff person, please contact:

Mount Sinai Hospital
Human Rights & Health Equity Office
60 Murray Street, L2-403
t 416-586-4800 ext. 7519
humanrights@mtsinai.on.ca

Mount Sinai Hospital would like to acknowledge that the basis of this resource comes from the booklet "Creating a Safety Plan" developed by the Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse (PCAWA). Additional information has been inserted and is listed on our Resources pages. Our thanks to the hard work and dedication of the PCAWA for this innovative idea and for their permission to use this information to assist women who may be in similar abusive and unsafe situations.

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600 University Avenue
Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5G 1X5
t 416-586-4800 ext. 5201
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