

Creating a Safety Plan for Abused Women



CRISIS LINES

Gillian's Place 905-684-8331

Serenity House 905-788-0113

Nova House 905-356-5800

This booklet has been developed based on the important information
from the Peel Committee Against Woman Abuse & The Family
Counselling Centre

Women Abuse can take many different forms. If any of the following apply to you, there are options to keep you safe.

A Safety Plan may be one of them.

Does your partner:

- Insult you**, call you names or threaten you? Makes you feel stupid, crazy or worthless?
- Control** where you go, what you wear, or who you hang out with?
- Accuse you of cheating, **constantly jealous?**
- Pressure you, or **force you to** have sex?
- Control** all the money, or withhold money for food, diapers, rent or other basic needs?
- Forbid you** from seeing your family or your friends?
- Hurt** your pets or break your belongings?
- Threaten** to have you deported?
- Punch holes in the walls?
- Push** you, **shove** you, **hit** you?
- Threaten to commit suicide** if you ever left?
- Do you feel you are “walking on eggshells”, living in fear of the next violent outburst?**

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you are being abused.

There are options to keep you safe.

For further assistance please see your service options at the back of this book.

Many women have escaped and survived abusive situations.

This information package was put together by women who have survived, and experts in the field

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
I. During a Violent Incident.....	4
II. An Emergency Escape Plan	5-6
III. Creating a Safer Environment	
1. At Home	7
2. If you are not living with abusive partner	8
3. In the Neighbourhood.....	9
4. At Work.....	10
5. Phone Safety	11
6. Computer and Internet Safety	12
7. Protecting yourself from GPS surveillance & recording devices ...	13
IV. An Emotional Safety Plan.....	14
V. A Child's Safety Plan	15-16
Resources for Abused Women in Niagara.....	17

INTRODUCTION

In creating a safety plan, each individual safety plan is specific to you and your children, based on your own unique needs and requirements.

- Although you cannot control your (ex) partner's violence, it may be possible to increase your own and your children's safety.
- A safety plan is needed whenever the possibility of abuse is identified.
- This safety plan information is specifically designed for actions that you can take.
- This safety plan information also includes actions you can take to increase your children's safety.
- It is important to become familiar with and to review and/or revise your safety plan regularly. Abusive situations and risk factors can change quickly.

**This basic safety plan is only the first step in planning
for the safety of you and your children.**

**You are encouraged to contact a worker who can assist you in
completing a more personal and detailed safety plan.**

Please refer to the back of this booklet for resources.

I. During a Violent Incident

Women cannot always avoid violent incidents.

However, in order to increase your safety, here are some things ***you can do***:

- Remind yourself that you have an Emergency Escape Plan, and go over it in your mind.
- Start to position yourself to get out quickly or near a phone so you can call 911, if necessary.
- Do not warn your partner that you are about to call the police.
- Sound your car alarm using your remote keyless entry device.
- Try to move to a space where the risk is the lowest. (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door.)
- Use your judgment and intuition – do whatever will keep you safe. Use techniques that you have used in the past to keep yourself safe.

When, or after, you have been assaulted, call the police at 911 if you can. Tell them you have been assaulted by your husband /partner

II. An Emergency Escape Plan

When you leave, take the children if you can. If you try to get them later, the police cannot help you remove them from their other parent unless you have a valid court order.

- ❑ The Emergency Escape Plan focuses on the things you can do in advance to be better prepared in case you have to leave an abusive situation very quickly.
- ❑ Where possible, try to arrange to speak with a woman abuse expert to assist you.
- ❑ Open a bank account in your own name and arrange that no bank statements or other calls be made to you, or, arrange that mail be sent to a friend or family member.
- ❑ Save and set aside as much money as you can.
- ❑ Plan your transportation and any associated costs of transportation, i.e. walk, bus, cab. * Note, shelters will send a cab and cover the costs of your taxi trip to the shelter*
- ❑ Plan your emergency exits.
- ❑ Plan and practice the steps you will take if you have to leave quickly, and learn them well.
- ❑ Start a new routine (e.g. going for a walk at 10 am) which may allow you to flee without suspicion.
- ❑ Hide extra clothing, house keys, car keys, money, etc. at a trusted friend's house.

The following is a list of items you may need:

Take a photocopy of the following items and store in a safe place, away from the originals. Hide the originals someplace else, if it is safe for you to do so.

- important papers, custody documentation, court orders, restraining orders
- marriage certificate passports, birth certificates, immigration papers, for all family members
- driver's license and registration
- medications, prescriptions, medical records for all family members
- all cards you normally use e.g. Visa, phone, social insurance, bank debit cards
- health cards for yourself and family members
- lease/rental agreement, house deed, mortgage papers
- bank books, insurance papers, and / or income tax
- ensure you have current numbers in your cell phone and/or have a copy of all current relevant numbers
- school and vaccination records
- picture of spouse/ partner

The Police will bring you back to the home later, to remove additional personal belongings, if it is arranged through the local division. Take the items listed above as well as anything else that is important to you or your children.

III. Creating a Safer Environment

There are many things a woman can do to increase her safety. It may not be possible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Here are a few suggestions:

1. At Home

If you are living with your abusive partner/spouse:

- Get your Emergency Escape Plan in order and review it often.
- Make arrangements with friends or family so that you can stay with them if necessary.
- Teach your children how to use the telephone (and your cellular phone, if you have one) to call 911 to contact the police.
- Plan your emergency exits, teach your children and know them well. If you cannot leave because of a disability, contact a shelter to make arrangements for transportation
- Teach your children their own Safety Plan.
- If you have call display on your phone, be careful who can get access to the stored numbers (example, last number dialed)
- Use caution when storing numbers on your cell phone and/ or using your computer. See phone safety.**

2. If you are not living with your abusive partner/spouse:

- Change the locks on the doors, ensure windows lock securely. Install a peephole in the door. Change the locks on your garage and mailbox.
- Teach your children not to answer the door.
- If you have a restraining order, custody and/or access documents, keep them with you at all times.
- Have your telephone number unlisted, including cell phone numbers, as it is harder to track or block your number when calling out.
- Consider getting a cell phone and pre-program numbers of people to call.
- If you live in an apartment, be aware of your surroundings; check the halls clearly when getting off the elevator. Look in mirrors and be aware of doorways in hallways. Speak to security, or make an anonymous call requesting safety in your building.
- Consider the advantages of getting a dog.
- Install an outside motion detection lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to your house.
- Do whatever you can to install security systems, including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, an electronic system, etc. – anything to provide added security.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times.
- Be aware of your surroundings before exiting your home.
- Keep your curtains closed

3. In the Neighbourhood

- Tell people who take care of your children, which people have permission to pick up your children.
- Tell people in your neighbourhood that your partner no longer lives with you.
- Ask your neighbours to look after your children in an emergency.
- Hide clothing and your Emergency Escape Plan items at a trusted neighbour's house.
- Use different grocery stores and shopping malls, and shop at hours that are different from when you were living with your abusive partner. Vary your routine regularly.
- Use a different bank or branch, and take care of your banking at hours different from those you used with your abusive partner.
- Do not put your name in your apartment building directory, list OCCUPANT
- Notify your doctor, dentist, insurance company, bank not to give out any information to your partner/spouse.
- Yell "fire" to get attention if you are at risk.
- Take well-populated and well lit routes
- Make family / friends / co-workers aware of destination and estimated time of return or arrival.

Have your fully charged cell phone with you and in your hand with programed emergency numbers.

4. At Work

Each woman must decide for herself if and/or when you will tell others that your partner is abusive and that you may be at risk. Friends, family and co-workers may be able to help protect you. However, each woman should consider carefully which people to ask for help. If you are comfortable, you may choose to do any or all of the following:

- Tell your boss, the security supervisor, and other key people or friends at work of your situation.
- Ask to have your calls screened at work. It would also help to have these calls documented.
- Discuss the possibility of having your employer call the police if you are in danger from your (ex) partner.

When arriving or leaving work:

- let someone know when you'll be home
- carry your keys in your hands
- get a remote or keyless entry car door opener
- walk with someone to your car
- look in the windows before your get in
- scan the parking lot
- Keep your cell phone easily accessible; make sure it's always charged.
- Consider if your partner has keys to your vehicle.
- Always lock your car
- If your partner is following you, drive to a place where there are people to support you, e.g. police station or a well-populated area. Keep your car in drive, windows & doors locked, sound your car alarm or horn.
- keep a sign in your car saying "call police"
- if you are walking, take a route that is populated and well lite.
- change the patterns of when you arrive and leave work and the routes you take home

If you see your partner on the street, go immediately to a public place.

5. Phone Safety

You can call 911 for free on most public phones and on any cell phone even if it's no longer in service or has any minutes left.

- Try to have as many cordless phones in the home as possible and carry one with you while in your home. Make sure your phones, including cell phones are always charged.**
- Have one corded phone in your home.**
- Keep a cordless phone charged and in a safe room/place preferably with a lock on the door. Teach your children to always keep this phone in this room and charged.**
- Call collect or use a prepaid phone card.** Remember that if you use your own cell phone or telephone charge card, the phone numbers that you call will be listed on the monthly bill that is sent to your home. Even if you've already left by the time the bill arrives, your abuser may be able to track you down by the phone numbers you've called for help.
- Check your cell phone settings.** There are cell phone technologies your abuser can use to listen in on your calls or track your location. Your abuser can use your cell phone as a tracking device if it has GPS, is in "silent mode," or is set to "auto answer." So consider turning it off when not in use or leaving it behind when fleeing your abuser.
- Get your own cell phone.** Consider purchasing a prepaid cell phone or another cell phone that your abuser doesn't know about. Some domestic violence shelters offer free cell phones to abused women.

6. Computer and Internet safety

Abusers often monitor their partner's activities, including their computer use.

While there are ways to delete your Internet history, this can be a red flag to your partner that you're trying to hide something, so be very careful. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to clear a computer of all evidence of the websites that you have visited, unless you know a lot about computers. For more information on hiding your internet activities go to www.shelternet.ca.

- Use a safe computer.** If you seek help online, you are safest if you use a computer outside of your home. You can use a computer at work, a friend's house, the library, your local community center, or a domestic violence shelter or agency.
- Be cautious with email, instant messaging and social networking sites.** Email and instant messaging are not a safe way to communicate. Be especially careful when sending email, as your abuser may know how to access your account.
- Google chrome links the history from your phone to your computer when the two are connected via e-mail. Disconnect your email.
- Change your user names and passwords.** Create new usernames and passwords for your email, online banking, and other sensitive accounts. Even if you don't think your abuser has your passwords, he may have guessed or used a spyware or keylogging program to get them. Choose passwords that your abuser can't guess (avoid birthdays, nicknames, and other personal information). Use strong passwords with numbers and characters (e.g. starship23#).
- Search for your name on the Internet.** Major search engines such as Google and Yahoo may have a link to your contact information. Do a full search for your name in quotation marks; "Full Name".

Be careful when using Facebook and other social network sites as your friends might post information on this site that you do not want your partner to know about...

7. Protecting yourself from GPS surveillance and recording devices

Your abuser doesn't need to be tech savvy in order to use surveillance technology to monitor your movements and listen in on your conversations. Be aware that your abuser may be using hidden cameras, such as a "Nanny Cam," or even a baby monitor to check in on you. Global Positioning System (GPS) devices are also cheap and easy to use. GPS devices can be hidden in your car, your purse, or other objects you carry with you. Your abuser can also use your car's GPS system to see where you've been.

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

IV. An Emotional Safety Plan

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

- ❑ Connect with appropriate counselling and support services for abused women, see list of resources at the back of this book.
- ❑ Become involved in community activities to reduce feeling isolated.
- ❑ Take a part-time job to reduce isolation and to improve your finances.
- ❑ Enroll in school to increase your skills.
- ❑ Join support groups of other women to gain support and strengthen your relationships with other people.
- ❑ Take time for yourself to read, meditate, play music, etc.
- ❑ Spend time with people who provide support.
- ❑ Take part in social activities, e.g. movie, dinner, exercise.
- ❑ Take care of your sleep and nutritional needs.
- ❑ Keep relevant documents available and up to date to help you feel prepared for upcoming events, such as medical appointments.
- ❑ Keep a personal journal to write about your feelings, especially when you are feeling low or vulnerable. If you cannot keep it in a safe place then destroy it.
- ❑ Take time to prepare yourself emotionally before entering stressful situations like talking with your partner, meeting with lawyers, or attending court.
- ❑ Try not to overbook yourself - limit yourself to one appointment per day to reduce stress.
- ❑ Be creative and do whatever makes you feel good.
- ❑ Write something positive about yourself everyday - your own personal affirmations.
- ❑ Stay fit and active.
- ❑ It's OK to feel angry, find positive and constructive ways to express your anger.

Remember that you are the most important person to take care of right now.

V. A CHILD'S SAFETY PLAN

This plan was developed to help mothers teach their children some basic safety planning. It is based on the belief that the most important thing that children can do for their mothers and their families is to get away from the area of violence! They cannot stop the abuse, although they often try by distracting the abuser or directly interfering in the abusive episode. It is important to tell the child that the best and most important thing for them to do for themselves is keep safe.

Children who experience woman abuse can be profoundly affected. It is very traumatic for them to be faced with violence directed at them or at someone they love. Personal safety and safety planning are extremely important and necessary for children whose families are experiencing violence. Children should learn ways to protect themselves. There are several ways to help you develop a safety plan with your children.

- Stress the importance of being safe, and that it is not the child's responsibility to make sure that his/her mother is safe.
- Have your child pick a safe room/place in the house, preferably with a lock on the door and a phone. Teach your children never to remove this phone and always keep it charged. The first step of any plan is for the children to get out of the room where the abuse is occurring.
- Teach your children how to call for help. It is important that children know they should not use a phone that is in view of the abuser. This puts them at risk. Talk to your children about using a neighbour's phone or a pay phone, if they are unable to use a phone at home. If you have a cell phone, teach your children how to use it. Instruct children not to hang-up the cell phone to ensure police can locate them.
- Teach your children who to approach for help (i.e. police/neighbour).
- Teach your children never to answer the door unless it is safe and you have confirmed it's safe to answer the door

- Teach your child/children how to contact police at 911.
- Ensure your child/children know their full name and address (rural children need to know their Concession and Lot #).
- Rehearse what your child/children will say when they call for help.

For example:

Dial 911.

An operator will answer:

"Police, Fire, Ambulance."

Your child says:

Police.

Then your child says:

My name is _____.

I am ___years old.

I need help. Send the police.

Someone is hurting my mom.

The address here is _____.

The phone number here is _____.

- Teach your children the safest route to the planned place of safety for them.

Pick a safe place to meet your children, out of the home, after the situation is safe for you and for them.

Resources for Abused Women in Niagara

Police

Niagara Regional Police

Emergency..... 911

Non-Emergency..... 905-688-4111

24-Hour Crisis Support Lines for Abused Women

Gillian's Place (formerly Women's Place of North Niagara Inc.):

St. Catharines and District 905-684-8331 (call collect)

Femaide 1-877-336-2433

Women's Place of South Niagara Inc.:

Welland (Serenity Place).....905-788-0113 (call collect)

Niagara Falls (Nova House).....905-356-5800 (call collect)

Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA) 905-682-4584

Shelters

Gillian's Place

St. Catharines and North Niagara905-684-8331 (call collect)

Women's Place of South Niagara Inc.:

Welland (Serenity Place).....905-788-0113 (call collect)

Niagara Falls (Nova House) 905-356-5800 (call collect)

Counselling Services for Abused Women

Centre de Sante Communautaire

Crisis Line 1-866-885-5947

Office..... 905-734-1141

A multi-disciplinary agency serving the French speaking population of Niagara. Services include anti-violence programs.

Design for a New Tomorrow

Provides support to individuals who have experienced abuse in intimate adult relationships 905-684-1223

Gillian's Place (formerly Women's Place of North Niagara Inc.):

Provides shelter, safety planning, counselling, legal advice, child & youth support practical supports & linkages, and public education. Services are provided to all women and their children living in the community, or residing in the shelter. All services are free and completely confidential.

..... 905-684-8331 (call collect)

Women's Place of South Niagara Inc

Provides shelter and outreach services (Welland ,Niagara Falls, Fort Erie and Port Colborne locations) for women and children experiencing abuse. Services include transitional support, child and youth support, counselling , safety planning and referrals. All services are free and confidential.

Welland (Serenity House)..... 905-788-0113 (call collect)

Niagara Falls (Nova House) 905-356-5800 (call collect)

Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA Inc.)

Provides support and counselling to individuals who have experienced rape, sexual assault, and incest and childhood sexual abuse.

..... 905-682-7258

Crisis Phone..... 905-682-4584

Family Counselling Centre Niagara

Provides a range of professional counselling and support programs to individuals, couples, and families.

..... ext. 3345, 1-888-937-7731 or 905-937-7731

Bethlehem Projects of Niagara

Provides supportive, transitional and permanent affordable housing, and community outreach services. All services are offered for singles and families.

..... 905-641-1660

West Niagara Second Stage Housing

Provides transitional support and housing to survivors of domestic abuse and their children.

Beamsville 905-309-1877

Sexual Assault/ Domestic Violence Treatment Program Niagara

Provides 24 hour medical service, collection of forensic evidence and follow up counselling to recent victims of sexual assault or domestic violence reporting to emergency departments in the Niagara Region. Niagara Regional Health System (Hospital) 905-378-4647

Legal Services

Gillian's Place (advice provided by a family law Lawyer) 905-684-8331

Women's Place of South Niagara (Legal Advocate):

Niagara Falls 905-356-5800

Welland..... 905-788-0113

Niagara North Community Legal Assistance

(can call collect) 905-682-6635

Legal Aid Ontario: 1-800-668-8258

press "0" to speak with a representative.

(Service available in 120 languages Monday – Friday 8:00am – 5:00pm)

..... TTY #...1-866-641-8867

Victim Witness Assistance Program

St. Catharines and Niagara Falls..... 905-685-2671

Welland..... 905-735-4326

Support Services for Abused Women

Folk Arts Centre of St. Catharines..... 905-685-6589

Multicultural Centre – Niagara Falls..... 905-358-3452

Welland..... 905-732-5337

Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre..... 905-871-8931

Niagara Victim Crisis Support Services Inc. 905-688-4111, ext. 4492

Centre de Santé Communautaire 905-734-1141

Crisis Line 1-877-336-2433

Distress Centre of Niagara Inc (Hours: 24-hour service)

St. Catharines..... 905-688-3711

Port Colborne, Wainfleet 905-734-1212

Fort Erie..... 905-382-0689

Grimsby, West Lincoln 905-563-6674

Women's Resource Centre:

Beamsville Site..... 905-563-5910

Children Exposed to Family Violence Programs

Pathstones Mental Health.....1-800-263-4944

Kids Help Phone.....1-800-668-6868

Side by Side Group Treatment Program ages (4-16 yrs):

.....905-937-7731, ext. 3684

For Me and My Mom (Individual and Family Counselling for
mom/children):

.....905-937-7731, ext. 3390

Contact Niagara (for Children's and Developmental Services)

.....905-684-3407

.....1-800-933-3617

Partner Assault Programs For Men

Partner Assault Response Program (PAR):

Family Counselling Centre.....905-937-7731, ext. 3345

Design for a New Tomorrow905-684-7713

Food Banks

Community Care:

St. Catharines.....905-685-1349

Thorold905-227-9240

Community Care of West Niagara905-563-5822

Community Outreach Program (Fort Erie).....905-871-2526

Project Share (Niagara Falls).....905-357-5121

Salvation Army (St. Catharines)905-935-4311

Housing

Housing Help Centre:

St. Catharines & Thorold.....	905-984-8955
Niagara Falls (Project Share).....	905-357-5121
Fort Erie.....	905-357-5121
Niagara Regional Housing.....	905-682-9201
.....	1-800-232-3292

Bethlehem Projects of Niagara905-641-1660

Y.W.C.A. Niagara Region

St. Catharines	905-988-3528
Niagara Falls.....	905-357-9191

South Ridge Shelter (Emergency Housing)905-682-2477

Financial Assistance

Ontario Works Intake Line	905-641-9960
Free Financial Counselling (credit counselling)	1-800-663-3973

Addiction Services

Mental Health & Addictions	1-866-550-5205
ABC Better Choice Program	ext. 63854, 905-378-4647
Out & About Clinic (Methadone Clinic)	905-688-1827
New Port Centre.....	ext. 32500, 905-378-4647
Out & About Clinic.....	ext. 63850, 905-378-4647
Women's Detox Program	905-687-9721
Women's Addiction Recovery Mediation (Ft. Erie).....	905-871-9195
Community Addiction Services Niagara	905-684-1183

For Additional Information on Other Services in Niagara
call 211 or www.informationniagara.com

WEBSITES

www.awhl.org (Assaulted Women's Hotline)

www.springtideresources.org (Woman Abuse Prevention)

www.pathstonesmentalhealth.ca (Pathstones Mental Health)

www.kidshelp.sympatico.ca

www.cevaw.com (Coalition to End Violence against Women)

***Production and Distribution
of this booklet
for Niagara was provided by:***

Gillian's Place

Women's Place South Niagara

Design for a New Tomorrow

Bethlehem Projects of Niagara

West Niagara Second Stage Housing

