

Planning for your **Safety**





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*For people dealing with
violence or abuse*

The courage you have shown
Shows how much you have grown
You will always shed a tear
With memories of the fear
No-one will completely know
Because a lot you didn't show
But with the help and understanding
Your heart is finally mending
So hold your head high
And breathe with a sigh
You can now see a future
One step at a time
But in the end, you can turn and say
This life is MINE.

Rachel

Overview

The information provided in this booklet is not an exhaustive list of options. It is not a checklist. It contains information that others have found useful when they have left an abusive or violent relationship.

This booklet contains suggestions that may be adapted to suit your individual circumstances; only you can decide which are the best options for yourself and your family and what is realistic and affordable.

Recognising the Situation

What is Domestic and Family Violence?

Domestic or Family Violence occurs when a person uses violence, threats, intimidation or force to control or coerce a family member, partner or former partner.

That abuse can take the form of verbal, physical or psychological abuse; sexual abuse; social isolation; financial abuse; emotional abuse; intimidation; threats to harm; property damage; spiritual deprivation; stalking; threats towards or actual harm of pets and threats to commit suicide as a form of manipulation.

It is any act or behaviour that causes fear. Domestic or Family Violence does not discriminate. It affects everyone, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, financial status, religious affiliation or race. It impacts on all members of a community.

It is against the law for one person to assault another person, whether they are living together or not.

WARNING SIGNS — Some Questions to ask yourself about your partner

- Do they need to know where you are all the time?
- Do they check your phone messages or emails?
- Do they constantly accuse you of being unfaithful?
- Have they isolated you from family or friends?
- Are they jealous of you having your own friends?
- Do they stop you from working or studying?
- Do they control your finances?
- Do they humiliate you in front of others?
- Have they ever hit, slapped, punched or kicked you?
- Do you feel scared of their reaction if you disagree with them?
- Have they ever threatened to hurt themselves if you left them or planned to leave?
- Has your partner ever done things to you sexually that made you feel bad or physically hurt you?
- Have they ever destroyed your personal property?
- Have you or they ever made excuses for their behaviour blaming drugs or alcohol?
- Do you feel trapped in this relationship, either socially, economically or because you are fearful of leaving?
- Do you constantly monitor your own behaviour?

What is a Safety Plan?

A Safety Plan is a guide for staying safe from violence.

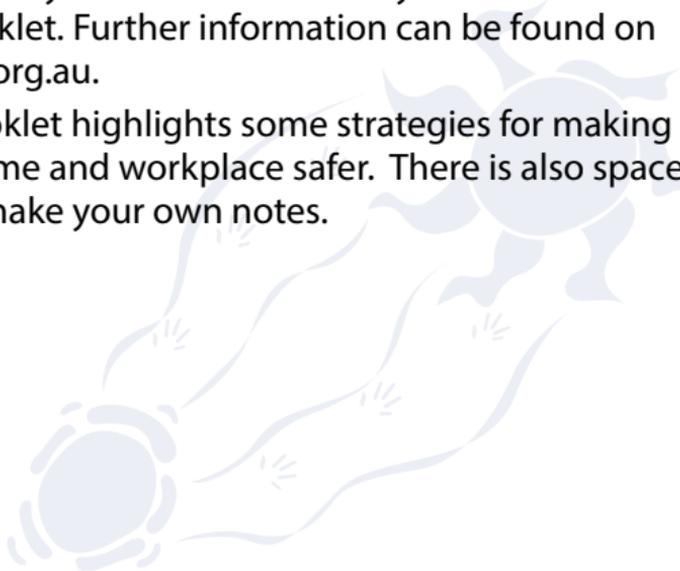
Planning for your safety is a process of looking at your situation and assessing what you might need to help you feel and be safer. Your safety plan must be relevant to your needs and be adapted if your situation changes. It needs to incorporate an escape plan as well as practical strategies to improve your home and personal security.

Safety planning is not about focusing on living in fear; it is about taking proactive steps to improve your and your children's safety. It is about taking back control over your life.

Safety plans need to include safety strategies for different environments such as home, social, work and vehicle security.

Cyber safety is an issue that is only touched on in this booklet. Further information can be found on wesnet.org.au.

This booklet highlights some strategies for making your home and workplace safer. There is also space for you to make your own notes.



The Police:

- If there have been any threats made against you or your family, contact your local police. If you are in immediate danger contact the police on 000.
- Ask for an “event number” when reporting to police.
- Speak to the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer at your local police station or any other police officer, about applying for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) which can include an exclusion order to keep the person you fear away from you.
- Report all breaches of your ADVO to police.

Keep a record or diary of any breaches of ADVO orders or suspicious behaviours such as phone hang ups.

Your Home

Some basic tips:

- Give a phone contact list of important people or services to people you trust in case of emergencies.
- Ask for identification before opening the door
- Make sure everyone in the home talks about suspicious calls or occurrences.
- Choose a code word that your ex would not know. Let family and friends know that when they hear the word it means that a crisis is occurring.

- Keep in touch with neighbours; ask them to let you know if anyone has been hanging around your house and to contact the police if they hear any violent incidents or have any concerns about your safety.
- Calls to the police can be made anonymously.
- Keep trusted friends and neighbours informed about what's going on.
- Make a safe evacuation plan. Make sure all household members know about and practice it occasionally.
- Treat your evacuation plan like a fire drill.
- Get a dog. If this has been a family dog known by the violent person, consider getting another.
- Check with landlords/estate agents if it is OK to have a dog.
- Keep a note by your phone that includes information such as your street address and nearest cross-street that will help guide police to your location. These are questions asked when you call 000.
- Be alert to any suspicious people hanging about. Don't ignore any 'funny feelings' – trust your intuition.
- Be prepared. Keep important papers together so you can grab them if you have to leave.
- Store copies of important papers at a safe location.

Locks:

- Have dead locks installed (NB do not deadlock yourself in at night, you need to be able to leave the building in case of an emergency such as fire).
- Install lockable security screens, where possible and keep them locked.
- Keep external doors locked when at home.
- If door keys go missing, change the locks.
- Supply your landlord or estate agent with a key to the premises. This is a legal requirement in private rentals. Housing NSW does not keep a key to your residence.
- Make sure windows and sliding doors have good locks.
- Lock windows cheaply by drilling a hole through the window jamb into the window frame and using a bolt to secure the window shut.
- Use a dowel stick to prevent sliding doors and sliding windows from being opened (make sure these are an exact fit so windows cannot be jimmed open). Screw a hook into dowel to allow easy access.
- NB: In rental properties making changes to houses needs to be done with the permission of the owner. You do not need permission to change locks, but a key must be given to the owner or agent.
- Keep electric fuse boxes locked (use locks supplied by electricity supplier to allow access to the metre box).

- Create a 'safe room' in your house that is secure and has mobile phone coverage. This could be a bathroom or laundry with a lock installed that could be a more secure place for you and your children to wait for the arrival of the police.
- Keep shed door locked.
- Keep side gates padlocked.
- If possible lock the area under your house and consider installing a manhole padlock.

You might be eligible for reimbursement of costs through Victims Services NSW.

www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au

Lighting:

- Install a veranda light at a height that makes it hard to reach.
- Install a sensor light. Some solar sensor lights can reduce installation costs and be just as effective.
- Ensure pathways are well lit.
- Keep torches and spare batteries in an easy to reach place.
- Keep a torch in the car.

Alarms and cameras:

- Consider a back-to-base alarm system with a remote button. Know the range of this device.
- Consider installing a loud, outside alarm that can be activated from inside the house.

- Consider installing security cameras. If you do, you must display a warning sign that the premise is under video surveillance.
- SHLV may have access to GPS alert systems. Contact your local SHLV service.

House surrounds:

- Keep your outside area clear.
- Keep garden utensils such as rakes, shovels and ladders securely stored.
- Store wheelie bins away from windows. They can be used as ladders.
- Trim shrubs and bushes from entrance ways.
- Let trusted people know if you go away e.g. neighbours or family.

Your car:

- Keep the garage door locked at all times.
- Keep car locked when at home.
- Always park in a secured garage if possible.
- Park in well lit areas when shopping or at work.
- Keep a torch in your car.
- Keep a personal alarm on your key ring (regularly check to ensure battery has not gone flat). This may give you time to get away and may attract attention.

Safety and children:

- Talk to your children about how your family is keeping safe.
- Teach your children how to telephone the police and how to give their full name and address. This is good practice in case of any emergency.
- Tell your children's school or child care centre about the situation and about who has authority to pick up the children. Provide the school or centre with copies of any family law orders or ADVO's.
- Practice safety plans as if they are fire drills.
- Be aware of what you talk about in front of your children. They need enough information to feel safe, but they may also have ongoing contact with both parents.

Internet and cyber security:

- Be aware of stalking, mobile phone, spy ware, such as Mspy. Some of these apps can remain invisible on your phone.
- You can find out if you suspect your mobile phone is being monitored by following the link <http://acisni.com/is-there-spy-software-on-my-cell-phone-how-to-detect-being-monitored/> for more information on cyber security
- Use your on screen keyboard when typing in passwords. This will prevent keystroke access.
- If in doubt, reset your phone to factory settings.

Social media sites:

- Check security settings
- Who are your friends of friends, is your info visible to them?
- Ask friends not to tag you.
- Take a screenshot to pass on to police if any threatening messages or images appear.
- Deactivate “find me” location finders. These can be used to track you.
- Be aware that even deleted material remains on a server.
- If you don't want information shared, don't send it via social media.

Phones and mobile phones:

- Get an unlisted phone number. Make sure everyone you give it to know it's a silent number. Make sure they know not to give it out to anyone.
- Consider getting caller identification.
- Use an answering machine to screen callers.
- Buy a pre-paid mobile phone for Family Law contacts.
- Make sure you know where in your house you can get reception for you mobile phone.
- Keep your mobile charged and with you in case the phone line is disconnected.

- Portable phones rely on electricity. If there is a power outage, you have no landline.
- Report all phone abuse. This is against the law. Keep accurate records and original messages for police and courts.
- Do not delete text or voice messages from your phone.
- Do not edit messages.
- Consider changing your number if phone abuse continues.
- Dialling 000 on mobile phones will work, however if you have a GSM digital phone dial 112 for emergencies.
- Emergency number will work even if you don't have credit.
- Program emergency contacts into your phones, both mobile and landline.
- For more information on cyber and smart phone security see wesnet.org.au.

Your work, shopping or social events

- Tell someone at work what is happening. Be selective; maybe the manager or supervisor.
- Make sure everyone in the workplace is aware not to give out your contact details. This should be workplace policy for all staff.

- Park in a well-lit space if possible and ask a work colleague/security person to escort you to your car.
- Form a buddy system with a co-worker in sharing rides or catching public transport.
- Have a plan of action if you are followed home. Know where your nearest police station is and drive there if you are in a car.
- Plan what you would do if you are followed while catching public transport.
- Change your routines. If you have always shopped on a certain day at a certain location, change the days and the shopping places from week to week.
- Purchase a small, battery operated alarm and be prepared to activate it. Have it somewhere you can access it readily.
- If you have a back-to-base alarm, carry it with you. There are mobile devices with GPS capabilities that are linked to police systems. You may be eligible; contact your local SHLV service.
- If there is an emergency in a public place, find someone, (even a shopkeeper), and ask for help.

Information that may be of help

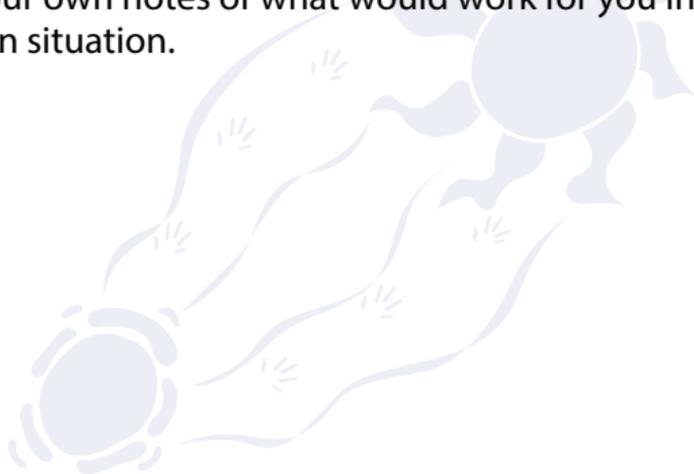
- Police can carry out a safety audit of your home.
- If there is a Staying Home Leaving Violence Project in your area they can also conduct safety audits of your home and provide some practical assistance.

- You may be eligible for the Victims Assistance Scheme for reimbursement for changing locks. Contact Victims Services in NSW or www.victimsservices.justice.nsw.gov.au
- You may also be eligible for a Crisis Payment from Centrelink (this needs to be done within 7 days after an incident).
- Your local domestic violence service may be able to help.
- Download the free “Safe Around Me” app, which contains the contents of this booklet.

Try not to panic.

Each area has its own domestic violence support agencies which can be located in your phone book. Make a note of your local services. NB: This is by no means an exhaustive list.

These are only a set of ideas that may provide some options for improving your and your family’s safety. Make your own notes of what would work for you in your own situation.





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