GETTING OUT: A Process Learned from the Courage & Wisdom of Survivors
Dedication

To those who share the experience, strength and wisdom they gain from leaving an abusive situation and to those still living in dangerous relationships.
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Introduction

Being hurt or abused by someone you love or care about is confusing and scary. At times, you might feel afraid for yourself, your children, your family, or other people who are close to you. Abuse can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, culture, sexual orientation, income, ability or where you live. It is our hope that those who are experiencing violence and abuse recognize that there is help and hope for the future.

This “Getting Out” guide can be used by anyone experiencing an abusive relationship. It is not meant to tell you what to do. It will help you to recognize the abuse, keep yourself safe, plan how to leave the abuse and rebuild after you have left. The information in this guide will also connect you with organizations and individuals that you can contact for help or advice. The Escape Planner in the middle of this guide is a checklist that you can pull out. The Escape Planner is easy to store and can be kept in a safe place for when you are ready to plan to leave the abuse.

The information in this guide has come from many places – from people who have left abusive relationships and successfully rebuilt their lives and from people in the community who provide support and help. Drawing on the life experiences of others and reaching out to resources available in the community can be a source of strength and support for you.

This guide was created through a series of consultations across Saskatchewan with people who represent the diversity of our province. It is based upon the experiences of people who have left violent and abusive relationships and are now living violence free lives and the knowledge of those who provide support and services to people dealing with abuse and violence in their lives.
This guide is offered with respect and humility to honour those who have shared their personal experience, wisdom, and courage, and those who work every day to support people in our communities to find their strength to heal and build healthy, resilient lives for themselves and their families.

The information in this guide is not a substitute for legal advice or personal counselling. Each situation is different and you may need to speak to a lawyer. More information about legal options can be found in Part 4 of this guide. You will also find contact information for community services and supports in Part 3 to assist you on your journey.

Remember that you are not alone. There are people who will listen and help you as you begin to make changes. You have worth and value. You deserve to be safe, healthy, and happy.

It is important to keep this guide in a safe and private place if you are currently living in a dangerous situation.
What is Abuse?
Is This Really Happening To Me?

"When the violence first started in my marriage, I truly thought it was my fault and that I should never say or do anything to anger my husband. If I did, I thought he was justified in hurting me because in my mind he was always right, so I must be wrong. I didn't want to think badly of him so I just denied that any violence occurred."

- Cathy, 37 Years Old
Interpersonal violence and abuse refers to violence and abuse that occurs between people who know each other. It can happen within or outside a family setting. Abuse is when someone in a caring relationship does or says things to gain control over another person by hurting that person or causing feelings such as fear, anxiety, nervousness, guilt, helplessness, or worthlessness. Abuse is anything done to injure, damage, or interfere with a person’s healthy development and wellbeing. Abuse is done on purpose. Abuse is used to intimidate. Abuse can involve physical, emotional, verbal, intellectual, sexual, financial, or spiritual harm.

Physical abuse means using, or threatening to use, physical force. It can be things like hitting, slapping, punching, pushing, grabbing, shoving, choking (strangulation), shaking, kicking, head-banging, or burning you. Not allowing you to have enough food, water, clothing, or shelter, or not letting you do things you need to survive, like sleeping or going to the bathroom, is physical abuse.

Emotional and verbal abuses are non-physical behaviours like threats, actions, and words that attack your self-esteem and how you feel about yourself or that make you feel unsafe. It can be put downs, name calling, swearing at you, yelling, blaming, shaming, or mocking you. Isolating you, controlling where you go, what you do, who you see and talk to, monitoring your phone conversations, and controlling contact from family and friends is emotional abuse. Criticizing your opinions or accomplishments, trying to force you to agree by arguing until you are worn down, discounting, disrespecting, or disregarding your opinions or wishes or using your mental or physical ability to make you feel less intelligent is abuse. Threatening you or people close to you, stalking you, following you, harassing you with phone calls, texts, or emails is abuse and are acts of criminal harassment.
**Sexual abuse** is any sexual contact or sexual act done to you without your permission. This can be things like kissing, touching and fondling you, raping you, forcing you into sexual acts against your will or while you are unconscious, asleep, or intoxicated, or causing unwanted pain. Refusing to use protection, knowingly passing on a sexually transmitted disease (STD), stopping you from using birth control, or forcing you to become pregnant is sexual abuse. Treating you like a sex object or forcing you to watch pornography, have sex with other partners, or prostitute yourself is sexual abuse.

**Financial abuse** involves controlling money. This could be controlling all the money (even the money you earn yourself), your debit and credit cards, taking money away from you, giving you an “allowance” that doesn’t cover your needs or those of your family, or making you ask for money and explain everything you spend. “Borrowing” money and never paying it back, stealing, forging your signature, or preventing you from working is financial abuse. Threatening to leave and not provide financial support or telling you that you can’t leave because you are unable to support yourself on your own can be considered financial abuse.

**Spiritual abuse** means hurting your spiritual, religious, or personal belief system or using beliefs to control you. This can mean using spiritual or religious teachings against you or to justify abuse and violence as ‘punishment’ or ‘correction’, stopping you from practicing your spiritual beliefs, ‘calling down’ your belief system and the values and morals you live by, or forcing you or your children into a belief system that you do not choose.
Anyone can abuse or be abused; any age, race, religion, political persuasion, or socioeconomic background, a man or a woman, homosexual or heterosexual, rich or poor, abled or disabled, employed or unemployed.

Abuse and violence can happen in any relationship. People can be married or common-law partners (people who live together). A dating relationship is between two romantically and intimately involved people. A care-giving relationship is between a person and someone providing care to them such as a senior or a person with a disability receiving care from a family member, friend, Home Care or someone paid to provide care.

The “Cycle of Violence” is used to explain patterns of abusive behaviour. In some relationships, abuse does not start until years into the relationship; for others the abuse begins right away. This cycle is common in abusive relationships. Depending on the relationship, the cycle might take hours, days, or months to repeat. Often, each time the cycle repeats itself the violence gets worse.

**Phase One – Tension Build-Up**
“Walking on egg shells” best describes the tension build-up phase. You most likely feel stress and strain as you try to keep the peace in the relationship. The abuser seems increasingly angry and emotionally abusive. You might feel afraid and avoid disagreeing with this person. An incident occurs that triggers a violent episode.

**Phase Two – Violent Episode**
The violent episode occurs when the abuser believes that they are losing control and tries to regain it. During a violent episode physical and sexual assault are most likely to happen. You might feel hopeless, weak, and humiliated.
Phase Three – Remorse/Romance

After a violent episode has occurred, the abuser will make excuses for their actions, trying to downplay what has happened. The abuser might blame you for not keeping the peace. The abuser might try to convince you that it was your fault, and that the violence occurred because of something you had done. At times, you may even find that you are blaming yourself for the violence and abuse.

Often, the abuser will apologize to you for the abuse. You may receive gifts. The abuser might show remorse for their actions and promise that it will never happen again or promise to get help. The abuser will look for your forgiveness. Things will seem better and you may believe that the abuser has changed. However, the cycle repeats itself and soon you will find yourself walking on egg shells once again.
Recognizing abuse is the first step to getting help. Abuse often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to violence. While physical injury may be the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological impacts of abuse are also severe. Once you acknowledge the reality of the abusive situation, then you can get the help you need.

There are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most telling sign is fear of the other person. If you feel like you have to walk on eggshells around them—constantly watching what you say and do in order to avoid a blow-up—chances are your relationship is unhealthy and abusive. Other signs that you may be in an abusive relationship include the other person belittling you or trying to control you and feelings of self-loathing, helplessness, and desperation.

There are behaviours that the other person may use to control you. Does the other person have a bad and unpredictable temper? Humiliate or yell at you? Ignore or put down your opinions or accomplishments? Threaten to take your children away or harm them? Destroy your belongings? Constantly check up on you? Keep you from seeing your friends and family? Limit your access to the phone, money, or car? Act excessively jealous or possessive? See you as property or a sex object rather than a person? Treat you so badly that you are embarrassed if your friends or family see?
Abuse wears down your body, mind, and spirit. The stress from the abuse affects your health and wellness. You may experience physical symptoms like headaches, ongoing stomach pains, diarrhea or heartburn, chest pains, and aching muscles. You may notice breakouts and acne, increased allergies, or aching jaws from grinding or clenching your teeth. You may have problems sleeping, have nightmares, or be restless at night. Your eating patterns may change and you may gain or lose weight.

Your mental health and wellbeing can change. You may be depressed. You may feel overwhelmed with everyday life and be nervous, anxious, and feeling on edge most of the time. You may have difficulty thinking clearly and making decisions. You may feel ‘numb’ and helpless, like you are not present in your own body. You may feel self-conscious and bad about yourself. You may be easily irritated or angered. You might have thoughts of suicide.

Coping with abuse is stressful. You may feel afraid of the abuser most of the time and avoid certain things because you are afraid of angering them. Perhaps you feel like you can’t do anything right. You may cry uncontrollably and feel like you are walking on eggshells. You may have difficulty controlling your anger and lash out at people. You may find that behaviours like shopping, smoking, gambling, gaming, having unsafe sex, drinking, or using drugs are hard to control. You may over eat or eat too little. You might not care about what you look like and may lose interest in sex. Nervous behaviours like biting your nails, pulling your hair or not being able to be still may increase. You might harm yourself by cutting or hurting yourself in other ways. You might isolate yourself by avoiding friends and family, not returning calls or messages, or not wanting to go out in public.
Making Excuses

Sometimes you may make excuses or minimize what is happening. Have you ever said any of these things to yourself or someone else?

- It won’t happen again. He promised.
- But she never hits me, and if I don’t have bruises or broken bones then it can’t be abuse.
- It must have been a mistake and he was only trying to teach me to be better.
- She wouldn’t hurt me if she’d only stop drinking. It’s all the alcohol’s fault.
- He only has my best interests at heart. He really does love me.
- If I hadn’t said (or done, or not said, or not done) that, he wouldn’t have hit me (or yelled, or hid the car keys, or beat the dog).
- He is smarter than me so he should make the important decisions.
- It’s because she loves me so much and can’t live without me that she says she will kill herself if I leave.
- He is very devoted to his culture/religion/traditions and his behaviour towards me is just a reflection of his devotion.
- They won’t take my money again. They probably just needed it for something important.
- He’s just keeping track of me because he doesn’t want me to make choices that might not be good ones.
Has your abuser ever said any of these things?

- Quit making such a big deal out of it.
- It’s just a little scratch.
- What are you talking about? Nothing happened.
- If you hadn’t done this, I wouldn’t have hit you.
- Where do you think you’re going? You’re not leaving this house.
- I was tired.
- I’m under stress at work.
- The kids were making too much noise.
- You’re so crazy, no one will believe you.
- You make things hard for me because taking care of you is so much work.
- You should just be thankful for what I give you.

MAKING EXCUSES
It Is Still Abuse If ...

- The incidents of physical abuse seem minor when compared to those you have read about, seen on television, or heard other people talk about. There isn’t a “better” or “worse” form of abuse.

- There has not been any physical violence. Many people are emotionally and verbally abused. This can be just as frightening and is often more confusing to try to understand.

- The incidents of physical abuse have only occurred one or two times in the relationship. Studies indicate that if your abuser has injured you once, it is likely they will continue to physically assault you.

- The physical assaults stopped when you became passive and gave up your right to express yourself as you desire, to do the things and see the people that you want to, to have what you need to survive, and to make decisions. It is not a victory if you have to give up your rights as a person in exchange for not being abused.

Is this "Normal"?

Often people don’t realize that the situation they consider “normal” is actually abusive. If you grew up in a violent environment or have become used to living in an abusive relationship, you may think your situation is “normal”. It is not.

Sometimes you might feel that the abuse is your fault. You are not responsible for the abuse. Everyone is responsible for their own behaviour. The abuse is NEVER your fault. When you feel this way, you might make excuses for the abuser’s violence or justify the abuser’s behaviour.
Abusers are able to control their behavior—they do it all the time.

- Abusers pick and choose whom to abuse. They don't insult, threaten, or assault everyone in their life. Usually, they save their abuse for the people closest to them, the ones they claim to love.

- Abusers carefully choose when and where to abuse. They control themselves until no one else is around to see their abusive behavior. They may act like everything is fine in public, but lash out instantly as soon as you're alone.

- Abusers are able to stop their abusive behavior when it benefits them. Most abusers are not out of control. In fact, they're able to immediately stop their abusive behavior when it's to their advantage to do so (for example, when the police show up or their boss calls).

- Violent abusers usually direct their blows where they won't show. Rather than acting out in a mindless rage, many physically violent abusers carefully aim their kicks and punches where the bruises and marks won't be visible.
Abuse affects children, even if they’re just witnesses. Children living in a home where there is abuse may overhear adults fighting, see bruises and injuries, or witness the actual abuse. They feel the tension and become part of the cycle of violence.

These experiences can have serious effects, including:

- Behavior problems and problems at school
- Feelings of guilt for not being able to stop the abuse
- Depression, anxiety, substance use, and other mental health problems
- Low self-esteem
- Health problems that will carry into their adult lives

Children depend on adults to look after them. They sense the emotions of their caregiver and respond accordingly. If the adult is calm and responsive and is able to maintain their daily routine, the child will feel secure. If the adult is anxious and overwhelmed, the child will feel unprotected and may display a variety of symptoms. Young children may fuss more, have problems with sleep, toileting or bedwetting, or may have problems with irritability and frustration, such as tantrums. School aged children may also experience increased anxiety and aggression or problems with attention and hyperactivity. Adolescents and teens may feel hopeless, have difficulties in their own relationships, or engage in risk taking behaviours like alcohol, drugs, or unsafe sex.

Children who see abuse at home are likely to think that abuse is a normal part of relationships. They are more likely than other children to abuse someone or be abused when they grow up.

You might worry that seeking help could further endanger you and your children, or that it might break up your family. Fathers might fear that abusive partners will try to take their children away from them.
Getting help is the best way to protect your children — and yourself. Without intervention, children exposed to violence may suffer long-term effects of their exposure, including reduced health and well-being. For more information about supporting your children go to page 41.
What Can I Do?

"An abusive or violent relationship is unsafe. One of the most important steps when living in an abusive relationship, or when making plans to leave, is making sure you and those around you stay safe."

- Mathew, crisis line worker
An abusive or violent relationship is unsafe. One of the most important steps when living in an abusive relationship, or when making plans to leave, is making sure you and those around you stay safe.

A safety plan helps you to decide how to respond and how to get yourself to safety when a situation turns violent or abusive. Planning ahead is very important – it will allow you to act quickly and to know what to do in crisis. If you have children, they should also have a safety plan. Go to page 43 for more information on developing a safety plan with your children.

The next section will guide you through some things that can help you stay safe, whether you are still in the abusive relationship, are planning to leave, or have already left. If you want to start creating your own personal escape plan to leave the abuse, visit the Escape Planner in the middle of this guide. An escape plan is your plan for leaving the abusive relationship and includes information on what to pack, important telephone numbers, and steps for putting your plan into action.

Keeping track of what happens in your relationship is important. It gives you a record of what has happened. You can use this record to consider what the abuser has done and decide what steps you want to take. Keeping track of the abuse will be helpful if you decide to report the abuse to the police, apply for full custody of your children, file for a divorce, or take other legal action. Keeping track of the abuse does not mean you have to talk to the police.
Here are some suggestions that you can follow to document the abuse:

• Keep a daily journal. List specific facts of what happened, when, and where. Include your feelings about what happened and your fears. By writing your words down, you can later reread them when planning what to do next.

• Save or print any threatening or harassing emails. Keep any threatening or harassing voice messages or texts from your abuser. If you don’t know how to do this, ask your internet or phone service provider for help. Telephone service providers can also track calls on your behalf.

• Write down any amount of money you find missing or that the abuser may have taken from you.

• Document beyond just words – take pictures, keep articles of clothing or personal items that were damaged during assaults (such as clothing with rips or blood on it), and keep broken items.

• Keep any hospital, doctor, or dentist records from injuries. You can ask health care professionals to keep a copy of these records for you.

• Call a trusted person (for example, a friend, family member, counsellor, shelter employee, family violence worker, police) immediately after an incident and tell them what happened and how you feel.

• Talk to the police and tell them about your situation. The police can be an important resource for you. They can help you to keep your evidence safe and start a report of your abuse. Talking to the police will help them know of your situation so if there ever is an emergency, they are better equipped to handle it. Telling the police about your abuse will let them
know that they need to keep an eye on you and the abuser in case things turn violent. When you talk to the police or have them start an abuse report for you, it is not your responsibility to file charges.

Remember to keep your information and report in a safe place where it will not be found.

Safely Using Technology

Technology makes it easy to search for help and to find supportive people and places. However, your abuser might also use technology as a form of control and to monitor your online activity. Your abuser might look through your phone to see who you have called or texted, read through your personal emails, or install software to monitor the sites you visit.

Your Computer

There are computer software programs that track usage and log keyboard strokes. This type of program allows the abuser to watch the sites you visit, view the information you collect, and even record your passwords. Trying to uninstall the program is not helpful because the abuser will receive a notification that the program was uninstalled. If you think your abuser is watching your computer activity, use a different computer to search for help or plan your escape. Public libraries, community centres, domestic violence support centres, or a trusted friend or family member may have a computer you can use. You might be able to use a computer at your workplace if you talk to your employer and explain your situation.

If you continue to use your home computer, remember to take extra steps to keep yourself safe online. The abuser may become
What is Abuse?

Your Phone

suspicious if you start changing your computer habits. You may want to continue your normal computer activities as before – such as checking your emails, looking up the weather, playing games – but find a safer computer to use when researching your escape plan, looking for a new job, a place to live, or asking for help.

The Internet

An internet browser is the program you use to look for information on the internet. An internet browser keeps a record of every website you visit. It is important to completely erase your browser history so your abuser cannot keep track of the sites you visit. Only use a computer if you feel certain that you will not be tracked. Some abusers are very skilled at using computers and can easily access files you have deleted. Take extra caution by using a safe computer and clearing your history every time you use a computer.

Most websites that offer help and information about abuse on the internet will have a “quick escape” button on their pages. Look for this. If someone comes along that you do not want to see what you are looking at, press the quick escape button and it will take you to a common website like Google.

Email

Your abuser may try to monitor your emails. Make sure that your account is secure. Sign out of your account after every use. A helpful tip is to change your email password often (at least once a month) so that your account is more difficult to access. Do not choose obvious passwords like birthdays or names of people. Create passwords that include both letters and numbers, making them harder for someone to guess.

If the abuser knows your password always delete emails in your “inbox” and “sent” folders that contain personal information. Remember to also go into your “trash” folder and delete those emails as well.
Another option is to create a secret account using something like Gmail (www.gmail.com) or Hotmail (www.hotmail.com). Only use this email on safe computers that the abuser cannot access. Keep this email secret so the abuser does not know that you have it. This private email address should not contain any information that can identify you – for example, use blackcat@hotmail.com instead of jane.smith@hotmail.com. You can use this email to safely contact organizations and people for help and support.

Your Phone

Your abuser might listen to your phone conversations, look through your contact list, read your text messages, or check your call history to see who you have been talking to. Only use a phone that is safe from the prying eyes and ears of the abuser.

If you have a cell phone, delete texts you do not want your abuser to read. If you have a voice mail service on a phone that you share, make sure to tell people not to leave voice messages that might cause your abuser to become suspicious. If possible, get a new cell phone and number that your abuser does not know about. Make sure only those you trust know about this phone. Consider keeping this cell phone with a friend or at work. Ensure that your bills for this phone are not sent to the abuser’s residence. Ask your boss or a trusted friend if you can use their address for billing, or get a post office box. Prepaid phone cards are another good option.

Remember:
You can call 911 from anywhere on a charged cell phone, even if the phone is not activated or is out of minutes
Using Social Media

Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Google+, and many other social media websites have privacy policies and controls. When your privacy controls are low, social media websites are easy places for your abuser to access your personal information and to monitor your posts, friends, and messages. When using social media, do not post your plans online and ask your friends to do the same, otherwise your abuser can find out where you are and easily follow you. For example, if you post “going out to the hockey game,” your abuser might read this and decide to go to there to find you.

Use the privacy controls offered in order to restrict access to your page, but keep in mind, even when your social media privacy settings are high, anything posted online will never be fully private.

Always make sure you log out of your profile each time you use it.

Global Positioning Systems (GPS)

Global Positioning Systems (GPS) are commonly installed in cell phones and cars. Your abuser can easily track where you are or where you’ve been through the GPS system. For example, some cell phone cameras come with location-tagging enabled in them. The location of where the picture was taken will show when the picture is posted online. Instant messages can have the location of where the message was sent from attached to them. A GPS system can be turned off or disabled. Search through your car or phone manual, or speak to your car or phone company, to find out how to disable the system.
What is Abuse?
Finding Help

“The longer you stay in an abusive relationship, the greater the toll on your health and well being. The only way to break the cycle of violence is to take action. Start by telling someone about the abuse, whether it’s a friend, loved one, health care provider or other close contact. At first, you might find it hard to talk about the abuse. But you’ll also likely feel relief and receive much-needed support.”

- Sarah, counsellor
Where Do I Start?

Consider these steps if you are in an abusive situation:

- If you are in immediate danger, call 911 or leave.
- If you are hurt, go to a doctor, hospital, or clinic for medical care.
- Use this guide to plan ahead so you know what to do when abuse happens.
- Contact the resources listed in this guide for help.

What is Available?

There are a number of services and supports available throughout the province. Don’t worry about which one is the right one. The most important thing for you is to make contact with someone and they will help you find the services that are most appropriate for you.

When you are talking to people who provide support services, you will be asked to tell your story. The more information you can give about what is happening and what you need, the better. Service providers want to understand your experience and find services that are right for you. Their job is to listen to you, respect the information you give them, and to assist you to find the help you are looking for.

You can also find listings of services available in your area in the front pages of your phone book or by going to www.abusehelplines.org. Service organizations can also be found through 211 Saskatchewan at www.sk.211.ca

Help Lines

A help line is a phone number that you can call to get help over the telephone. Crisis lines are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Services are available to anyone, regardless of gender. All crisis lines are anonymous and confidential services. You do not have to give your name and what you tell them is safe.
If you are experiencing abuse, having difficulty with emotions or suicidal thoughts, have been physically or sexually assaulted or need support because of trauma or crisis, call one of the lines below. If you are feeling unsure of whether or not you should call, please do. The people who answer your call will help you find resources to assist you. Also see the section following called “Emergency Shelters and Transition Houses” for additional contacts that offer telephone support.

**Regina and area**
*Regina Sexual Assault Line*
306-352-0434

**South East Saskatchewan**
*Envision Counselling and Support Centre*
1-800-214-7086 (toll free)

**North East Sask.**
*North East Outreach and Support Services*
1-800-611-6349 (toll free)

**South West Saskatchewan**
*Southwest Crisis Services*
1-800-567-3334 (toll free)

**Saskatoon and area**
*Abused Women’s Info Line*
1-888-338-0880 (toll free)
*Sexual Assault Crisis Line*
306-244-2224

**West Central Sask**
*West Central Crisis and Family Support Centre*
306-463-6655

**Northern Saskatchewan**
*Piwapin Women’s Centre*
1-306-425-4090 (call collect)

**Moose Jaw and area**
*Moose Jaw Transition House*
306-693-6511

**Yorkton and area**
*Project Safe Haven*
1-877-444-2836 (toll free)

**Province wide**
*Battlefords & Area Sexual Assault Centre*
1-866-567-0055 (toll free)
*Sask HealthLine*
881
www.healthlineonline.ca
Emergency Shelters and Transition Houses

Shelters and transition houses provide temporary housing, food, and support for women and their children fleeing violence. When you are at the shelter, the staff can assist you as you plan for your future by offering safety, a supportive ear, abuse information, and referrals to counselling and services such as financial services, legal support and housing. Typically, emergency shelters and transition houses can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also call shelters and transition houses for assistance over the phone. You do not have to contact or go to the shelter that is closest to you. If you feel safer or more comfortable accessing services in another area, you can do so.

La Ronge
Piwapan Women’s Centre
306-425-3900
www.pwcprograms.com

Yorkton
Shelwin House
306-783-7233
www.shelwinhouse.ca
Project Safe Haven
306-783 7233

Lloydminster
Project Safe Haven
306-783-7233

Lloydminster and area
Lloydminster Sexual Assault and Information Centre
306-825-8255

Lloydminster and area
Lloydminster Interval Home
780-875-0966
www.intervalhome.ab.ca

Moose Jaw and area
Moose Jaw Transition House
306-693-6511
www.mj-transitionhouse.com

North Battleford
Battlefords Interval House
306-445-2742

Saskatoon
Saskatoon Interval House
306-244-0185
www.saskatoonintervalhouse.org
YWCA of Saskatoon
306-244-2844
www.ywcasaskatoon.com

Hudson Bay and area
Hudson Bay Family & Support Centre
306-865-306

Hudson Bay and area
Hudson Bay Family & Support Centre
306-865-306

Lloydminster Sexual Assault and Information Centre
306-825-8255

La Ronge
Piwapan Women’s Centre
306-425-3900
www.pwcprograms.com

Lloydminster and area
Lloydminster Sexual Assault and Information Centre
306-825-8255

Lloydminster and area
Lloydminster Interval Home
780-875-0966
www.intervalhome.ab.ca

Moose Jaw and area
Moose Jaw Transition House
306-693-6511
www.mj-transitionhouse.com

North Battleford
Battlefords Interval House
306-445-2742

Saskatoon
Saskatoon Interval House
306-244-0185
www.saskatoonintervalhouse.org
YWCA of Saskatoon
306-244-2844
www.ywcasaskatoon.com

Hudson Bay and area
Hudson Bay Family & Support Centre
306-865-306

Hudson Bay and area
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Lloydminster Sexual Assault and Information Centre
306-825-8255

Lloydminster and area
Lloydminster Interval Home
780-875-0966
www.intervalhome.ab.ca

Moose Jaw and area
Moose Jaw Transition House
306-693-6511
www.mj-transitionhouse.com

North Battleford
Battlefords Interval House
306-445-2742

Saskatoon
Saskatoon Interval House
306-244-0185
www.saskatoonintervalhouse.org
YWCA of Saskatoon
306-244-2844
www.ywcasaskatoon.com

Hudson Bay and area
Hudson Bay Family & Support Centre
306-865-306

Hudson Bay and area
Hudson Bay Family & Support Centre
306-865-306

La Ronge
Piwapan Women’s Centre
306-425-3900
www.pwcprograms.com

Lloydminster and area
Lloydminster Sexual Assault and Information Centre
306-825-8255

Lloydminster and area
Lloydminster Interval Home
780-875-0966
www.intervalhome.ab.ca

Moose Jaw and area
Moose Jaw Transition House
306-693-6511
www.mj-transitionhouse.com
Counselling and Support Centres

These Centres provide counselling services for victims of violence. As well, family violence programs and programs for children exposed to violence are available at many centers. Family violence outreach programs assist people who may not use a shelter or need help in accessing a shelter or other services. Often, crisis services can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and are available to people of any gender.

Regina

*Regina Transition House*
306-569-2292
www.reginatransitionhouse.ca

*YWCA Isabel Johnson Shelter*
306-525-2141
www.ywcaregina.com

*Wichihik Iskwewak Safe House (WISH)*
306-543-049

Meadow Lake

*Waskoosis Safe Shelter*
306-236-5570

Prince Albert

*Prince Albert Safe Shelter for Women*
(306) 764-7233

Yorkton

*Shelwin House*
306-783-7233
www.shelwinhouse.ca

*Project Safe Haven*
306-783 7233

Swift Current

*Southwest Safe Shelter*
306-778-3692
www.swcrisis.ca

Counselling and Support Centres

Melfort

*North East Outreach and Support Services*
306-752-9464
www.northeastoutreach.ca

Hudson Bay

*Hudson Bay Family and Support Centre*
306-865-3064
www.hbfamilyandsupport.ca
What is Abuse?

Regina
Family Service Regina
306-757-6675
www.familyserviceregina.com
Regina Sexual Assault Centre
306-522-2777
www.reginasexualassaultcentre.ca

Weyburn
Envision Counselling & Support Services
306-842-8821
www.envisioncounsellingcentre.com

Meadow Lake
PARTNERS Family Services
306-682-4135

Humboldt
PARTNERS Family Services
306-682-4135
www.partnersfamilyservices.ca

Swift Current
Southwest Crisis Services
306-778-3692
www.swcrisis.ca

Saskatoon
Family Service Saskatoon
306-244-0127
www.familyservice.sk.ca
Catholic Family Services
306-244-7773
www.cfssaskatoon.sk.ca

Prince Albert
Catholic Family Services of the Battleford
1-877-922-3202
www.cfspa.org
Prince Albert Safe Shelter for Women
306-764-7233

Fort Qu’Appelle
TFHQ Safe Shelter
306-332-6881

La Ronge
Piwapin Women’s Centre
306-425-3900
www.pwcprograms.com

Moose Jaw
Moose Jaw Women’s Transition Associations
306-693-6511
www.mj-transitionhouse.com

Regina
Family Service Regina
306-757-6675
www.familyserviceregina.com
Regina Sexual Assault Centre
306-522-2777
www.reginasexualassaultcentre.ca

Weyburn
Envision Counselling & Support Services
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www.envisioncounsellingcentre.com

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PARTNERS Family Services
306-682-4135
www.partnersfamilyservices.ca

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Southwest Crisis Services
306-778-3692
www.swcrisis.ca

Saskatoon
Family Service Saskatoon
306-244-0127
www.familyservice.sk.ca
Catholic Family Services
306-244-7773
www.cfssaskatoon.sk.ca
Mobile Crisis Services

Mobile crisis offers support 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week to anyone. Call the Mobile crisis location that is close to you.

Mobile Crisis Services Regina: 306-525-5333
Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Services: 306-933-6200
Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit: 306-764-1011
Victims Services Program

These programs work closely with police and are located throughout the province. Services include crisis intervention, information, support, and referrals to other specialized programs and services.

To find Victims Services in your area, call toll-free from anywhere in Saskatchewan: 1-888-286-6664; TTY for the Deaf: 1-866-445-8857; email victimservices@gov.sk.ca or go to www.justice.gov.sk.ca/VictimsServices or contact your local police detachment.
An abusive or violent relationship is unsafe. One of the most important steps when living in an abusive relationship, or when making plans to leave, is making sure you and those around you stay safe.
“Living on reserve made it really hard for me to ask for help because everyone knew my partner. I was scared that if I talked to anyone, they would tell. There were only 200 people, so I felt that there was nowhere to turn. I was at a ceremony where all these different communities came together to celebrate spring. I met a lady there who worked as a social worker. I realized after all these years that this was my chance to finally ask for help. Sometimes help comes when you least expect it.”

- Journey, 41 Years Old
If you live on reserve you may face challenges unique to reserve life:

- **Word travels fast.** Reserves are typically small and you may be afraid to talk to anyone about the abuse for fear that rumours will spread.
- **Kinship.** Going to a community centre or safe shelter on reserve could also be difficult if your abuser’s friends or family are employed there.
- **Social settings.** Because the Aboriginal community is close knit, you may be worried that you will run into your abuser on or off reserve.

Continue to look for help wherever possible – on reserve or off. Neighbouring communities might have centres and resources you can access; friendship centres can help you work through your emotions, doctors and nurses may be able to help, local Elders and chiefs might be able to provide you with some advice or mediation, and cultural celebrations and festivals can be places where you might be able to access information or help. Know that you are not alone and that there are people who can help you.

Whether you make the decision to leave or stay on the reserve, know that this is your choice. No one should make you feel bad about the choices you make.

If you are living in an urban setting, many of the same conditions exist. The Aboriginal community is reasonably close knit and everybody knows each other. In an urban setting, there are more options, as there are many community based agencies that can be contacted. These agencies can help you establish a safe environment to allow you to make good decisions about your next steps.

Remember, healing is a way to restore the harmony of your mind, body, spirit, and emotions. Healing is a personal journey and caring people can help you work through your pain. You may want to explore your history, your traditional spirituality, and take time to talk to people and nurture yourself.
• Band Offices
• Aboriginal Family Violence Programs
  • Prince Albert Indian and Métis Friendship Centre
    306-764-3431
  • Circle Project Association (Regina) 306-347-7515
    www.circleproject.ca/
  • Regina Treaty Status Indian Services 306-522-7494
    www.fhqtc.com/entities/rt-sis/
  • Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services (Battleford)
    306-445-3500
    www.kanaweyimik.com
  • Prince Albert Grand Council Women’s Commission
    (Prince Albert) 306-953-7200
    www.stardale.org
  • Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre
    (Saskatoon) 306-244-0174
    www.afcs.ca/saskatoon.html
  • SIGN (Yorkton) 306-782-0673
    www.page.sk.ca
• Aboriginal Family Services Centre (Regina) 306-525-4161
  www.afscregina.ca/
• Canadian Métis Heritage Corporation (Melfort)
  306-752-4950
• La Ronge Native Women’s Council 306-425-3900
• Métis Nation Saskatchewan 1-888-343-6667
  www.mn-s.ca
• Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan
  306-955-0762
  www.afcs.ca
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Taking Care of Yourself
“My boyfriend and I got along great at first but 6 months after we started living together, things turned really ugly. He called me nasty names and controlled how I dressed and where I could go. When he started hitting me, I knew I had to get out but didn’t know where to go. My town was so small and I thought I was stuck forever. After I did a quick Google search I found that there was a center for abused women only two hours away. I took the first step and phoned them. It was the best decision I made.”

- Paula, 62 Years Old
There are many diverse rural and northern communities in Saskatchewan. Living in a rural or northern community can present certain challenges when planning to leave an abusive relationship or when seeking help. Challenges or concerns might include:

- **Isolation.** Physical and social isolation are two of the most common reasons why you may be feeling like you can’t get out of the abusive relationship. This isolation makes it easier for the abuser to keep you in the cycle of violence.

- **Transportation.** If your community does not have public transportation it may be difficult for you to get around or you may be dependent on your abuser.

- **Proximity to help.** Rural and northern communities often have limited resources. The distance one may have to travel in order to access service can be great. It may take time for emergency service personnel to locate and respond to your call for help.

- **Word travels fast.** You may be afraid to talk to anyone about the abuse for fear that rumours will spread.

- **Care of property and livestock.** You may be concerned about what might happen to your property or livestock if you leave.

An important rural and northern resource is the RCMP. Talk to the RCMP about your situation and let them know what is happening to you. Talking to the RCMP will let them know your location so that, if needed, they can get to you as fast as possible. Know your land description number, let the RCMP know where you live and what routes they can take both in the summer and winter to get to your residence quickly when you need immediate help.

You might feel that it is difficult to create a support system in a small town, especially if you are worried that your abuse will become the
“story of the town.” Find trustworthy people that you can talk to. Your town’s community center, senior care home, doctor’s clinic, school, or church might also have resources that can help you. You might also want to access crisis lines and organizations that provide support over the phone.

WHO to Contact?

- **LaRonge Native Women’s Council**
  306-425-3900
- **North East Outreach and Support Services** (Melfort)
  306-752-9464
  www.northeastoutreach.ca
- **Prince Albert Safe Shelter for Women**
  306-764-7233
- **Waskoosis Safe Shelter** (Meadow Lake)
  306-236-5570
- **South West Crisis Services** (Swift Current)
  306-778-3692
  www.swcrisis.ca
- **Evision Counselling and Support Centre** (Estevan/Weyburn)
  306-842-8821
- **Battlefords & Area Sexual Assault Centre** (North Battleford)
  306-445-0055
  www.basac.ca
- **RCMP Victim Services** 1-888-286-6664
  www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/sk/progsvictim-eng.htm
- **RCMP Detachments** – check your local phone book or go to
  www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/sk/detachs/index-eng.htm
Children are exposed to violence when they see abuse happen, when they over hear abuse, when they see the aftermath (such as bruises or a hole in the wall), or when they sense tension in the home.

Many parents stay “for the sake of the children”, but while living in a home where there is abuse, children learn unhealthy lessons about relationships. Children might see violence as a way to get what they want. They might believe that when they hurt others they won’t get in trouble. Children often think that unhealthy relationships are normal, which makes them believe that behaving this way is okay.

These unhealthy lessons impact your children. Children exposed to abuse and violence need special care and support to rebuild their trust, self-esteem, and feelings of safety. They need to see and experience healthy, supportive relationships to learn positive relationship skills for their futures.

Here are some ways you can provide care and support for your children:

- Get help for your children by getting help for yourself.
- Talk to a health professional about your children (like a doctor or a counselor).
- Surround them with healthy role models – people that you trust who can show them that violence and abuse is not acceptable. This could be teachers, family, friends, or people from organizations that provide programs for children.
- Encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- Listen to them and believe them.
- See if you can find ways to reduce your own stress, like positive support for your children.
getting emotional support from a friend. This will help you to be a positive support for your children.

- Teach them non-violent ways to express fear, anger, and settle disagreements.
- Make sure they understand that violence and abuse are wrong and that what is happening is not their fault.
- Register yourself and your children in counselling or community programs that can help you work through the issues you are facing and build supports.
Your children should also have a safety plan. This plan should be easy to follow and aimed at getting the children to a safe place when needed. Based on the age and maturity of your children, you can decide how much information to give them. Remember the abuser may try to get information from the children. This could be very dangerous. Make sure you only share your plan with your children if you are sure you will all be safe.

Some suggestions for creating a safety plan with your children:

- Warn the children to go to a safe place inside or outside the house when there is conflict.
- Decide ahead of time on a safe place the children can go when they feel unsafe. For example, they could go into their rooms and lock the door or go to a neighbour’s for help.
- Teach your children how and when to call police and other emergency phone numbers.
- Make a list of people your children can trust and talk to when they feel unsafe. Talk to these people about providing support to your children.
- Practice the safety plan several times with your children – from calling the police, to leaving the house quickly, to going to a safe place such as a neighbour’s house, to getting into the car quietly so you can leave.

There are Children Exposed to Violence Programs available across Saskatchewan to address the needs of children who are exposed to violence. These programs assist children and youth who have witnessed or experienced interpersonal violence or abuse, with a goal of preventing them from becoming victims or perpetrators of violence and abuse in the future.
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• **Children Exposed to Violence in Families Program**
  Catholic Family Services of Saskatoon
  306-244-7773

• **Children Exposed to Violence in Families Program**
  Family Service Saskatoon
  306-244-0127

• **Children Who Are Exposed to Conflict Program**
  Catholic Family Services of Prince Albert
  306-922-3202

• **Children Who Witness Domestic Violence Program**
  YWCA of Regina
  306-525-2141

• **Children Exposed to Violence in Families**
  Catholic Family Services of the Battlefords (North Battleford)
  306-445-6960

• **Envision Counselling and Support Centre (Estevan)**
  306-637-4004

• **Mamawetan Churchill River Regional Health Authority**
  (La Ronge)
  306-425-2422

• **Moose Jaw Women’s Transition Association Inc.**
  306-693-6511

Children, teens, and young adults can also contact the Kids Help Phone for support by phone or online.

**Kids Help Phone**
1-800-668-6868 (toll free)
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“I never thought my own children would abuse me. It wasn’t the type of abuse you hear about now with all the hitting and beating so I never believed it was abuse. They said they were going through some hard times, but they just kept taking and taking money from me. They told me not to worry and that they would take care of everything. In 5 years, my children stole more than $70,000 from me. Enough is enough.”

- Art, 79 Years Old
The World Health Organization defines elder abuse as “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person”. Elder abuse can take various forms such as physical, psychological or emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. It can be intentional or unintentional.

You might be abused while living in your own private home, in the home of a family member, or in a care home. Your abuser might be a loved one (spouse, son or daughter, family member), a caregiver (nurse, caretaker, volunteer), or even a person in authority that you trust (lawyer, doctor, banker). Seniors who experience abuse might have challenges and concerns including:

- **Shame or embarrassment.** You have lived your entire life with independence and control until now.

- **Finding a care-giver.** You depend on your abuser for care and support.

- **Leaving your home.** You may not want to leave the home you have lived in your entire life. Your abuser may threaten to "put you in a home".

- **Grandchildren.** You worry you will be denied access to your grandchildren if you speak out.

- **Finances.** You have become financially dependent on your abuser or you are on a fixed income.

- **Medications.** You are being over medicated or under medicated so your abuser can have more control over you. The abuser may be stealing your medications.

- **Isolation.** You are being prevented from seeing or contacting your friends or trusted family members. Your abuser may insist on being with you when you visit your doctor or the bank.
• **Neglect.** You may not be receiving enough food, water, medication, clothing, personal care or may not have access to assistive aids that you need.

• **Health.** You may have health conditions that affect your mental or physical ability and be more vulnerable to abuse.

As a senior, it is important that you have a network of people you can trust. Think about including people like your banker, pharmacist, social worker, nurse or doctor, friends or colleagues, trustworthy family members, and members of your faith congregation. Ensure that your caregivers do not try to isolate you from people in your network. If anyone in your support network is not able to reach you and has concerns about your safety, they should call the police. Only give Power of Attorney to someone that you absolutely trust.

Part of your escape plan should include getting the information you need to change government benefits such as Canada Pension, income tax rebates, and GST rebates. If your abuser has access to your bank account, remove that person from the account or consider opening another bank account.

You may feel that you are unable to begin addressing the abuse on your own. There are many organizations and agencies in the province who support seniors and help them through any problems they may be having.

If you need help to leave, contact the police or the Mobile Crisis service that is closest to you.
WHO to Contact?

- **Saskatoon Council on Aging**
  306-652-2255
  www.scoa.ca

- **Saskatchewan Seniors Mechanism**
  1-888-823-2211
  www.skseniorsmechanism.ca/

- **Lifelong Learning Centre** (Regina)
  306-585-5816
  www.uregina.ca/cce/personal-enrichment/lifelong-learning.html

- **Seniors Legal Assistance Panel Program**
  306-569-3098
  www.pblsask.ca

- **Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse**
  www.cnpea.ca

- **RCMP Victim Services**
  1-888-286-6664
  www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/sk/progs/victim-eng.htm

- **RCMP Detachments** – check your local phone book or go to
  www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/sk/detachs/index-eng.htm

- **Mobile Crisis Services Regina**
  306-525-5333

- **Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service**
  306-933-6200

- **Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit**
  306-764-1011
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“My caregiver abused me for 8 years. She would take my wheelchair away from me and leave me stranded upstairs. I couldn’t eat, use the bathroom, or even take a bath without her help. I was too scared to leave because I thought, If I leave who is going to take care of me? Who will support me?” When I finally left, I found lots of people that respected me for who I am and loved and cared for me the way I deserve to be treated.”

- Cara, 30 Years Old
Having a disability can impact people in a variety of ways. This can include sight, physical mobility, hearing, mental health, communication, and understanding. Having a disability or needing supports to have your needs met does not mean that you deserve to be abused. It is not an excuse for the abuser’s behaviour. It is important to know that neglect is abuse. Neglect includes not being given proper housing, enough food, medication, clothing, withholding of personal care, and destroying or withholding assistive aids. Medication abuse includes using medication for any purpose other than to deal with a health issue. This can include manipulation of medications to cause pain or reduce ability, over- or under-medicating against a doctor’s direction, not filling a prescription, or stealing your medication for other uses or resale.

If you have a disability here are some concerns you might have:

- **Being taken seriously.** You may feel people don’t believe you because of your disability or see what is happening as your fault because you require supports to meet your needs.

- **Children.** You may depend on your abuser to care for the children or worry that you may not be granted custody due to your disability.

- **Transportation.** You may be dependent on others or an accessible public transportation system to get around.

- **Loss of supports.** Your abuser may be your primary caregiver and you are worried about not having the help you need if you end your relationship with them.

- **Finding somewhere to live.** You may have concerns about finding a place to live that meets your needs and that you can afford.
• **Fear of having to move to an institution.** Your abuser may threaten to ‘put you in a home’ or an institution.

• **Finding accessible shelter or support services.** You may have concerns that shelters or support services available to help you leave the abusive relationship are not accessible or do not understand the impact of your disability on your life.

• **Communication.** You may depend on the abuser to assist you with communication, such as sign language or helping others understand your speech.

Tell someone you trust about what is going on. When creating your safety plan, work with someone you know and trust. If you live with your abuser, start by mapping out the safe and accessible places in your home to which you can escape when your abuser becomes violent. Visualize the escape route by identifying doors, elevators, ramps and stairs.

If you decide to leave your abuser, arrange transportation for your escape beforehand. Are you able to drive? If not, who will pick you up? Is the vehicle accessible? Choose and plan on a safe, accommodating, and accessible place to stay (with a friend, family member, colleague, etc.). If you plan to go to a shelter and require wheelchair access, check if the shelter is accessible. If not, shelter staff can refer you elsewhere. If you have a service animal, make sure to let people know you will be bringing your service animal with you. If you depend on your abuser for care and support, contact your health region to find out about options for care. If you depend on the abuser to assist you with communication (such as sign language interpretation), find a friend or community organization that can help you communicate with service providers and police.
If possible, keep extra medications, supplies, or devices somewhere that is safe. If the abuser decides to take something away, you will have another ready for use. Pack contact information for your doctor, counsellor, home care, mobility service, pharmacy, and any other care provider that helps meet your needs. Take medications and supplies with you.

If you need help to leave, contact the police or the Mobile Crisis service that is closest to you.

**WHO to Contact?**

- **Saskatchewan Voices of People With Disabilities** (Regina)
  1-877-569-3111
  www.saskvoice.com

- **CNIB Helpline** (National)
  1-800-563-2642
  www.cnib.ca

- **Saskatchewan Association for Community Living**
  306-955-3344
  www.sacl.org

- **Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services**
  Toll free: 1-800-667-6575
  Video Phone: 306-665-6578 (Saskatoon) or
  Toll free: 1-800-565-3323
  Video Phone: 306-352-3322 (Regina)
  www.sdhhs.com/
• Canadian Mental Health Association Saskatchewan
  Toll free 1-800-461-5483
  www.cmhask.com

• South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre
  306-757-7452
  www.ssilcsk.ca

• North Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre
  306-665-5508
  www.nsilc.com

• Saskatchewan Abilities Council
  306-569-9048
  www.abilitiescouncil.sk.ca

• Mobile Crisis Services Regina
  306-525-5333

• Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service
  306-933-6200

• Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit
  306-764-1011
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Taking Care of Yourself

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning (LGBTQ)
"People used to tell me to "man up" because I would let my partner push me around. No one believed that I was being physically, mentally, and emotionally abused by him. When I asked my family or friends for help they told me to just work it out, but it had been 3 years of abuse, and I was exhausted from this nightmare. I needed help. I left my unsupportive friends and started connecting with the friends that I trusted the most. From there, I found hope."

- Derek, 56 Years Old
Abuse can occur in any relationship regardless of sexual orientation or identity. Abuse is not only defined by men controlling women. An imbalance of power can exist in any relationship.

As someone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, you may have fears about leaving the abusive relationship. You will share the same worries any individual wanting to leave an abusive relationship experiences. You might also experience some unique fears and challenges. Here are a few examples:

• **Shame or embarrassment.** You might be struggling with your sexual orientation or gender-identity. Maybe your abuser uses this to control and hurt you.

• **Being believed or taken seriously.** You might be worried that if you report the abuse you will be faced with common stereotypes that violence and abuse only occurs between opposite-sex partners.

• **Harassment, rejection, bullying.** If you are not “out” to everyone, your abuser might threaten to “out” you. You might fear that asking for help will make you a target of harassment, rejection, or bullying because of your sexuality or gender identification.

• **Legal protection.** You might fear talking to the police or any legal organization because you believe that you will have less legal protection based on your gender or sexual orientation. This is not true.

• **Social settings.** Because the LGBTQ community tends to be close knit, you may be worried that you will run into your abuser at future social events.
There are many resources for the LGBTQ community that you can access. Connect with organizations that work with the LGBTQ community, or make connections wherever you feel comfortable.

**WHO to Contact?**

- **UR PRIDE** (Regina)
  306-586-8811 ext 207
  www.urpride.ca/

- **USSU PRIDE** (Saskatoon)
  306-966-6615
  www.ussu.ca/pridecentre/

- **TransSask Support Services**
  306-351-6066
  www.transsask.org

- **The Avenue Community Center** (Saskatoon)
  306-358-1833 Toll free1-800-358-1833
  www.avenuecommunitycentre.ca/

- **Canadian Rainbow Health Coalition**
  www.rainbowhealth.ca/

- **Egale Canada**
  1-888-204-7777
  www.egale.ca
"I was very excited to join my husband in Canada and start a new life with him there, but when I got to Canada he was a very different person. He was very angry all the time and he started hitting me. I was embarrassed to tell my family about what was happening to me because I didn’t want to shame them. I thought if I was patient things would get better, but they never did. I realized that I needed patience to help me plan my escape and leave the abuse, not patience to take his abuse."

- Zahra, 39 Years Old
Abuse is not acceptable in Canada. You may feel embarrassed to tell anyone about the abuse because you believe that it is shameful to talk about your marriage with other people. You might feel that you do not trust anyone enough to talk about what is happening or maybe you feel that you do not know enough English to communicate so someone will understand or believe you. The abuser may scare you by threatening that if you go to the police or you ask for help about the abuse you will be kicked out of Canada. The abuser might also scare you by telling you that you will lose the children if you leave the abuse. This is not true.

Here are some things that might be keeping you in an unsafe situation:

- **Isolation.** You are alone with no one to talk to. You must stay in the home and you are not allowed to be educated or employed.
- **Language.** You know very little or no English.
- **Money.** Your abuser controls the money and you cannot access it.
- **Immigration.** You fear that you will lose your immigration status or be sent back to your home country.
- **Children.** Your abuser threatens to take your children away from you. You are afraid that if you leave you will be separated from your children.
- **Family.** You worry about dividing your family or causing them shame or harm by leaving.
- **Culture.** The abuser might use your cultural practices and beliefs to justify the use of violence or abuse.
- **Western concepts.** You worry about working with police, counsellors, and other professionals out of fear that they might not understand your culture or that they will only support the abuser and not help you.

As part of your escape plan, know your immigration status. Finding out your immigration status will help you and the professionals you
work with determine what to do.

If you are a Canadian Citizen, Permanent Resident, or Landed Immigrant you cannot be removed from Canada for leaving the abusive situation, even if you were sponsored by the abuser.

If you are a Temporary Resident on Visa (visitor, student, worker, spouse of a worker, or spouse of a student) you need to contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada because your status in Canada might be tied to the status of the abuser. Remember, officials are not allowed to tell anyone that you are asking for information about your status.

If you are a Refugee, live-in caregiver, or are living without legal status you can apply to become a permanent resident. This does not mean you will be able to stay in Canada, but you can speak to a community center, lawyer, or other professional for more information and advice about your choices.

**WHO to Contact?**

- **Regina Immigrant Women Centre** 306-359-6514  
  www.reginaiwc.ca

- **Regina Open Door Society** 306-352-3500 www.rods.sk.ca/

- **Saskatoon Open Door Society** 306-653-4464  
  www.sods.sk.ca/

- **Moose Jaw Multicultural Center** 306-693-4700  
  www.mjmcinc.ca

- **The Global Gathering Place** (Saskatoon) 306-665-0268  
  www.globalgatheringplace.com/

- **International Women of Saskatoon** 306-978-6611  
  www.internationalwomenofsaskatoon.org/

- **Saskatchewan Intercultural Association** (Saskatoon) 306-978-1818 www.saskintercultural.org/

- **Saskatchewan Immigration**  
  www.saskimmigrationcanada.ca/immigration-gateways
What is Abuse?

Who can be Abused?

Immigrants and Refugees

Building a Support System

Keeping Track of Events

the Importance of Dealing with the Abuser

What Might Change?

Seeking Help

What is the Cycle of Violence?

Rural/Northern People

Caregivers Parents & People with Disabilities

Safely Using Technology

Seeking Help

What is Available?

Taking Care of Yourself

Taking Care of Yourself
“She used to scream at me all the time and lash out during arguments. I had to tell colleagues that the cat was always scratching me. I was really embarrassed, but asking for help was the turning point. I realized that it does happen to other people.”

- Justin, 42 Years Old
If you’re a man in an abusive relationship, it’s important to know that you’re not alone. It happens to men from all cultures and all walks of life. However, men are often reluctant to report abuse by women because they feel embarrassed, or they fear they won’t be believed, or worse, that police will assume that since they’re male they are the perpetrator of the violence and not the victim.

Traditional gender roles confuse the matter. Aside from the embarrassment over admitting abuse, abused men may feel that they are somehow less of a man for “allowing” themselves to be abused. But just like women are told when they are abused. Abuse is never the victim’s fault. This is no less true just because the victim happens to be male.

An abuser may hit, kick, bite, punch, spit, throw things, or destroy your possessions. To make up for any difference in strength, they may attack you while you’re asleep or otherwise catch you by surprise. They may also use a weapon, such as a gun or knife, or strike you with an object, abuse or threaten your children, or harm your pets. They may verbally abuse you, belittle you, or humiliate you in front of friends, colleagues, or family, or on social media sites. The abuser may be possessive, act jealous, or harass you with accusations of being unfaithful. They may threaten to leave you and prevent you from seeing your kids if you report the abuse.

Men who experience abuse might have challenges and concerns including:

- **Obligation.** You might feel a sense of obligation to be a leader in your family or to provide for them.
- **Protecting children.** You may be afraid to leave your children alone with your abuser or that if you leave, you will never be allowed to see your children again. You may be afraid that the abuser will tell your children that you are a bad person or that you don’t love them.
- **Assuming blame.** You may believe it is your fault or feel you deserve the treatment you receive. You may feel responsible
and have an unrealistic belief that you can and should do something that will make things better.

- **Dependency.** You may be mentally, emotionally, or financially dependent on the abuser. The idea of leaving the relationship creates significant feelings of depression or anxiety.

Abuse can have a serious physical and psychological impact on both you and your children. The first step to stopping the abuse is to reach out. Acknowledging what is happening and seeking help doesn’t mean you have failed as a man or as a husband. You are not to blame and you are not weak. As well as offering a sense of relief and providing some much needed support, sharing details of your abuse can also be the first step in addressing the abuse. Follow the steps provided in this Guide. Create a safety plan. Tell someone you trust about what is happening. Keep track of events. Contact support services for assistance.

Always try to avoid retaliating, even if provoked, as it may escalate things and you might get seriously hurt. Think about how you can leave the situation when you recognize that the abuser may become violent towards you. If you retaliate and the police are called, it may be that they see you as the abuser and you could be arrested and charged, particularly if your partner has any injuries caused by your retaliation.

Although there may be no shelter services for men near you, there are options for assistance. Contact the crisis line or Mobile Crisis closest to you. If you have children, it is important for service providers to know that you are needing assistance to keep them safe as well. They can help you to arrange for somewhere to stay in crisis. Sometimes just having some safe place to go for a few days to get some sleep, to make phone calls, establish plans, and have a base of operation can give you the leeway you need to know what is available and to put your plans into place. It’s important to ask for the services and help that you want.
WHO to Contact?

- **Help Lines** listed on page 26
- **RCMP Victim Services**
  1-888-286-6664
  www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/sk/progs/victim-eng.htm
- **RCMP Detachments** – check your local phone book or go to
  www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/sk/detachs/index-eng.htm
- **Mobile Crisis Services Regina**
  306-525-5333
- **Saskatoon Crisis Intervention Service**
  306-933-6200
- **Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit**
  306-764-1011
What is Abuse?

WHO TO CONTACT
What is Abuse?
Preparing to Leave

"No matter what, no one has the right to abuse anyone. I had to separate my own behaviour from my husband’s behaviour before I could realize that the abuse was my husband’s problem, not mine. I did this by removing myself from the battles. Arguments are useless. Talking to a person who is in a rage is a waste of time. I am taking the unnecessary risk of being hurt when I meet anger with anger."

- Priyal, 24 Years Old
Leaving a relationship is a difficult decision to make. You may experience conflicting emotions. For example, you want the abuse to stop, but you love and care for the abuser. You might feel scared or helpless, or that you deserve the abuse. You might feel embarrassed to admit that your relationship is in trouble. It is hard to admit you are being abused but seeking help is important.

You may face obstacles and challenges as you prepare to leave your relationship. For example, you could be faced with pressures that might lead you to believe that ending the relationship is wrong. Your family or community might try to convince you that you are disgracing the family name. It may seem that there is no one to ask for help and that you are without support. Socially, you may feel that you are judged by people for wanting things to change. Maybe you believe that people will look down on you. You may be afraid for your safety or fear that no one will support you when you leave. You might think it is easier to stay than to leave. You may be worried about having enough money or being able to find a place to live. These fears are all valid.

Leaving might seem difficult, but there are services and supports to help you. You are stronger than you think. Leaving is possible and it is a process that starts with you. It is your decision.

Your escape plan is your guide to leaving the abuse. Your escape plan should include what you will take with you, where you can go, and who you can contact for help. While you should try to make your escape plan as solid as possible, leave some room for flexibility in case situations change. For example, if a friend offered to pick you up on the day you decided to leave, but things changed, consider calling a taxi instead. As much as you have planned, sometimes things come up at the last minute. Leaving a little room for change will make things easier.
See the Escape Plan Checklist in the middle of this booklet for more information.
What is Abuse?

Building a Support System - the Importance of Seeking Help

It is common for people to leave a relationship only to return later on because they didn’t find support. Part of your planning should be dedicated to building a support system.

A support system is made up of non-judgmental, trustworthy, and knowledgeable people who know what you are going through and who will support your decisions as you leave. This can include friends, family members, colleagues, an employer, and professionals from organizations who provide services. Choose people for your support system that you feel safe with and who will protect your privacy – those who will not betray your confidence or tell your abuser or others what you have told them. If you feel someone in your support system is no longer safe, you should stop sharing information with them.

The people in your support system will help you in different ways. Friends and family members might be good listeners and emotional helpers; they might help watch your children while you attend appointments. They may be able to provide you with a safe place to stay or with other basics needs you might have. People from service organizations or other professionals can help you remain calm and focused so that you can follow through with your escape plan. They can intervene during a crisis. They can let you know about other programs and services that could assist you or they can help you through legal processes. The ways in which a support system can help will depend on your needs. Be clear about what you need from each person and what they can expect from you. Above all else, do not be ashamed to ask for help. People who care about you want you to be safe.

Stay connected with your support system through phone calls, emails or visits in person. Tell someone from your support system when you come and go from home or appointments. Communication like this can help keep you safe. Create a safety code word that you can use in case of emergency situations. Share this code word with
your support system and make sure that your system knows what to do if you use this word - should they phone the police? Meet you somewhere? Come to where you are?

**If someone in your support system is unable to reach you and is concerned that you are in danger, they should call the police.**

Your support system is an important resource for you that will help you stay safe and strong as you make changes in your life.
Leaving the abuser might mean there is a change in the amount of money you have. Having money to purchase food, gas, pay the phone bill, or find a place to live are all things you need to consider. As part of your planning, you can make a budget and research options for income or income support. Do not let the fear of not having money keep you in an unsafe situation.

Organizations and people in your support system can help you apply for jobs or to government support programs, work with you to create a budget, and teach you how to manage money.

Here are some things to consider in order to gain financial freedom from your abuser and to build your money base:

**Know where you stand**
It is helpful to know where you stand financially. Knowing your sources of income, bank account balances, property owned (house, car, cabin, etc.), monthly expenses, and any debts owed will give you a better picture of how financially secure you are and help you to consider your options.

**Set up a bank account**
Setting up a bank account is an easy and secure way to store your money until you need it. Your abuser should not know about this account. To keep yourself safe, use a different bank than the one your abuser uses. Use an address that your abuser does not know – an address of a trusted friend or family member, a work address, or a private post office box. You can also talk to the bank and request that they send online bank statements and information to a secure email address or arrange to go to the bank to pick up items that cannot be sent through email.

**Start saving**
Put aside small amounts of money whenever possible. Set up your own bank account to keep this money safe or ask a trustworthy individual from your support system to look after the money for you.
Find help with financial planning
It can be overwhelming to plan a budget, save, and manage money. Your support network can help.

WHO to Contact?

- A Bank (if possible, choose a different bank or location from the one the abuser uses)
- Ministry of Social Services – Income Assistance
  1-866-221-5200 (toll free)
  www.socialservices.gov.sk.ca/income-assistance/
- Your Band Office
- A trusted friend or family member
- Saskatchewan Income Supplement Client Service Centre
  1-888-488-6385 (toll free) or
  1-800-683-9052 (TTY)

Legal Issues

*Do NOT stay in an abusive relationship just because you cannot afford a lawyer.*

You have the legal right to be protected from abuse and violence. Talk to a professional in your support system for advice on affordable or free legal supports and services. Legal aid, pro-bono legal clinics, and community organizations are great resources.
If you seek legal advice while still living with your abuser, make sure that your lawyer or legal service provider knows how to contact you safely. Make it clear to your lawyer or legal service provider not to leave you a voicemail message or send you emails or texts that the abuser might find. Make a plan with your lawyer so you both know how to communicate safely and privately.

If you fear for your safety, the safety of your children, or the security of your property, there are legal options that can help keep you safe. There are a number of criminal and civil actions that you can take depending on your situation. Two of the most common are:

**Peace Bond:** if you have a real fear that you may be harassed or abused after you leave, you can get protection from the courts in the form of a Peace Bond. A Peace Bond is a promise made in court by the abuser to “keep the peace” for a certain amount of time. The abuser must also obey any other conditions the court might add. As long as the conditions of the Peace Bond are met, the abuser will not be charged with a criminal offence.

**Emergency Intervention Order (EIO):** An EIO is a court order and can include things like removal of the abuser from the home, supervision by a police officer as you or the abuser pack up personal belongings from the home or a condition that the abuser cannot contact you, your children, or your family. EIOs can be requested in an emergency situation when evidence of violence exists. EIOs can be issued 24/7. Police officers, victim service coordinators, and mobile crisis workers can help you apply for an EIO.
• **Public Legal Education Association (PLEA)**
  306-653-1868
  www.plea.org/

• **Pro Bono Law Saskatchewan**
  1-855-833-PBLS (7257) (tollfree)
  www.pblsask.ca

• **Legal Aid**
  1-800-667-3764
  www.legalaid.sk.ca

• **Free Legal Clinics:**
  - Regina 306-757-4711
  - Saskatoon 306-657-6100
  - Prince Albert 306-764-3431
  - Estevan 1-855-833-7257
  - Swift Current 306-778-0515
  - North Battleford 1-855-833-7257
  - Meadow Lake 1-855-833-7257
  - Moose Jaw 1-855-833-7257
  - La Ronge 1-865-833-7257

• **Lawyer Referral Service, Law Society of Saskatchewan**
  1-800-667-9886

• **Elizabeth Fry Society:**
  1-888-934-4606
  www.elizabethfry.ca/

• **Victim services**
  1-888-286-6664 (toll free) or 1-866-445-8857 (TTY)

• **RCMP or City Police**
  - See local listings in phone book, online, or dial 411 for directory assistance
  - RCMP Detachments
    www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/sk/detachs/index-eng.htm
Ready, Set, GO!

It is normal to feel all kinds of emotions during the planning and leaving process. Give yourself permission to feel these feelings, to name them, and to share them with someone you trust. Sharing your feelings is the best kind of medicine for emotional well-being.

Leaving is one of the hardest decisions you will ever make. There is no right or wrong way of leaving an abusive relationship. Keep safety as your top priority and when it’s time, just leave. Don’t second guess yourself or your decisions.
What is Abuse?
What is Abuse?
Starting Fresh

"Today, two years later, I’ve relocated, gone back to school, and I am working on raising my child as a single parent, free of the fear of violence. My problems are not all solved, but have changed. I have my fears, lack of money, loneliness, and a lack of time, but I feel directed now to use my talents to the fullest and to see my problems as opportunities for growth."

- Eliza, 33 Years Old
It is normal to feel many emotions after you’ve left. You might have “happy” feelings such as relief and empowerment and “sad” feelings like fear and loneliness. While you are happy that you left, you might also feel worried about where you will go from here. You might miss the good times you had with your abuser. Allow yourself to feel these emotions and recognize that they will not last forever. You are slowly but steadily gaining strength and rebuilding your life. This will take time. The life you want is ahead. You can face the obstacles and challenges that come your way.

Change is hard

Leaving an abusive relationship brings many changes. You may not be able to go to the same stores, restaurants, and hangouts that you are used to going to because the abuser still goes to these places. You might have to switch the grocery store you shop at, the gym you exercise at, or the parks you go to. Changing personal routines is common when leaving a relationship.

Your circle of friends might change. Friends you have in common with your abuser may not be trustworthy and might tell your abuser where you are living, what you are doing, and how you life is going after you have left. Some friends can be a constant reminder of the abuse and might even push you to get back together with the abuser. Let go of these friends to make room for others that support your choices.

There are many emotions you will experience as you work through your feelings. You will likely grieve the end of your relationship. You may feel anger, sadness, regret and think about the ‘what ifs’. You may feel like you have lost something after you leave your relationship. The change will feel difficult and overwhelming at times. You may start to think that perhaps the situation wasn’t that bad or that you made a mistake. Read the journals and reports you have kept to remind yourself why you chose to leave. Talk to people in your support system who will remind you of the changes...
you want to make and encourage you to keep moving forward. Connect with others who have left abusive relationships who can share their experiences and the difference it has made for them. One day at a time, things will become easier.

“**But I still have feelings for the abuser**”

Just because you have left the abuser does not necessarily mean you will stop loving or caring for that person. Sometimes, the hardest part about leaving is the feelings you have for the person who was abusing you.

After leaving, you might feel that you want to go back. Maybe you are having a hard time supporting yourself, are feeling lonely, or want to feel loved and want someone there with you.

To help you let go of the abuser, make a list of all the reasons why you left and why you cannot be with that person any more. Keep this list near you and read it often. If you kept a journal or diary while in the relationship, read through it and reflect on the abuse. How did the abuse and violence make you feel? Do you want to be back in that situation again? Make a list of things that you can do when you are feeling lonely or afraid. For example, go for a walk, read, or call someone from your support system.

You might begin to remember the good times you had with the abuser, and this might lead you to forget about the bad times. Acknowledge that you have good memories and enjoyed some moments with the abuser but do not minimize the abuse and violence.

It is unlikely that the abuser’s behaviour will improve if you return. If anything, the abuser may become more violent and abusive. Remember, the abuse is not your fault and the abuser’s actions are not your responsibility.
Dealing with the Abuser

There may be times where you will need to see or talk to the abuser. Dealing with this person does not mean you have to go back or accept abuse. You have a right to be safe and protected.

Before meeting with the abuser, prepare yourself. Talk to a trusted person in your support system about the emotions you are feeling. If it makes things easier, practice what you are going to say, decide the topics of conversation you are willing to accept and where you will draw the line. If you feel more comfortable, take someone with you whenever you need to meet with the abuser. This can be a friend, a family member, or any other person from your support system. Having someone with you will make the meeting easier and help you to face the abuser, especially if you have recently left the relationship.

Continue to record events even after you have left the abusive relationship. Leaving the relationship is an important step in moving on and starting fresh, but sometimes the abuser is not ready to let go. It is important to continue to record any incidents with the abuser because it will help you to further build a case if you decide to report the abuse. The abuser might start sending you threatening emails and voice messages, try to enter your home without your permission, follow you around as you run errands, harass you at work, or threaten your children at school. Keep track of everything. Contact the police if you feel you are in danger. Remember, you don’t have to put up with this behaviour any more. You deserve to be protected from any harassment or abuse.

Along with collecting evidence, it is important to continue to write your feelings down in your journal. This journal will serve as your personal evidence for why you left the abusive relationship and why you need to stay away. The journal will be a constant reminder of what you have been through and why it is important for you to continue on the path of rebuilding your life.

If possible, cut all ties with the abuser - no phone calls, messages via other people, letters, texts, emails, and so on. If you have to
contact the abuser for whatever reason, try to control your feelings. Don’t show the abuser that you are angry, hurt or afraid. Share these feelings with trustworthy people in your support system instead.

### Staying Safe After Leaving

Leaving an abusive relationship can be dangerous. It is important to be aware of the possible dangers you may face after leaving and take some simple steps to help make sure you are safe at home, in public, and at work.

#### At Home

- Keep your doors locked at all times. If you are not at home, close and lock all your windows.
- Change the locks on your doors as soon as possible, especially if you live in a place that the abuser has access to. If possible, add locks to your windows and don’t forget to change the lock on the patio door.
- If you have a yard, make sure to keep it well lit. Lock garages and sheds.
- Consider installing a motion detector or security system in your home to keep you and your property safe at all times.
- Talk to your neighbours and let them know about your situation. Tell them that you’ve just left an abusive relationship and ask them to keep an eye out for the abuser.
- Install a peep hole in your door so you can see who is on the other side.
- If you rent, ask your landlord to help you secure your home. Do not put your name in the apartment/rental building directory.
• Get an unpublished and unlisted phone number for your home and cell phone. Have your phone service provider block your number when calling out so that your phone number does not show on the caller display.

• Don’t give copies of your keys to anyone unless you fully trust this person and know that they will keep the keys safe.

**In Public**

• Carry your phone with you at all times. If you need immediate help, call 911.

• Establish check-in times with your support system. Tell someone when you are leaving the house, where you will be going, and what time you will be back. Agree on what to do if they do not hear from you.

• Develop a signal or code word that you can use with your support system in case of emergency situations. Let people know what to do if they see or hear this signal.

• If you have a Peace Bond, Emergency Intervention Order, or custody order in place, carry a copy with you. If you need to contact police, you can quickly show them to confirm these orders so they can act.

• Consider changing your doctor, dentist, and other professional service provider if you and the abuser used to see the same one or if your abuser knows which ones you see.

• Consider talking to your employer about your situation.

• Provide your employer with a list of individuals to contact in case of an emergency.

• Give your employer a picture of the abuser in case you are confronted at your workplace by your abuser.

• If you have a Peace Bond, Emergency Intervention Order, or custody order in place, provide a copy to your employer so
they are able to protect you and other staff. If your employer needs to contact police, they will be able to share the orders with the police so they can act.

- If you have concerns about your safety, park near the building so you can enter and leave work quickly and safely. Have someone walk with you to your car.

**Social Media**

- Be aware that social media can be a way for an abuser to track your activity and to maintain contact with you. Consider not actively using social media if you have any concerns.

- Increase your profile’s privacy settings so that it becomes more difficult to access your page.

- If you are friends with your abuser, “un-friend” them. You don’t need the added stress of having them look at your profile or of you constantly checking their profile.

- Clean out your friends list. There may be people on your friends list who are close to the abuser. The abuser can access your page and your information through these friends.

- Do not post anything on your page that can tell someone where you are, where you are going, or what you are doing. Posts like “had a great time at the concert” or “heading out to visit Paula” can be used to track where you are.

- Talk to your friends and ask them not to post any pictures of you or tag you in any pictures or posts.

- Disable the location tagging on your social media profile page so that your location does not show up every time you post, comment, or share something.

- If you are sending messages through social media, private message people rather than posting publicly.
• Do not accept friend request from anyone you don't know. It is very easy for your abuser to create a fake profile to keep tabs on you and your children.

### Children’s Safety

If you have children, you need to make sure that they are safe too. Taking extra steps to establish safety for your children will help create the safe and loving family life they need and deserve. Here are some steps you can take to ensure the safety of your kids:

• Inform all the people who are in contact with your kids (teachers, supervisors, coaches, school bus drivers, youth group mentors, etc) about the abusive relationship you have left and the need to keep your kids safe. Show these people a photo of your abuser and make it clear that the kids need to be protected from the abuser and what the conditions of their contact are.

• Contact the daycare or school officials to clearly discuss and create a safety plan for the children. Include a list of people who can pick up the children, contacts to phone in case of emergency, and any code words that your kids may use to describe a threatening or emergency situation.

• Maintain regular communication with the daycare or school and keep everyone who needs to know up-to-date with changes to your plan.

• If you have a Peace Bond, Emergency Intervention Order, or custody order in place, provide a copy to the daycare and school principal. This lets the school know what contact is acceptable.
• Join a counselling or support group with your children and discuss the effects that the abuser has had on the family and what can be done to improve everyone’s well-being and safety.

• Talk to your children and develop a safety plan that they can follow if they are in an emergency situation but you are not with them.

• Teach your children how to call the police and any other family members or important people in your support system in case of emergencies.

Taking Care of Yourself

As you start rebuilding your life, it is important to take care of yourself and your personal needs. The abusive relationship may have taken a toll on your self-esteem and you might find yourself feeling lonely, depressed, and unworthy. Remember that the abuse was never your fault and you did nothing to deserve it. Feeling good about yourself is an important part of rebuilding your life. Boosting your self-esteem starts by thinking positive thoughts about yourself and your life.

Take a few moments within your day to try some of the following suggestions:

• **Accept compliments.** Learn to accept compliments and believe them. You can be beautiful, your work can be great, your clothes can look nice, your hair cut is cute, and your smile is amazing! Don't downplay the compliments you receive.

• **Self-praise.** Learn to compliment yourself for the things you do well. Maybe you are a great cook, an excellent speaker, a good carpenter, a talented artist, or a friendly neighbour.
Praise yourself for both big and small things and share your accomplishments and successes with your support system.

- **Success imagery.** Relax and imagine doing well in an upcoming task. You might be faced with a task that is challenging or difficult. Do not lose hope or lose sight of success. Complete the task with the positive energy you imagined.

- **Thought stopping.** Every time you find yourself thinking negative thoughts, stop yourself and replace these thoughts with positives. Negative thoughts will only bring you down.

- **Affirmations.** State your positive qualities to yourself. Take a piece of paper and write down three positive qualities that you have. Post this paper on your fridge or bathroom mirror, or in your journal as a frequent reminder of your great qualities. Frequently think about your positive qualities; write them down and change this paper often.

- **Accept your self.** No one is perfect. Be gentle with yourself.

Building your self-esteem is an important part of moving on. This will take time and effort and does not happen over night. At times, you might feel like you are on a rollercoaster ride of emotions.

Make time to do things and activities that you love. Make a list of things that you enjoy doing (for example, “I love to: go for walks, cook, fix things, write poetry, play video games, ride horses, play hockey, watch a movie, etc.”) and make some time each week to do at least one thing on your list. Spending your free time doing things you love will help ease the stress and emotional hardships you might be facing while you rebuild your life. Life can be stressful and busy – remember to make time to relax and have fun!

Maintain contact with your support system. When you’re in the
midst of change, having supportive people in your life is essential. Your support system might include friends and family members, or professionals such as counsellors and support groups. You might find books at your local book store or library that can offer support as well.

Rebuilding your life after leaving an abusive relationship will be a challenge. At times you may find yourself feeling overwhelmed. Taking on too many things at once can lead to even more stress and you may find yourself giving up. Take things slow and plan out your days. A good idea is to start a log of daily, weekly, and monthly goals you want to accomplish, and the steps you are going to take to achieve these goals.

For example, you can set up a mini schedule like this one:

• **Today’s Goal:** make a home cooked meal for the kids
  • How Will I Do This? Pick up some groceries after work today
  • Have kids work together to make some chocolate chip cookies for dessert

• **This Week’s Goal:** talk to the landlord about fixing the leaky faucet in the bathroom
  • Get landlord’s number from neighbour
  • Phone after work on Tuesday to arrange for appointment on weekend

• **This Month’s Goal:** phone local support group to register for the single mother program
  • Talk to community center down the street about what programs are available for single moms
  • Phone a few programs and see what days and times the programs run
  • Choose the best program that works for my schedule and needs
You Can Do It

You can succeed. You deserve a life that is safe, healthy and full of love. Over time you will find your hard work is worth it. This is a process of self-development and change. You will notice that you will develop new positive behaviours and attitudes. You will find that you are creating new celebrations and family traditions that you are sharing with those you love and who love you back – whether it be your friends, family, children, or yourself.

Take a new picture of yourself with your friends, your family, your children, or on your own. Frame this picture and place it in a special place in your home. Notice the new life in your eyes.

Realize that change is possible. You deserve love and abundance. You can rebuild your life, and find peace, health, and goodness.