

Safety Planning

If your partner abuses you, your safety and the safety of those around you needs to become the priority.

When one partner is hurting the other, it's called **abuse** or **domestic violence**. It can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, controlling their partner's money or behaviour, controlling them emotionally, or coercive control.

Coercive control is behaviour by a current or former partner or family member that makes someone fear they will be physically harmed, causes their mental health to decline, or causes the victim such distress that their day-to-day activities are negatively affected.

This brochure gives you information about how to make a safety plan. A [safety plan](#) lays out how you can protect yourself and your children, and how you can make a plan to keep as safe as possible.

Take one action at a time. Start with the one that is easiest and safest for you.

If you live with a partner who abuses you

- Tell someone you trust that your partner is abusing you.
- Think about ways your partner has hurt you in the past. This will help you predict the level of danger you and your children face and when it might be safest to leave.
- Plan where to go in an emergency.
- Create a plan to get out of your home safely. If you have children, practice getting out of your home safely with them.
- Ask neighbours, friends, and family you can trust to call the police if they become aware of abuse.
- If you and your partner are starting to argue, move to a place where you can get outside easily.
- Try to avoid rooms where there are potential weapons, like the kitchen, workshop, or bathroom.
- Always back your car into the driveway and keep it fuelled.
- Hide your keys, a cell phone, and some money near your escape route.
- Have a list of phone numbers to call for help. Call the police if it is an emergency.

If you have children

- Teach your children that hurting other people is never right, even when someone they love hurts other people. Tell them the abuse isn't your fault or their fault; they did not cause it, and neither did you. Help them understand it is important to be safe, and that abuse is never acceptable.
- Try not to run to a place where the children are, as your partner may hurt them as well.
- Teach your children how to get help. Let them know it is not helpful to get between you and your partner if there is violence. Plan a code word to signal they should get help or leave.
- Plan how to get out of your home safely and practise with your children.
- Ask your neighbours to look after your children in an emergency.

If you're planning to leave

- Do not tell your partner you are thinking about leaving. This can be a very dangerous period when abuse can become worse.
- Tell the police or a local transition house that you plan to leave your abusive partner. Ask them to help you make a safety plan. Ask to speak to an officer who understands domestic violence (information shared may result in charges being laid by police against the abuser).
- If you do not identify as a woman, call 211 to help you find a safe place to go.
- If you are injured, go to a doctor or an emergency room and tell them what happened to you. Ask them to document your visit.
- Gather important papers: identification, bank cards, financial papers related to family assets, last Canada income tax return, keys, medication, pictures of the abuser and your children, passports, health cards, your address or telephone book, cell phone, and legal papers like immigration papers, the deed or lease to your home, emergency protection orders (EPOs) or peace bonds.
- If you're worried your partner will destroy these documents, make copies and leave them with someone you trust.
- Talk with a lawyer. Keep any proof that your partner hurt you, such as photos. Keep a journal of each time they hurt you, with the date, what happened, any threats and names of witnesses, and leave it with someone you trust.
- Gather pictures, jewellery, and objects of sentimental value, as well as toys and comforts for your children so you can find them quickly if you leave.
- Ask someone to care for your pets while you get settled. A transition house may be able to help with this.
- Clear your phone of the last number you called. You don't want your partner to use redial to find out who you are talking with.

When leaving

- Ask police or a friend, neighbour or family member to be with you when you leave.
- Call a local transition house for people facing abuse. It may be safer than going to a place your partner knows. You can just stay there for a short time if that helps.
- Leave quickly.
- Have a back-up plan in case your partner finds out where you are going.

After leaving

- Visit the closest police station and ask to speak to an officer who understands domestic violence.
- Think about applying for a peace bond that may help keep your partner away from you and your children. Keep it with you at all times.
- Give police a copy of any legal orders you have.
- Ask a lawyer or legal aid clinic about how you can protect yourself or your children. Tell your lawyer about any times you have gone to criminal court.
- Think about changing any service provider that you share with your ex-partner. This includes your cell phone company.
- Get an unlisted telephone number; block your number, so it doesn't show up when you make calls; if you have a landline, get caller ID so you can see who is calling you.
- Screen your calls so you don't answer a call from your partner by mistake.
- Make sure your children's school or day care centre knows about the abuse and has copies of all documents about it.
- Carry a photo of your ex-partner and your children with you.
- Ask your neighbours to look after your children in an emergency and to call the police if they see your ex-partner.
- Take extra care at work, at home, and in the community. Think about telling your supervisor at work about your situation.
- Think about places and patterns that your ex-partner will know about and try to change them. For example, use a different grocery store or place of worship.
- If you feel unsafe walking alone, ask a neighbour, friend, or family member to go places with you.
- If you need to go back to your home, ask the police to go with you. Never confront your ex-partner.

If you need help

You can get help in Nova Scotia any time of the day and any day of the week.

- Call 211 for information about organizations that can help. Ask about the Men's Helpline, Women's Helpline, or All Genders Helpline.
- Call the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia: **1-855-225-0220**.

If there is a risk of danger now, call 911.



Nova Scotia
Advisory Council on
the Status of Women

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Neighbours, Friends & Families