



**STOPS**  
TO VIOLENCE

# Escape Planner

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# Escape Planner

Creating an escape plan means identifying the steps and actions you need to take to increase your safety and prepare to leave the abusive relationship.

Deciding to leave an abusive relationship is a big decision. Perhaps you have not yet made this decision but are considering all of your options. It is important to know that, although you do not have control over your abuser's behaviour, it is possible to increase your safety and the safety of anyone who depends on your care (for example, your children, service animal, or pet) by being prepared. Set this plan up when you are not in crisis or panic. If you have children, teach them the signs of needing to leave. Practice the escape plan with them, much like a fire drill, so that it becomes automatic if it needs to be implemented

## Here are some steps to take:

- Decide where you are going to go. Phone shelters and safe houses, tell them about your situation and see how they can help you. Remember to tell them if you have children that you will be bringing with you, a disability that may impact your living situation, or any other supports you need. If you don't want to go to a shelter, talk to a friend or family member that you trust to see if you can stay with them for a while.
- Prepare your emergency bag. This bag will contain everything you need for a few days. Make sure this bag stays in a safe place at home, or keep the bag with a friend or family member you trust (See checklist below for items to pack).
- Arrange your transportation. Are you driving? Taking the bus or a taxi? Will a friend come pick you up? If you need a wheelchair accessible vehicle, check into your options ahead of time. Is there an accessible taxi service available? Do you have a friend or other service you can access with short notice?

- Keep your car fuelled and your car keys nearby so that you can leave quickly. If you use the bus, keep extra change or bus tickets in a safe and nearby place. You can also hide your bus tickets or money in your shoes. If you are making arrangements with a friend or family member to pick you up, check in with them to know when they are available. If you are going to use an accessible taxi, make sure you know what hours they are available.
- If you use mobility devices, daily living aids or other equipment to accommodate your disability, make a list of the equipment you will need. Ensure you have back up equipment or check into where you may be able to rent or borrow items if needed.
- If your children are old enough, teach them how to use the phone to dial 911 and important numbers of friends or family members they can contact in case of an emergency. Have them memorize the phone numbers and teach them what to say when they call.
- Start saving money early on. Open a separate bank account in your own name and put as much money as you can into it. You don't have to have thousands of dollars to be able to escape the abuse. There is financial help you can apply for, but having some money to get started can help. You can also buy gift cards as you have money. Purchase gift cards for gas stations, grocery stores, department stores, or prepaid minute cards for your cell phone. Keep these cards until you need them.
- Open a post office box. This will be your temporary mailing address where you can send your bills, bank information, and any other kind of information. Make sure that only you and a trusted friend or family member knows about the post office box – your abuser should not know anything about it.

- If you have a cell phone, make sure that it is fully charged. Take your cell phone charger with you. Remember - You can call 911 from anywhere on a charged cell phone, even if the phone is not activated or is out of minutes.
- Find someone to care for your pets or livestock if you need to leave quickly.
- Write down the serial and registration numbers of any weapons, guns, and ammunition that you know are in the home. Keep this information in a safe place.
- Talk to the police and let them know of your situation. They can help keep an eye on you and your abuser.
- Keep your children's daycare, school, etc. informed of the situation. Give them a picture of the abuser and a list of trusted people and their contact info. Let them know that no one is allowed to pick up the children except for you or these trusted people. If you have a Peace Bond, Emergency Intervention Order, or custody order in place, provide them with copies of these documents.
- Consider letting your employer know what is happening. If you have a Peace Bond, Emergency Intervention Order, or custody order in place, provide them with copies of these documents.
- Go over your safety plan and your emergency escape plan on a regular basis. Update your plans when circumstances change. (e.g. change in seasons, taking a different job).

## Packing an Emergency Bag

Packing an emergency bag allows you to gather the things you need for a few days in advance and to be ready to leave quickly. The following is a list of suggested items to set aside or hide in a safe place (for example at a friend's house, family member's house, at your workplace). It is important to keep these items in a safe place so that the abuser does not find them. You may not have access to all of these items before leaving but try to collect as many of them as possible. Do not let the collecting of items stop you from leaving – your safety must come first.

- Medical prescriptions, medications and other supplements
- Clothes to last for a few days for you and your children
- Cell phone and cell phone charger
- Extra batteries

Below are suggestions of documents that are helpful to have with you. Take a photocopy of the documents that are relevant to you and store them in a safe place away from the originals. Hide the originals where they will be safe. Remember - your safety and well being are most important. Having these types of documents with you is helpful but it is ok if you are not able to get them.

- Passports, birth certificates, and immigration papers for all family members
- School and vaccination records for your children
- Driver's license and registration
- Car insurance, house insurance, and any other type of insurance you may have on your property
- Work permits, Visas
- Divorce papers, custody documents, court orders, restraining orders, marriage certificates, Peace Bonds, Emergency Intervention Orders

- Lease/rental agreement, mortgage payment book, other property documents
- Investment information and life insurance policies
- Income tax records, accountant records
- Cheques, bank books
- Personal address and telephone books
- Pictures of the abuser
- Health cards for yourself and your family members
- All cards you normally use (credit card, bank card, social insurance)
- Medical records, police records, and any other evidence of abuse
- Any health or disability related records that doctors have filled out in the past
- Your personal journal or diary
- Your escape plan
- Important numbers for shelters, social workers, police, service organizations, etc.

If you have children, leaving can be a difficult move for them. Pack things that will make them comfortable. Examples include: diapers, wipes, bottles, formula, medications, favourite toys and books, school records, activity books, or games.

If you have a service animal, make sure to pack items they will need such as a harness, leash, food and dishes, medications, registration papers, or any other things you need for their care.

The experience of being abused is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of surviving and building a new life requires much courage and incredible energy. To conserve your emotional energy, and to support yourself in hard emotional times, there are a number of things you can do:

## Emotional Safety Planning

- Attend as many counselling group sessions as you can. You can find these by contacting a service provider in your area (see list in next section).
- Become involved in community activities to reduce feeling isolated.
  - Join support groups to gain support and strengthen your relationships with other people.
  - Take time for yourself to do things that you like such as reading, playing music or sports, exercising, spending time with friends, etc.
  - Spend time with people who make you feel good and provide support.
  - Take part in social activities, e.g. movie, dinner, exercise.
- Try to eat well and get enough sleep.
- Keep a personal journal to write about your feelings, especially when you are feeling low or vulnerable. Keep it in a safe place.
  - Take time to prepare yourself emotionally before entering stressful situations like talking with your partner, meeting with lawyers, or attending court.
- Try not to overbook yourself - limit yourself to one or two appointments per day to reduce stress.
- Write something positive about yourself everyday - your own personal affirmations.
- Be careful to avoid finding comfort in excessive use of alcohol, drugs, shopping or other addictive behaviors - it only serves to increase your depression.



