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## Breakup planning guide

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### What is a safety plan?

A safety plan is a personalized strategy to remove yourself from potentially dangerous situations. Since the most dangerous time in an unhealthy relationship is during and after a breakup, you need to tell multiple people in your community before you break up with an unhealthy or abusive partner. They can become your eyes and ears to help limit your partner's access to you. You should include advocates, community organizations, friends, and family as people you can talk to. Each plan is designed to fit your relationship and make sure that you are leaving the relationship in a safe and healthy way.

### Why is it important?

It is crucial that you create a breakup plan whether you are planning to leave or stay in an unhealthy or abusive relationship. The most dangerous time in an abusive relationship is during a breakup and after you have left your partner. During this period, your partner might escalate their aggression to keep you from leaving. It is very important that you take precautionary measures to keep yourself as safe as possible.

Breakup plans can be altered and changed as time goes on. Even if you are not leaving an abusive relationship, creating a plan for your safety is important. If you are concerned about how your partner might react to a breakup, you can start your plan by answering a few basic questions and add more safety measures if you feel increasingly threatened.

### It's okay to ask for help

If you are in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, you should know that the abuse is not your fault and that you deserve to feel safe. Asking for help to leave a relationship that no longer makes you happy or threatens your safety is a sign of strength, and there is no weakness in leaning on the people and resources around you. You do not have to be in immediate crisis to use these resources. Preparation is key in keeping yourself as safe as possible.

For more help creating a safety plan, please visit: [joinonelove.org/my\\_plan\\_app](http://joinonelove.org/my_plan_app), or refer to the National Resources on page 24 for hotlines that can assist you in building your safety plan.

### Tips for breaking up with a partner

- » Identify your support system early and lean on them when necessary.
- » Let your friends, parents, or a trusted adult\* know that you are ending your relationship, especially if you think your ex will try to confront you when you're alone.
- » It is normal to miss your partner after a breakup, even if they have been abusive. Write down your reasons for ending the relationship, and keep them as a reminder for later on. Give a copy to a trusted friend who you have identified to be part of your support system.
- » If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. Sometimes the safest way to break up is by phone or social media, even if it feels impersonal or mean.
- » If you break up in person, always do it in a public place. Have friends or your parents wait nearby, and take a cell phone with you if you have one.

\*For LGBTQ+ students, you might be concerned about being outed. It's okay and important to find a trusted adult is crucial if your parents are not supportive.

### PRE-BREAKUP FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

How to leave an unhealthy or abusive partner for students in high school.

Questions to consider:

- » Do I need to have my locker or class schedule changed? Who do I go to for this?
- » What teachers, counselors, administrators or coaches do I need to tell about the breakup to make my safety at school a priority?
- » Am I walking to my car/driving home/walking from the bus by myself at any point throughout the day? Who can I ask to

accompany me during these times?

- » Do I spend any time at home alone before my parents/guardians/siblings get home?
- » Do I have a place I can go if I feel that my house isn't safe - a neighbor, grandparent, or friend?
- » Do I live in a state that allows teens to acquire restraining orders? (Check with your local DV agency for the latest updates on the law)
- » What public area can I go to instead during this time?
- » What is the safest way to get to/from school?
- » Who do I go to if my partner has threatened to physically harm themselves or me?
- » Do I have a list of phone numbers written and stored somewhere safe? Do I have some numbers memorized?
- » Will they contact my family or friends to find out where I am?
- » Do they have access to my virtual location - SnapMaps, FindMyFriends, FindMyiPhone. Do they know any of my online passwords?
- » Where can I save documentation of abusive, threatening, or harassing comments/posts/texts, and photos of physical abuse?\*
- » What steps can I take to minimize being blackmailed with sexted photos?
- » Who are the counselors at my school, and where are their offices located?
- » Who can I call if I feel overwhelmed or need additional support?

\*Be sure to save any screenshots of threatening communication from your partner, police reports, ER visits related to injuries caused by your partner, etc. to support any claims you may need to make later.

## PRE-BREAKUP FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

How to create a safety plan while studying at a university.

Questions to consider:

- » Do I have the numbers for campus security and local police stored somewhere safe?
- » What is the safest way to get in/out of my dorm or apartment?
- » Do I have a safe place I can stay if I feel my home is not safe?
- » Do I have a place I can leave extra keys/clothes/money?
- » Who do I need to alert to my situation so they can be on the lookout for suspicious activity or sounds - roommates, neighbors, RA's, campus security?
- » What is the safest way to get from my dorm or apartment to classes/job?
- » Do I need someone to walk me to class?
- » Where on campus can I go if I feel I need to switch my class schedule or switch dorm rooms?
- » Who can help me obtain a restraining order?
- » What is the Title IX policy at my university related to issues of student safety? How does my university handle cases of domestic violence?
- » Where can I save documentation of abusive, threatening or harassing comments/posts/texts, and photos of physical abuse?
- » Where can I go to get my locks changed?
- » Will they contact my friends or family to find out where I am?
- » Do they have access to my virtual location - SnapMaps, FindMyFriends, FindMyiPhone? Do they know any of my online passwords?
- » Is there a free self-defense class offered on campus you can take to empower yourself?
- » Do I have a whistle, pepper spray, or an alarm to alert police that I can carry with me?

## PRE-BREAKUP FOR ADULTS

How to leave an unhealthy or abusive partner for young adults not enrolled in school or university.

Questions to consider:

- » Who do I call to get the locks on doors and windows changed?
- » Who do I call if I need a safe place to stay?
- » Who can I ride to/from work with?
- » What are the local community and legal resources available to me?
- » Is a restraining order a viable option? (include workplace in language)
- » Do I have a trusted friend or neighbor you can leave clothes/money/keys with?
- » Where can I save documentation of abusive, threatening, or harassing comments/posts/texts, and photos of physical abuse?
- » Do they have access to my virtual location - SnapMaps, FindMyFriends, FindMyiPhone? Do they know any of my online passwords?
- » Where is security located at my job and what help can they offer me? Provide a picture to them.
- » If living alone, who can you ask to stay with you or who can you stay with?
- » Do they know your personal routine? (where I park my car, where I grocery shop, etc.)
- » Do they know your route to/from work?

- » Do they know the building code to where you stay, or where to find the spare key?

## PRE-BREAKUP PLANNING WITH A FAMILY

How to leave an unhealthy or abusive partner when you live together or children are involved.

Questions to consider:

- » Where are the safe areas of my house where there are no weapons and have easy ways to escape? If arguments occur, how will I get to that space? Practice how to leave safely from this spot ahead of time.
- » Is it possible to have a burner phone hidden and programmed with important numbers?
- » Do children have access to a 911/burner phone and know how to use it?
- » Where can I safely save documentation of abusive, threatening, or harassing comments/posts/texts, and photos of physical abuse?
- » Where is a safe place in the house the children can go?
- » Do I have a code word with my children so they know when to call or implement the safety plan?
- » Where is a safe place I can take the children if we need to leave the house in a rush?
- » Where can I begin setting aside money, or what trusted friend or family member will keep it hidden for me?
- » What trusted friend or family member will keep extra clothes, keys, and important documents (or copies of these documents)?  
Examples: driver's license, credit cards and checkbooks, passports or green cards, medical records, birth certificates, social security, welfare information, valued pictures/jewelry?
- » Who at my children's school can I alert to the situation?
- » Do I need to remove or add a person (parent or non-parent) from the emergency pick up list?
- » What ways can I change my routes to/from work or children's school?
- » What frequented places do I need to change - grocery stores, dry cleaners, etc.?
- » Do they know the building code to where you stay, or where to find the spare key?

## POST BREAKUP PLANNING

Most of the questions posed above apply during the post break up phase as well. You should keep those measures in place as long as necessary to remain safe. Below are a few additional questions that you should consider as you get further away from the initial breakup.

Questions to consider:

- » Is there a support group of other survivors I can join?
- » What do I have to do to make sure the restraining order remains enforced?
- » Have I checked my devices for electronic spying?  
Note: Check out this resource for help [www.techsafety.org/technology-safety-quick-tips](http://www.techsafety.org/technology-safety-quick-tips)
- » If I share children with someone who is abusive, have I retained a lawyer to determine what next steps to take regarding custody?  
Note: There is often free legal support through domestic violence agencies.

# Lethality indicators

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In some situations, contacting law enforcement, a domestic violence advocacy agency, or school administrators can be the difference between life and death. If any of the following is happening to you (or a friend), you are highly encouraged to talk to someone who can help.

## IF ANYONE

- Threatens to kill you
- Threatens to kill himself or herself
- Has a gun or another weapon
- Has ever used a weapon to threaten, scare, or hurt you
- Brags that they killed or would kill someone else
- Puts his or her hands around your throat to scare or hurt you (strangling you)
- Forces you to have sex or is otherwise sexually abusive
- Will not let you get medical attention for an injury
- Threatens to hurt someone you care about
- Destroys your property
- Harms a pet
- Follows you, shows up unexpectedly, demands to know your whereabouts (stalking)
- Steals or withholds money from you
- Interferes with your communication with family or friends
- Becomes more and more physically abusive (escalating violence)
- Controls most or all of your daily activities (what you do, who you see, what you wear)
- Is extremely jealous and possessive ("If I can't have you, nobody will")
- Is capable of killing you (you have an instinct that they could do this)
- Drinks excessively or uses drugs and becomes abusive
- Has ever or would elude law enforcement

## WHEN IN DANGER

If you have knowledge that leads you to believe that a person may be physically harmed, you should:

- Warn the victim and law enforcement if you believe that they are in danger.
- If it is safe to do so, take your concerns to the victim directly before contacting law enforcement so that they can come up with the safest plan for reporting.
- If you help an abusive person commit a crime, you can be considered an accomplice. For example, if you drive an abusive person to his or her partner's home, and you suspect that your friend may become abusive while there, it is possible you could be charged with aiding the perpetrator. Do not support your friends who may be abusive; call the National Domestic Violence hotline and authorities.

If the thought of telling an authority makes you worried that the abusive partner could become even more dangerous if they find out, speak with a trained domestic violence advocate first. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233.