

## **Domestic Violence: Making a Safety Plan**

At the Physical Abuse Centre, one of the first things we do for a battered woman is help her create a safety plan. This will enable her to have a well thought-out plan for responding to a violent situation. We recognize how difficult it is for a woman to decide to seek shelter. It might take several attempts before she can permanently leave. Even when a woman decides that leaving might be in her best interests, there are many emotional, physical, and financial issues, combined with danger, that make leaving difficult. Additionally, leaving does not guarantee that the violence will end. Because of this danger, it helps to be prepared. Safety planning can help women prepare to safely leave their batterers and it empowers them to know that they have options besides living with abuse.

The following guide can help an abused woman in making a safety plan. The Physical Abuse Centre strongly recommends that anyone thinking of leaving an abusive relationship and/or making a safety plan should do so in consultation with a trained domestic violence specialist. There is no best way to protect yourself from future harm by your abuser. Many women involved in a domestic violence situation find it's helpful to make a safety plan. While you are working on a safety plan, remember, you don't have to figure it all out on your own. To help make a decision about what is best for you, it can be helpful to talk to a domestic violence advocate or hotline counsellor who has experience working with victims of domestic violence and who knows how to work with the different systems (police, courts and our shelter) that can make things easier for you. They are familiar with your community and can help you make a safety plan that meets your individual needs.

Remember that you always have a choice. If you are in a dangerous situation, there is help available for you if you need it. If you write out a safety plan, be sure to keep it in a place where your partner won't find it.

### **Plan Ahead**

Make a safety plan for yourself when you can think things through. That way, if you need to get out quickly, you'll know where to go and what options are available to you.

### **Decide how you would get out**

- Decide on a pathway if you have to leave at night. Think of public places you can access 24 hours a day. Know the route to police stations, the hospital, and fire stations.
- If you leave by car, make sure you lock the car doors immediately.
- Consider making a plan for each room in your home.
- Know which doors lock in your home.

### **Communicate with someone who can help and decide where you would go**

This may be difficult especially if your partner has isolated you; however, it is important to confide in a domestic violence advocate or hotline counsellor who has been trained to help you.

- An advocate or domestic violence hotline counsellor can help you figure out which friends and relatives might be able to help you.
- An advocate or hotline counsellor can help you figure out alternatives if you have to leave at a time when your friend is not available.
- If you don't have a car, think of a safe place, close to your home, where your friend could pick you up.
- You may want to plan a code word or phrase to use on the telephone with a friend if you need to access help when your abuser is present. Tell your friend that when you say " " it means you're in trouble and you need them to dial 911 for you.
- If you feel comfortable, tell your neighbours about the violence and ask if they will call the police if suspicious noises are coming from your home.

### **Plan**

- Keep your Order of Protection on you at all times.
- Keep your purse and keys in a safe place, in case you have to leave quickly.

### **Important Documents**

Keep important documents together in safe place - a domestic violence hotline counsellor or advocate can help you decide where. These documents and other necessities could include:

- Order of Protection
- ATM card
- money/taxi fare
- check book
- credit card
- passport
- work permit
- coins to use a payphone
- driver's license and registration
- medical records
- address book
- insurance policies
- important legal documents
- police records
- record of violence
- baby's things (diapers, formula, medication)
- children's school records
- medications
- clothing
- eye glasses
- lease
- pictures
- anything of sentimental value
- non-perishable snacks for children (e.g. juice and crackers)

**Memorize or keep a listing of important telephone numbers:**

- The Physical Abuse Centre 292 - 4366, **24-Hotline 297 - 8278**
- The Women's Resource Centre 295-3882, **Hotline (6pm-am) 295-7273**
- King Edward Memorial Hospital **236-2345**
- Family Services, **Referral Hotline 239 - KIDS (5407)**
- You can dial 911 for free from most telephones. If you are in immediate danger, you should always call **911**.

**How to keep your children safe**

- Make sure your children know how to dial 911 in an emergency situation
- Teach your children how to call the police or fire department, if necessary
- Instruct your children on where to go in an emergency

## **The Physical Abuse Centre**

**Contact us:**

**#58 North Shore Road, Hamilton Parish, FL03**

**Office : (441) 292-4366 Fax: (441) 292-9280**

**[physicalabuse@ibl.bm](mailto:physicalabuse@ibl.bm)**

**We will do our best to respond to your email within 24 hours.**

**(Give us a little longer on weekends and public holidays.)**

**24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline (441) 297-8278**