

# Your safety is the most important thing!

**Do not**, under any circumstances, alert the abuser that you are going to leave, that you want a divorce, or that you are taking the kids. Even if your partner has never laid a hand on you before, announcing that you are leaving is often the trigger to push a controlling, abusive person over the edge. More important than the other person's feelings, or what other people will say or think about you, is your own personal safety. You must come first.

Your heart may tell you that you're being mean, cold, or insensitive; but your gut is telling you that you need to get out. Follow your gut and deal with your heart another time.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline suggests the following steps and precautions for preparing to, and leaving an abusive relationship:

## Preparing To Leave:

- Keep any evidence of physical abuse, such as pictures of injuries.
- Keep a journal of all violent incidences, noting dates, events and threats made, if possible. Keep your journal in a safe place.
- Know where you can go to get help. Tell someone what is happening to you.
- If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and report what happened to you. Ask that they document your visit.
- Plan with your children and identify a safe place for them, like a room with a lock or a friend's house where they can go for help. Reassure them that their job is to stay safe, not to protect you.

## Leaving the Abusive Relationship:

If you must leave in a hurry, use the following list as a guide. Remember, your safety is the most important thing.

### Identification:

- Driver's license
- Birth certificate and children's birth certificates
- Social security cards
- Financial information
- Money and/or credit cards (in your name)
- Checking and/or savings account books

### Legal Papers:

- Protective order

- Contact your local shelter and find out about laws and other resources available to you before you have to use them during a crisis. WomensLaw.org has state by state legal information.
- Acquire job skills or take courses at a community college as you can
- Try to set money aside or ask friends or family members to hold money for you.
- Copies of any lease or rental agreements, or the deed to your home
- Car registration and insurance papers
- Health and life insurance papers
- Medical records for you and your children
- School records
- Work permits/green Card/visa
- Passport
- Divorce and custody papers
- Marriage license

## Get Help Now

If you or someone you know is suffering from intimate partner abuse, teen dating violence or domestic abuse, there are people ready to answer your questions and help you right now.

**CALL: 1-800-799-SAFE**

You are:  
not stupid.  
not alone.  
not to blame.  
worthy of love.

Get the answers and the help you need today - nobody deals with this all by themselves.

Remember: domestic abuse is not only physical violence: it's mental and emotional abuse used by one person to gain power and control over another.

### Emergency Numbers:

- Your local police and/or sheriff's department
- Your local domestic violence program or shelter
- Friends, relatives and family members
- Your local doctor's office and hospital
- County and/or District Attorney's Office

### Other:

- Medications
- Extra set of house and car keys
- Valuable jewelry
- Pay-as-you-go cell phone
- Address book
- Pictures and sentimental items
- Several changes of clothes for you and your children
- Emergency money

## After you Leave:

- Change your locks and phone number. Visit Verizon's HopeLine for access to a free phone.
- Call the telephone company to request caller ID. Ask that your phone number be blocked so that if you call anyone, neither your partner nor anyone else will be able to get your new, unlisted phone number.
- Change your work hours and the route you take to work.
- Change the route taken to transport children to school or consider changing your children's schools.
- Alert school authorities of the situation.
- If you have a restraining order, keep a certified copy of it with you at all times, and inform friends, neighbors and employers that you have a restraining order in effect.
- Call law enforcement to enforce the order and give copies of the restraining order to employers, neighbors and schools along with a picture of the offender.
- Consider renting a post office box or using the address of a friend for your mail (be aware that addresses are on restraining orders and police reports, and be careful to whom you give your new address and phone number).
- Reschedule appointments of which the offender has knowledge.
- Use different stores and frequent different social spots.
- Alert neighbors and request that they call the police if they feel you may be in danger.
- Replace wooden doors with steel or metal doors. Install security systems if possible.
- Install a motion sensitive lighting system.
- Tell people you work with about the situation and have your calls screened by one receptionist if possible.
- Tell people who take care of your children or drive them/pick them up from school and activities. Explain your situation to them and provide them with a copy of the restraining order.