

# Staying Safe



Violence against women and children is not acceptable for any reason. You are not responsible for any form of abuse and are not alone with the pain and suffering you are experiencing.

Unfortunately domestic and family violence is everywhere in our community; especially behind closed doors.

There is always the hope that the situation will improve and this keeps us locked into the abusive situation with our dreams of a happy and harmonious family life. To hold on to this hope and dream we will keep the peace at all cost. This is where we start walking on egg shells waiting for the next cycle of abusive behaviour. Our hope is sustained by the promises by the abuser and the disappointments when the behaviour re-appears.

Leaving a violent relationship permanently can take on average six attempts; each time women find they become stronger, clearer and more confident.

**Women leave a violent relationship to become safe; however it is important to remember that this safety may not occur immediately. Separation can be the time of greatest danger**

**Lower North Shore Domestic Violence Network**  
[www.northshoredomesticviolence.org.au](http://www.northshoredomesticviolence.org.au)



# Understanding Domestic & Family Violence

To determine if your relationship is abusive you need to look at what the other person is doing, how it affects your life, how it makes you feel and where the balance of power lies in the relationship. Trust your intuition - if something does not feel right to you then it is not ok.

## Forms of Domestic Violence

**Fear** can be the most powerful means of control. Fear can be created through any behaviour which is used to intimidate you and which takes away your power.

**Intimidation** includes breaking your possessions, intimidating body language, hostile and aggressive questioning, constant calls, emails, text messages and stalking.

**Physical abuse** includes physical harm to you, your children, your property, family, friends and pets. It may also involve the threat of weapons.

**Sexual abuse** includes any forced or unwarranted sexual interaction. This may include: forced sexual acts, harassment, or sexual harm.

**Verbal abuse** includes constant put-downs, insults and verbal threats. Verbal abuse is a humiliating experience and over time can destroy your self-esteem and self-belief.

**Emotional / psychological abuse** includes behaviour / actions and comments to undermine your sense of self and destroy your self confidence / worth.

**Spiritual abuse** includes ridiculing your spiritual beliefs and/or excluding you from taking part in cultural or spiritual activities.

**Financial abuse** occurs when the abuser takes control over your financial resources. This may include not allowing you to work or making the decisions about the money you earn or spend.

**Social abuse** is when the abuser criticises, jokes about or puts you down in front of family, friends, work friends etc and/or controls where you go and who you see. These are attempts to isolate you from family and friends

**Cyber bullying / cyber harassment** includes use of email, instant messaging, chat rooms, mobile phones or other forms of information and digital technology (including social media) to harass, humiliate or intimidate

# Safety Planning

Think of ideas that will help keep you safe and put them into action. Here are some things you can do now to make it safer for you and your children.

## **Safety during an abusive incident**

- Be aware of all exit routes and safety areas for you and your children.
- Seek support from neighbours to call the police if they hear a disturbance.
- Develop a safety plan for your children; e.g. how to call 000, how to safely exit the house and how to get help.
- Phone police as soon as you can.
- Seek medical support for any injuries.
- Keep a diary of violent incidents, including dates.

## **Safety at Work**

- Inform someone at your workplace about your current situation.
- Avoid taking the same route to work each day.
- Develop a safety plan for arriving and leaving work.

# Safety when preparing to leave

Women leave a violent relationship to become safe; however it is important to remember that this safety may not occur immediately.

## Separation can be the time of greatest danger.

It is important to have a clear safety plan for you and your children before you leave.

- Contact the Domestic Violence Hotline **1800 65 64 63** and arrange safe accommodation for you and your children
- Contact RSPCA to arrange safe accommodation for your pets
- Seek support from a domestic violence worker and consider getting an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO). Speak directly to the Domestic Violence Liaison Officer at your local Police station to lodge your ADVO.
- Arrange your transportation in advance
- Practice travelling to your intended safe area
- Prepare and safely store a leaving package with money, documents, clothes, spare keys
- Seek legal advice
- Program emergency support service contacts into your phone
- Ask your doctor to document any injuries
- Only tell trusted people of your intended new location

## What to take when you leave

The safety of you and your children is paramount. Take the items below only if it is safe to do so. It is important to remember you may be able to return with Police support at a later time to collect your possessions.

- Driver's licence, bank details, credit cards, birth/marriage/divorce certificate/s for you and your children
- Centrelink, immigration documents
- Car & house keys
- Passports for you and your children
- Car registration papers
- Medical records, medication & Medicare details
- Taxation and employment documents
- Court papers including protection and family law papers Rental, mortgage, legal papers, copy of ADVO
- Clothing
- Personal address book
- Your children's favourite toys and other items of comfort
- Personal items which have value or you fear may be destroyed such as jewellery and photographs

**A safety plan is about taking proactive steps to improve you and your children's safety and needs to include safety strategies for home, work, school and community.**

# Planning for My Safety

Leaving an abusive relationship does not always result in immediate safety. Here are some tips you and your children can use to maintain safety after separation.

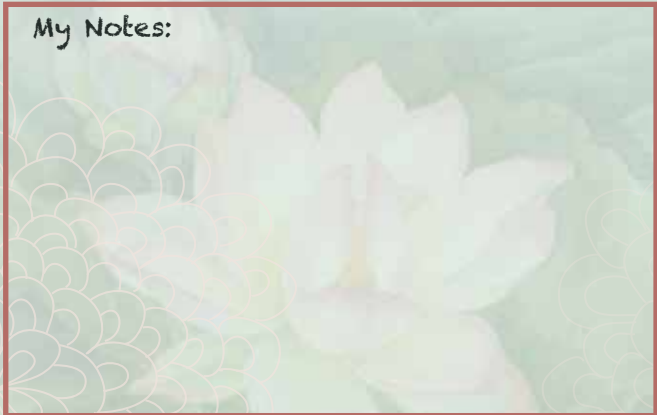
- Seek legal advice; be informed of your rights
- Program emergency services / contacts into your phone
- Inform your children's school/day care of collection arrangements for your children
- Keep your ADVO with you at all times. Store a copy with someone you trust. If your circumstances change, apply to the local court for a variation
- Request police support if you need to return to the house to retrieve your possessions
- Consider changing your bank, postal address and phone number
- Consider using a silent number and using caller ID
- Consider asking the Australian Electoral Commission to exclude your name and contact details on the electoral role
- Avoid using your usual shopping centre – change your routines
- Increase home security (changing locks, security chains, sensor lights)
- Seek support from neighbours to call the police if they hear a disturbance
- If your partner breaches an ADVO inform the police immediately

- Seek support from a domestic violence support worker / counsellor
- Contact Centrelink to ensure any joint correspondence to you and your partner is changed immediately.
- Install a security light
- Be alert to any suspicious people – don't ignore any "funny feelings"
- Keep electric fuse boxes locked, make a safe evacuation plan.
- Make sure all household members know and understand the evacuation plan.
- Identify a "safe room" in your house with a lockable door.

## Crisis Plan

Things I will do if there is a crisis at home:

My Notes:





## How I will teach my children to manage their safety?

- Teach your children how to telephone the police and how to give their full name and address.
- 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.

My Notes:

## Phones and Mobile phones

- Get an unlisted number. Make sure everyone you give it to know it's a silent number
- Consider the purchase of a telephone that has caller ID
- Consider the purchase of a separate pre-paid mobile for your children to use for access phone calls where Family Law matters are in place
- Report all phone abuse. Keep accurate records and original messages for police and court. Do not delete text or voice messages from your phone
- Program emergency contacts in your phone

## On-line safety

- Use a computer with a password
- Clear your internet history
- Be careful when communicating online
- Create an alternative email account
- Protect or change your passwords
- Increase privacy settings on social network sites such as Facebook

## Your Car

- Keep your car locked at all times
- Park in well lit areas when shopping or at work
- Consider purchasing a personal alarm for your key ring

## Your work, shopping or social events

- Make sure everyone in the workplace is aware not to give out your personal details
- Inform your manager or supervisor of your safety concerns
- Park in a well lit space
- Have an action plan if you are followed home
- Plan what you will do if you are followed while using public transport

What will I do if I am unsafe in a public area?

My Notes:

# Safety Plan Checklist:

## I have

- Safe place to go
- My essential documents in a safe place
- Copies of important documents at a friend's (or safe) place
- A comprehensive emergency plan
- Discussed emergency plans with my children
- Informed neighbours and/or colleagues of my safety plan
- Spare house/car keys in a safe accessible place.

## My Notes:

Developed by



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