

*** * * How To Leave Safely**

Maybe you just want to give up, because you feel there is no way out of your domestic abuse situation. You are not alone. And there are people waiting to help.

There are many resources available for both abused and battered women and men, including crisis hotlines, shelters ... even job training, legal services, and childcare.

Start by reaching out today.

As you [face the decision](#) to either end the abusive relationship or try to save it, keep the following things in mind:

If you're hoping your abusive partner will change... the domestic abuse will probably keep happening. Abusers have deep emotional and psychological problems.

While change is possible, it isn't quick or easy.

And change can only happen once your abuser takes full responsibility for their behavior, seeks professional treatment, and stops blaming you, their unhappy childhood, stress, work, their drinking, or their temper.

If you believe you can help your abuser... It's only natural that you want to help your partner. You may think you're the only one who understands them or that it's your responsibility to fix their problems.

But the truth is that by staying and accepting repeated domestic abuse, you're reinforcing and enabling the behavior. Instead of helping your abuser, you're perpetuating the problem.

If your partner has promised to stop the domestic abuse... When facing consequences, abusers often plead for another chance, beg for forgiveness, and promise to change. They may even mean what they say in the moment, but **their true goal is to stay in control** and keep you from leaving.

Most of the time, they quickly return to their abusive behavior once you've forgiven them and they're no longer worried that you'll leave.

This is called the “honeymoon phase.”

If your partner is in counseling or a program for batterers, there is no guarantee that they'll change.

Many domestic abusers who go through counseling continue to be violent, abusive, and controlling.

If your partner has stopped minimizing the problem or making excuses, that's a good sign.

But you still need to make your decision based on who they are now, not the person you hope they will become.

If you're worried about what will happen if you leave... You may be afraid of what your abusive partner will do, where you'll go, or how you'll support yourself or your children.

But don't let fear of the unknown keep you in a dangerous, unhealthy situation.

Signs that your abuser is NOT changing:

- They minimize the domestic abuse or deny how serious it really was.

- They continue to blame others for their behavior.
- They claim that you're the one who is abusive.
- They pressure **you** to go to couple's counseling.
- They tell you that you owe them another chance.
- You have to push them to stay in treatment.
- They say that they can't change unless you stay with them and support them.
- They try to get sympathy from you, your children, or your family and friends.
- They expect something from you in exchange for getting help.
- They pressure you to make decisions about the relationship.

Safety planning if you're being abused

Whether or not you're ready to leave your domestic abuser, there are steps you can take to protect yourself.

These safety tips may make the difference between being severely injured or killed and escaping with your life.

1, Know your abuser's red flags.

Stay alert for signs and clues that your abuser is getting upset and may explode in anger or violence.

Come up with several believable reasons you can use to leave the house (both during the day and at night) if you sense trouble brewing.

Identify safe areas of the house. Know where to go if your abuser attacks or an argument starts.

Avoid small, enclosed spaces without exits, such as closets or bathrooms, or rooms with weapons, like the kitchen.

If possible, head for a room with a door and a phone. Plan your escape strategy, because we often don't think straight when we are panicked.

Come up with a code word.. Establish a word, phrase, or signal you can use to let your children, friends, neighbors, or co-workers know that you're in danger and they should call the police.

Contact a therapist - there are numerous resources on the homepage of fearfree.life.

Make an escape plan

Be ready to leave at a moment's notice.

Keep the car fueled up and facing the driveway exit, with the driver's door unlocked.

Hide a spare car key where you can get to it quickly. Sleep with a car key in your bra, if necessary.

Have emergency cash, clothing, and important phone numbers and documents stashed in a safe place, at a friend's house, for example.

Practice escaping quickly and safely.

Rehearse your escape plan so you know exactly what to do if under attack from your abuser.

If you have children, make sure they practice B Ask several trusted individuals if you can contact them if you need a ride, a place to stay, or help contacting the police.

Memorize the numbers of your emergency contacts, local shelter, and or hotline..

If you stay

If you decide at this time to stay with your abusive partner, here are some coping mechanisms to improve your situation and to protect yourself and your children.

- **Make a list of support people you can call on in an emergency.** They can provide emotional support, peer counseling, safe emergency housing, information, and other services whether you decide to stay or leave the relationship.
- **Build as strong a support system as your partner will allow.** Whenever possible, get involved with people and activities outside your home and encourage your children to do so.
- **Be kind to yourself!** Develop a positive way of looking at and talking to yourself. Use affirmations to counter the negative comments you get from the abuser. Carve out time for activities you enjoy.

Protecting Your Safety

Abusers often monitor their victim's phone or computer activity.

You may be afraid to leave or ask for help out of fear that your partner will retaliate if they find out.

However, there are precautions you can take to stay safe and keep your abuser from discovering what you're planning.

When seeking help for domestic violence and abuse, it's important to cover your tracks, especially when you're using the home phone, a smartphone, or a computer.

Call from a friend's or neighbor's phone when seeking help for domestic violence, or use a “burner phone.”

Check your smartphone settings.

There are smartphone apps your abuser can use to listen in on your calls, read your text messages, monitor your Internet usage, or track your location.

Consider turning it off when not in use or leaving it behind when fleeing your abuser.

Get a second cell phone.

To keep your communication and movements private, consider purchasing a prepaid cell phone (“burner” phone) or another smartphone that your abuser doesn't know about.

Some domestic violence shelters offer free cell phones to battered women.

Call your local hotline to find out more.

Call collect or use your second cell phone.

Remember that if you use your own home phone, the phone numbers that you call will be listed on the monthly bill.

Even if you've already left by the time the bill arrives, your abuser may be able to track you down by the phone numbers you've called for help.

Use a safe computer.

If you seek help online, you are safest if you use a computer outside of your home. While there are ways to delete your Internet history on a computer, tablet, or smartphone that your abuser has access to, this can be a red flag that you're trying to hide something.

Besides, unless you're very technical, it can be almost impossible to clear all evidence of the websites that you've visited. Use a computer at work, the library, your local community center, a domestic violence shelter or agency, or borrow a smartphone from a friend.

Change your user names and passwords.

In case your abuser knows how to access your accounts, create new usernames and passwords for your email, messaging apps, online banking, and other sensitive accounts.

Even if you don't think your abuser has your passwords, they may have guessed or used a spyware or key logging program to get them. Choose passwords that your abuser can't guess (avoid birthdays, nicknames, and other personal information).

Protecting yourself from surveillance and recording devices.

Your abuser doesn't need to be tech savvy in order to use surveillance technology to monitor your movements and listen in on your conversations.

Your abuser could be using:

Hidden cameras, such as a “Nanny Cam,” covert security cameras, or even a baby monitor to check in on you.

Smartphone apps that can enable your abuser to monitor your phone usage or track your movements.

Global Positioning System (GPS) devices hidden in your car, purse, on your phone, or other objects you carry with you. Your abuser can also use your car's GPS system to see where you've been.

If you discover any tracking or recording devices or apps, leave them in place until you're ready to leave. While it may be tempting to remove them or shut them off, this will alert your abuser that you're on to him.

Domestic violence shelters

A domestic violence shelter is a building or set of apartments where those who've been abused and battered can seek refuge from their abusers.

They generally cater to female victims of domestic abuse and their children. The location of the shelter is kept confidential in order to keep your abuser from finding you.

Domestic violence shelters will provide for all your basic living needs, including food and childcare.

The length of time you can stay at the shelter is limited, but most shelters will also help you find a permanent home, job, and other things you need to start a new life.

The shelter should also be able to refer you to other services in your community for domestic abuse victims, including:

- Legal help
- Counseling
- Support groups
- Services for your children
- Employment programs
- Health-related services
- Educational opportunities
- Financial assistance

If you go to a domestic violence shelter, you do not have to give identifying information about yourself, even if asked.

While shelters take many measures to protect the people they house, giving a false name may help keep your abuser from finding you, particularly if you live in a small town.

Protecting Yourself After You've Left The 'Shelter:

Keeping yourself safe from your abuser is just as important after you've left as before.

To protect yourself, you may need to relocate so your former partner can't find you. If you have children, they may need to switch schools.

To keep your new location a secret:

- Get a prepaid mobile phone.
- Use a post office box rather than your home address.
- In the U.S., apply to your state's address confidentiality program, a service that confidentially forwards your mail to your home.
- Cancel your old bank accounts and credit cards, especially if you shared them with your abuser. **When you open new accounts, be sure to use a different bank.**

If you're remaining in the same area, change up your routine. Take a new route to work, avoid places where your abuser might think to locate you, change any appointments he knows about, and find new places to shop and run errands.

You should also keep a cell phone on you at all times and be ready to call your country's emergency services number (911 in the U.S.) if you spot your former abuser.

Consider getting a restraining order or protective order against your abusive partner.

However, do not feel falsely secure with a restraining order. Your stalker or abuser may ignore it and the police may do nothing to enforce it.

If you are the victim of stalking or abuse, you need to carefully research how restraining orders are enforced in your neighborhood.

Find out if the abuser will just be given a citation or if they will actually be taken to jail. If the police simply talk to the violator or give a citation, your abuser may reason that the police will do nothing and feel empowered to pursue you further. Or your abuser may become angry and retaliate.

Taking Steps To Heal and Move On With Your Life

The scars of domestic violence and abuse run deep. The trauma of what you've been through can stay with you long after you've escaped the abusive situation.

You may struggle with upsetting emotions, frightening memories, or a sense of constant danger that you just can't kick. Or you may feel numb, disconnected, and unable to trust other people.

But counseling, therapy, and support groups for domestic abuse survivors can help you process what you've been through and learn B

After getting out of an abusive situation, you may be eager to jump into a new relationship and finally get the intimacy and support you've been missing.

But it's wise to go slow. Take the time to get to know yourself and to understand how you got into your previous abusive relationship. Without taking the time to heal and learn from the experience, you're at risk of falling back into abuse.

Visit fearfree.life and join the inner healing newsletter. It will make the recovery a lot easier, by weekly messages that can create new thought patterns.

Note: This blog is for sharing information and exchanging ideas. I don't offer professional advice. It's important to seek professional help from a therapist or counselor to address underlying issues and develop healthy coping mechanisms.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, please reach out for help. You are not meant to live this way, and you are not alone.

Here are some resources:

- The National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- The National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE
- Additional resources are listed on the homepage of fearfree.life
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Information sources for this article include Better Help Help Guide and Breaking The Silences handbook.