

Creating Your Safety Plan: A Comprehensive Worksheet

Introduction

A safety plan is a critical tool for protecting yourself, especially if you're experiencing abuse or feel at risk in a relationship, home, or community. This 4-page worksheet guides you through creating a detailed, actionable plan to ensure your physical, emotional, and financial safety. Keep this plan in a secure, confidential location—such as with a trusted friend, in a safe deposit box, or in a password-protected digital file—where your abuser cannot access it. Update your plan regularly as your situation changes or new risks emerge. This resource is designed to empower you to take proactive steps, connect with support, and prioritize your well-being. If you're in immediate danger, call 911 or a crisis hotline before proceeding.

Section 1: Responding in a Crisis

When facing an immediate threat, having a clear, quick-response plan can save your life and well-being. This section helps you identify trusted contacts, safe locations, and discreet signals for help.

People I Trust to Call

In a crisis, you need reliable individuals who can offer immediate support, whether emotional, practical, or physical.

- **Prompt:** List 3-5 people you can rely on for immediate help during a crisis. Include their names, phone numbers, relationships to you, and whether they can offer shelter, transportation, or other support.
 - **Example:**
 - **Name:** Maria Lopez
 - **Phone:** 555-123-4567
 - **Relationship:** Sister
 - **Support Offered:** Can provide shelter at her home and drive me to a safe place.
 - **Name:** James Carter
 - **Phone:** 555-789-0123
 - **Relationship:** Close friend
 - **Support Offered:** Can listen and call authorities if needed, but no shelter available.
 - **Tool:** Create a contact card or digital list on a secure device (e.g., a phone with a passcode). Program their numbers for speed dial and test calling them during a non-emergency to ensure they're prepared.

Write down your trusted contacts, noting any specific instructions (e.g., “Call only after 9 PM if I’m at home”). Reflect on how often you’ve reached out to them and whether you need to update or expand this list.

Safe Places to Go

Having predetermined safe locations can help you escape quickly and reduce panic in a crisis. These should be places where you feel secure and your abuser cannot easily reach you.

- **Prompt:** Identify 3-5 safe locations you can go to if you need to leave home suddenly. Include their addresses, phone numbers (if applicable), and why they feel secure.
 - **Example:**
 - **Location:** Maria’s House
 - **Address:** 123 Oak Street, Anytown, CA
 - **Phone:** 555-123-4567
 - **Why Safe:** My sister lives there, and she has a security system and no connection to my abuser.
 - **Location:** Local Domestic Violence Shelter
 - **Address:** 456 Safe Haven Rd, Anytown, CA
 - **Phone:** 1-800-555-1234
 - **Why Safe:** Offers 24/7 confidentiality, security, and support services.
 - **Tool:** Use a map app (e.g., Google Maps) to plot these locations and calculate travel time from your home. Keep printed directions or screenshots in your essentials bag (see Section 2).

Write down your safe places, including any barriers (e.g., transportation, distance) and how you’ll overcome them (e.g., “Call a friend for a ride”). Consider public places like libraries or police stations as temporary options if private spaces aren’t available.

Code Word or Signal for Help

A discreet code word or signal allows you to communicate danger to trusted people without alerting your abuser. This is especially useful in person or over the phone.

- **Prompt:** Agree on a simple code word, phrase, or nonverbal signal (e.g., tapping your nose twice) to alert your trusted contacts that you’re in danger and need immediate assistance. Describe how you’ll use it and with whom.
 - **Example:**
 - **Code Word:** “Sunflower”
 - **How to Use:** I’ll say, “Can you tell me about that sunflower recipe?” during a call to signal I’m in danger and need help.
 - **With Whom:** Maria, James, and my neighbor Lisa (555-987-6543).
 - **Tool:** Practice the code with your contacts during a safe moment (e.g., a casual call). Ensure they know to call 911 or come to your aid discreetly if they hear it.

Write down your code word or signal, including specific instructions for each contact (e.g., “Maria should call the police; James should come quietly to my street”). Test it with at least one person to confirm they understand and are prepared.

Section 2: Preparing in Advance

Proactive preparation can make leaving safer and smoother. This section helps you gather essential documents, pack an essentials bag, and secure your finances.

Important Documents

Having access to key documents ensures you can prove your identity, access services, or manage finances if you need to leave quickly.

- **Prompt:**List 5-10 essential documents you’ll need in an emergency. Include their locations, whether you’ve made copies, and where you’ll store them securely.
 - **Example:**
 - **Document:**Driver’s License
 - **Location:** Wallet (original), safe deposit box (copy)
 - **Secure Storage:** Password-protected USB drive with a trusted friend.
 - **Document:**Birth Certificate
 - **Location:** Home filing cabinet (original), safe deposit box (copy)
 - **Secure Storage:** Scanned PDF in a password-protected email draft.
 - **Tool:** Use a checklist to track each document’s status (e.g., “Copied? Stored? Accessible?”). Create digital scans (encrypted) and physical copies, storing them in separate secure locations (e.g., with a friend, in a safety deposit box).

Write down your document list, noting any missing items and a plan to obtain or replace them (e.g., “Order a new passport through the government website by next month”). Regularly update this list as your needs change.

Essentials Bag

An essentials bag ensures you have critical items if you need to leave suddenly. This should be small, portable, and stored securely.

- **Prompt:**List 5-10 items to include in your essentials bag. Describe where you’ll keep it and how you’ll access it quickly.
 - **Example:**
 - **Items:**
 - Clothes (2 outfits, underwear, socks)
 - Medications (weekly supply)
 - Spare phone/charger (pre-loaded with contacts and apps)
 - Cash (\$200-500, if possible)
 - Copy of important documents (on USB or paper)
 - **Location:** Stored in a locked box at my trusted friend Maria’s house, accessible by calling her.

- **Tool:** Use a small backpack or duffel bag, labeling it discreetly (e.g., “Gym Bag”). Test packing and unpacking it monthly to ensure items are current and functional.

Write down your essentials bag contents, including any additional items specific to your needs (e.g., children’s toys, pet supplies). Plan how you’ll maintain or update the bag (e.g., “Replace medications every 3 months”).

Financial Safeguards

Financial independence can be crucial for safety. Preparing discreetly reduces your dependence on your abuser and ensures you can support yourself if needed.

- **Prompt:** Outline 3-5 steps to secure your finances. Include actions like opening a separate bank account, saving cash, or securing a credit card in your name. Note any challenges and how you’ll address them.
 - **Example:**
 - **Step:** Open a separate bank account at a new branch my abuser doesn’t know.
 - **Challenge:** Limited access to funds—solve by depositing small amounts (\$20/week) from cash I save.
 - **Step:** Apply for a secure credit card in my name online, using a trusted friend’s address.
 - **Challenge:** Bad credit history—solve by consulting a financial advisor or domestic violence advocate.
 - **Tool:** Use a financial safety tracker (e.g., spreadsheet) to log deposits, account details (encrypted), and progress. Consult a domestic violence advocate or financial planner for confidential advice.

Write down your financial safeguards, including a timeline (e.g., “Open account within 2 weeks”) and resources for support (e.g., local banks, hotlines). Reflect on any barriers (e.g., access, fear) and how you can overcome them safely.

Section 3: Protecting Yourself Long-Term

Ongoing safety requires vigilance, especially with technology, children, and planning your exit. This section provides advanced strategies for sustained protection.

Technology

Abusers may use technology to monitor or control you. Securing your digital presence is essential for safety.

- **Prompt:** List 3-5 steps to protect your technology and privacy. Include actions like changing passwords, disabling location sharing, or getting a new device.
 - **Example:**
 - **Step:** Change passwords on email, social media, and banking apps to strong, unique codes (e.g., 12-character mix of letters, numbers, symbols).

- **Tool:** Use a password manager (e.g., LastPass) and enable two-factor authentication.
 - **Step:** Disable location sharing on my phone and apps, or switch to a new, untracked device.
 - **Tool:** Consult a domestic violence advocate or tech support for safe device setup (e.g., prepaid phone).
- **Tool:** Regularly check your devices for spyware using free tools like Avast or Malwarebytes, and keep software updated.

Write down your technology safeguards, noting any risks (e.g., shared devices) and how you'll mitigate them (e.g., "Use public library computers for confidential tasks"). Update these steps quarterly or after major changes.

If You Have Children

If children are involved, their safety is a priority. Creating a plan with them ensures they know what to do in an emergency.

- **Prompt:** Develop a safety plan for your children, including 3-5 steps they can take if they feel unsafe. Include where to go, who to call, and how to signal for help.
 - **Example:**
 - **Step:** Go to the neighbor's house (Lisa, 555-987-6543) if they hear yelling.
 - **Step:** Call 911 if they see violence, using the code word "Sunflower" to explain the situation.
 - **Step:** Hide in their closet and text Maria (555-123-4567) if they can't leave.
 - **Tool:** Practice these steps with your children in a safe, non-threatening way (e.g., role-play during a game). Keep a laminated card with emergency contacts in their backpack or room.

Write down your children's safety plan, ensuring it's age-appropriate and rehearsed regularly. Note any additional supports (e.g., school counselors, pediatricians) and how they can assist.

Leaving Safely

If you're planning to leave, thorough preparation reduces risks and ensures a smoother transition.

- **Prompt:** Outline 3-5 steps to leave safely, consulting with experts if needed. Include timing, resources, and support contacts.
 - **Example:**
 - **Step:** Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233) for a safety plan tailored to my situation.
 - **Step:** Pack my essentials bag and retrieve important documents from the safe deposit box with Maria's help.
 - **Step:** Move to the local shelter (456 Safe Haven Rd) during the day when my abuser is at work.

- **Tool:** Work with a domestic violence advocate to create a detailed exit strategy, including legal, financial, and housing support. Use a timeline (e.g., “Leave within 2 weeks”) to stay focused.

Write down your leaving plan, including potential challenges (e.g., pets, transportation) and how you’ll address them (e.g., “Arrange pet care with a friend”). Update this plan as your situation evolves.

Important Reminders

- **You Are Not Alone:** Millions of people face similar challenges, and help is available through hotlines, shelters, and advocates.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** If you feel unsafe, act immediately—don’t wait for confirmation from others.
- **Your Safety Is Your Priority:** Focus on protecting yourself and your loved ones, even if it feels overwhelming.

Further Resources

- **National Resources:**
 - Canada Public Health – Stop Family Violence Services (<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/health-promotion/stop-family-violence/services.html>)
 - U.S. National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233, <https://www.thehotline.org/>)
 - 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (1-800-273-8255, <https://988lifeline.org/>)
- **Local Resources:** Contact your local domestic violence shelter or crisis center for tailored support (e.g., housing, legal aid, counseling).
- **Books:**
 - *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker – Insights on recognizing and responding to danger.
 - *Safety Planning with Battered Women* by Jill Davies – Practical strategies for safety planning.
- **Online:**
 - National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) (<https://ncadv.org/>) – Resources and safety tips.
 - Women’s Aid (<https://www.womensaid.org.uk/>) – UK-based support for domestic abuse survivors.
- **Apps:**
 - *Aspire News* – A safety app with panic buttons and resource tracking.
 - *SafeJourney* – Tools for mapping safe routes and storing emergency contacts.

National Resources in Canada

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline (Canadian Women’s Foundation):**
 - Toll-free line: 1-866-863-0511

- Offers 24/7 support, referrals to local services, and safety planning for individuals experiencing domestic violence. This line is available across Canada and supports English and French speakers, with some multilingual options.
- Kids Help Phone:
 - Toll-free line: 1-800-668-6868
 - Provides 24/7 confidential support for youth, including those affected by family violence. Available in English and French, with online chat options.
- ShelterSafe.ca:
 - Website: <https://www.sheltersafe.ca/>
 - An online resource and clickable map to connect women and children seeking safety from violence and abuse with the nearest shelter or transition house across Canada.
- National Aboriginal Circle Against Family Violence:
 - Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419
 - Supports Indigenous individuals experiencing family violence, offering culturally sensitive resources and referrals.
- Ending Violence Association of Canada:
 - Website: <https://endingviolencecanada.org/>
 - Provides resources, education, and advocacy on gender-based and domestic violence, with links to local service providers across Canada. If you're in immediate danger, they recommend calling 911.

Provincial and Territorial Resources

Canada's provinces and territories offer localized support through crisis lines, shelters, and treatment centers. Below are examples for some regions—contact your provincial/territorial government or a local service for specific addresses and additional options:

- British Columbia:
 - VictimLink BC:1-800-563-0808 (toll-free, 24/7)
 - Offers crisis intervention, safety planning, and referrals for domestic and gender-based violence.
 - BC Society of Transition Houses (BCSTH):
 - Website: <https://bcsth.ca/>
 - A provincial umbrella organization supporting transition houses and services for women, children, and youth experiencing violence.
 - Ending Violence Association of BC:
 - Website: <https://endingviolence.org/>
 - Resources and referrals for domestic and sexual violence support in BC.
- Alberta:
 - Family Violence Info Line:310-1818 (call or text, 24/7, English only)
 - Provides support, safety planning, and connections to shelters for Albertans experiencing family violence. Online chat available.
 - Alberta Works – Support for Albertans Fleeing Abuse:1-866-644-5135 (24/7)
 - Offers funding and resources to help individuals escape abusive situations and set up a new life.
 - Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter:403-234-SAFE (7233) or 1-866-606-7233 (24/7)

- Provides emergency shelter, court programs, and support for women and children.
- **Ontario:**
 - **Assaulted Women’s Helpline:1-866-863-0511 (24/7, toll-free)**
 - Offers crisis support, safety planning, and referrals for women experiencing violence, available in over 200 languages, including 17 Indigenous languages.
 - **Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres:**
 - Website: <https://www.sadvtreatmentcentres.ca/>
 - Provides hospital-based care, counseling, and 24/7 navigation lines for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence across Ontario.
 - **Victim Support Line (Ontario):1-888-579-2888 (Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–8 p.m. ET)**
 - Supports victims of crime, including domestic violence, with counseling and referrals.
- **Quebec:**
 - **Neighbours, Friends and Families (Abuse and Violence Support Line):1-855-225-0220 (toll-free, 24/7)**
 - Offers support and resources for those experiencing or witnessing family violence, available in French and English.
 - **L’Alliance des maisons d’hébergement de 2e étape pour les femmes et enfants victimes de violence conjugale:**
 - (French only) Supports women and children in second-stage transition homes after leaving abusive situations.
 - **Regroupement québécois des centres d’aide et de lutte contre les agressions à caractère sexuel:**
 - (French only) Provides support for sexual assault survivors, including crisis lines and counseling.
- **Nova Scotia:**
 - **Transition House Association of Nova Scotia:**
 - 24/7 staffed shelters with crisis support and safety planning for women and children fleeing violence.
 - **Neighbour Friends and Family Toll-Free Line:1-855-225-0220 (24/7)**
 - Supports individuals impacted by intimate partner violence and offers guidance on spotting abuse.
- **Manitoba:**
 - **Manitoba Association of Women’s Shelters (MAWS):**
 - Hotline: 1-877-977-0007 (24/7)
 - Supports women and children fleeing abuse, offering shelter and crisis intervention.
 - **Kids Help Phone:1-800-668-6868 (24/7)**
 - Available for youth experiencing or witnessing domestic violence.
- **New Brunswick:**
 - **Support Services for Victims of Abuse:**
 - Contact local transition houses, domestic violence outreach, or crisis lines via www.gnb.ca/violence for region-specific support.
 - **Emergency Intervention Orders: Available through courts for urgent protection in serious situations.**

- **Northwest Territories, Yukon, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador:**
 - **Contact local victim services or transition houses for region-specific support.**
Examples include:
 - **Northwest Territories Victim Services: (867) 920-2121 or toll-free 1-800-661-0844 (24/7 crisis line).**
 - **Yukon Victim Services: (867) 667-8550 or VictimLink 1-800-563-0808 (after-hours support).**
 - **Transitional House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador: 24/7 staffed shelters for women and children.**
 - **Prince Edward Island Family Violence Prevention Services: Contact local shelters or crisis lines for support.**

Local Domestic Violence Shelters and Centers

- **Use ShelterSafe.ca to find a shelter or transition house near you by entering your location. This national resource lists safe havens for women and children fleeing violence.**
- **Contact your local community center, women's shelter, or Indigenous friendship center for culturally appropriate support, especially if you're in a rural or remote area.**

Additional Tips

- **Confidentiality:** Many services prioritize anonymity and safety, but always verify how your information will be handled, especially with online or phone contacts.
- **Language Support:** Most national lines offer English and French, with some providing multilingual or Indigenous language options. Check with local services for language availability.
- **Legal and Financial Aid:** Many shelters and hotlines can connect you with legal aid, financial assistance, or housing support to help you leave safely.
- **Workplace Support:** Some organizations, like the Canadian Labour Congress, offer resources for domestic violence in the workplace, including safety planning and employer support.

Important Notes

- **If you're in immediate danger, call 911 or your local police emergency number. Many police services in Canada have domestic assault units trained to handle family violence.**
- **Resources may vary by province or territory, as they are responsible for administering justice and services related to family violence. Check your provincial/territorial government website (e.g., www.alberta.ca, www.ontario.ca) for localized listings.**
- **Posts on X and other platforms mention additional hotlines like the Canadian Women's Foundation's toll-free line (1-866-863-0511), but always verify current information through official websites or direct calls, as contact details can change.**

This information is based on web resources and sentiment from posts found on X, reflecting current support networks in Canada as of March 4, 2025. For the most accurate and up-to-date local resources, I recommend contacting a national hotline or visiting a government or

nonprofit website specific to your province or territory. If you need help creating a safety plan or accessing these resources, I can assist further with tools or worksheets based on your needs. Let me know how I can support you!

Final Thoughts

Creating a safety plan is a powerful act of self-care and empowerment. This worksheet equips you with the tools, resources, and confidence to protect yourself and build a safer future. Keep your plan updated, reach out for support, and trust in your ability to navigate this journey. If you're in danger now, call 911 or a crisis hotline immediately. You deserve safety and peace—start building your plan today.