

APRIL 2020

# AT HOME DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SAFETY PLAN

STRATEGIES FOR STAYING  
SAFE PHYSICALLY,  
EMOTIONALLY, WHILE ONLINE,  
AND WITH CHILDREN.

Student Counselling & Development  
Division of Students  
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## 01

# PHYSICAL SAFETY

During social distancing and isolation, it can be hard to maintain your physical safety when living in an abusive relationship and unable to leave your home. Here are a few things to think about when trying to keep physically safe.



## Review your safety plan

Review your safety plan to know what to do, who to call, and/or where to go if abuse continues to escalate. This may include how to stay safe if your partner gets more abusive when under the influence of alcohol or substances.

## Reflect on past episodes

Reflect on past episodes of your partner's violence, and notice what triggered them in the past. This can help you to try to predict the next likely incident and give you a chance to prepare.

Plan your strategy to avoid triggers or respond to your partner with a "soft approach". You know your partner best and what would work to de-escalate the situation or interaction. Here are just some examples:

- Use calm body language and keep more physical distance than you normally would.
- Speak in a calm, even voice and use respectful language (e.g., "please", "thank you", "I'm sorry"). Repeat what they are saying to reassure them that you are listening.

- Avoid language that is accusatory or may make your partner feel defensive (e.g. "you don't listen", "you don't care", "you are wrong") and use "I" statements (e.g., "I feel like you aren't hearing me right now").
- Recognize your partner is triggered and escalating and decide to not argue your point knowing that it may lead to further abuse. Try not to defend yourself from insults or accusations as they are meant to hurt you and bring you into the argument.
- Use distraction or try to immediately remove yourself from the situation but still validate your partner's feelings (e.g., "I hear you right now but I really have to go to the bathroom. Can we come back to this?")

## Reach out to people you trust

Wait for your partner to leave the home (e.g., when they go out grocery shopping), or when you know it is safe, to reach out to someone you trust about the abuse and make arrangements with friends/family to go and stay with them. Create a Code Word to use with friends/family and/or children that tells them that you need them to call for help.

## Be aware of weapons

Be aware of any weapons in the home or your partner's access to weapons. If possible, try to dismantle weapons or hide ammunition; however, only attempt this when your partner is out of the house or when you know it is safe. This can be especially important when your partner has been using alcohol or substances.

## Pack an emergency bag

Pack an emergency bag in case you have to leave the home. An emergency bag should include: important documents (passport, birth certificate, health card/children's health card), medication, debit/credit card, cash, car keys, driver's license and registration, change of clothes (for yourself and children), and list of emergency addresses and phone numbers.

## Know emergency numbers

Create a list of numbers to police, Victim Services, nearest shelter, helpline/crisis line, family members, counsellors and hide in a place where only you can find it. If possible, contact alternative housing options (e.g., shelters) to confirm availability particularly during this time.

## Additional resources for physical safety

### Resources & Referrals Directory

By: Student Counselling & Development

<https://counselling.students.yorku.ca/scd-resources>

### Online Directories

By: Student Counselling & Development

<https://counselling.students.yorku.ca/scd-resources>

### Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence Resources

By: City of Toronto

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/8c17-R1-Domestic-Intimate-Partner-Violence-Resources-FINAL.pdf>

## 02

# EMOTIONAL SAFETY

It is so important to try and maintain your emotional safety when living in an abusive relationship. Often times the abuse you experience can make you feel shame, guilt, and disconnected from your inner sense of self. Here are some tips on how to get reconnected and to be kind and compassionate to yourself during these difficult times.

## Work towards small goals

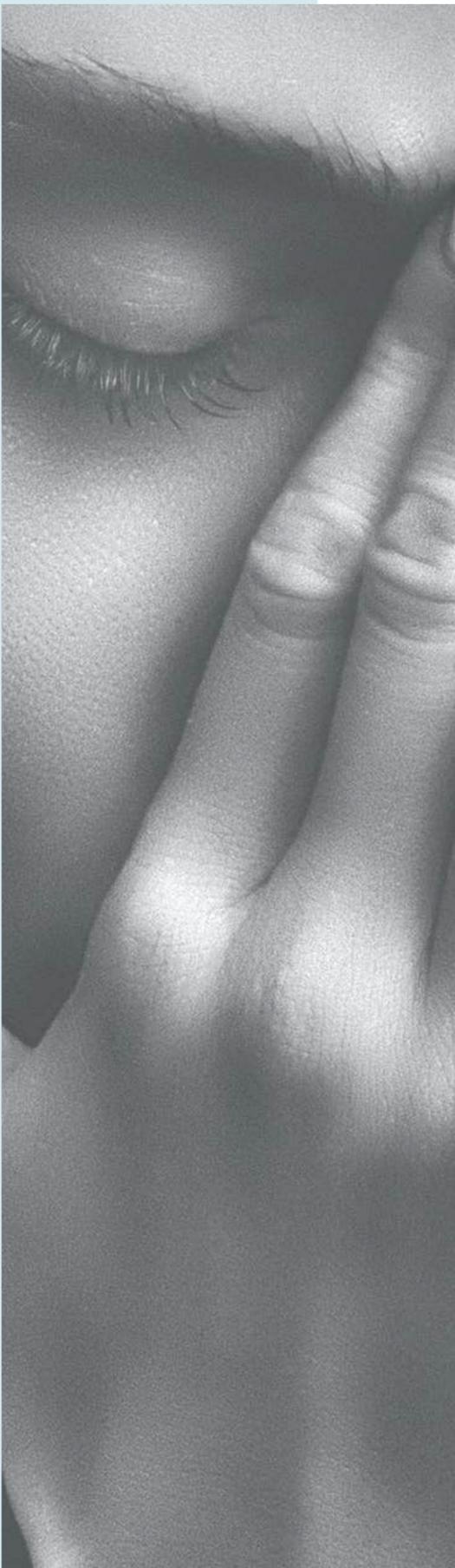
Being isolated and dealing with abusive situations can be stressful and overwhelming. Identifying and working towards small achievable goals can make you feel more empowered. One small goal might be to find what resources are available to you in the community so when things are more settled, you know where to go and who can help.

## Create a calming place

Create a calming place for yourself such as a room, outside in the yard, or a comfy chair in the home. In this place you can relax your mind, calm yourself, and feel more centered. You can also use this place for meditation and mindfulness.

## Practice self-compassion

Remind yourself that you are going through a very difficult time and that you are able, capable, and have value. Abuse is never your fault. You can never make someone be abusive. Remind yourself that your feelings matter and that you matter!



# Engage in self-care

It is important to practice self-care every day. For your emotional health, it is important to take breaks and create moments of peace and comfort.

There are many different types of self-care that you can practice. Below are just a few you can try. Specific examples of self-care under each category can be found in this [article](#).

## Sensory

Focus on the present moment, and the sensations around you—sights, smells, sounds, tastes, touch.

## Pleasure

Take a break from what you're doing and engage in a pleasurable activity.

## Mental/Mastery

Give yourself a boost by doing a task that you've been avoiding or challenging your brain in a novel way.

## Spiritual

Getting in touch with your values—what really matters—is a sure way to cope with stress and foster a calm mind.

## Emotional

Take the time to address your emotions in a healthy and positive way.

## Physical

Coping with stress by engaging the body is great because you can bypass a lot of unhelpful mental chatter.

## Social

Connecting with others is an important part of self-care. It can also mean remembering that others go through similar experiences and difficulties as we do.

**03****DIGITAL SAFETY**

We often rely on technology to stay connected, informed, and engaged—now more than ever. However, technology can also put our personal safety in jeopardy. Abusive partners can monitor what you do online or through your phone which can further isolate you or trigger an escalation of violence by your partner. Here are some tips on how to keep yourself safe when using technology.

**"Hide this site"**

While you are browsing online, some websites have an option to 'Hide this site' which will take you away from the site immediately and bring up a general website such as Google homepage.

**Switch to another tab**

Keep another website open in a different tab or window. If someone comes in the room and you don't want them to see what you are looking at, you can quickly switch to another window or tab.

**Clear your history**

Clear your internet search history and cache files. Learn more on the following pages.

**Browse in private**

When you browse privately or "incognito", the browser won't store cookies and site data, information entered in forms, or record your browsing history on your device. Learn more on the following pages.



# Firefox

## Clear Search History & Cache Files

Clear your entire browsing history:

1. Go to the History panel on your home screen.
2. Tap on Clear browsing history at the bottom of the History panel.
3. Tap OK to confirm.

Clear specific items from your browser:

1. Tap the menu button (either below the screen on some devices or at the top-right corner of the browser) and select Settings (you may need to tap More first).
2. Tap Clear private data.
3. Put a check mark next to the items you want to clear and then tap Clear data.

## Browse in Private/ "Incognito"

Use the keyboard shortcut:

Windows: Ctrl-Shift-P

MacOS: Command-Shift-P

Alternately, click the menu button - three short horizontal lines- at the upper-right corner, and select "New Private Window".

A link can be opened into a Firefox Private Window by right-clicking the link, then choosing Open Link in New Private Window from the menu.

To close a Private Window, shut it down just as any Firefox window by clicking the X in the upper right corner (Windows) or the red dot in the upper left (macOS).

# Google Chrome

## Clear Search History & Cache Files

1. Tap on the three small dots at the top right corner of your browser.
2. From the list that appears select History. At this point you can click and delete individual websites that appear in your search history. You also have the option to select Clear Browsing Data on the left hand side to remove your browsing history over a specific frame of time.
3. After selecting Clear Browsing Data, you will be given a Basic and Advanced option. You can click on the Basic tab, choose the "Last Hour" time range and place a check mark next to all three boxes (Browsing History, Cookies and other site data, and Cached images and files). We recommend avoiding clearing all history as this may appear suspicious. Ideally you want to delete your browsing data from the past hour or day to cover your recent tracks.
4. Click on Clear Data and close the window.

## Browse in Private/ "Incognito"

Use the keyboard shortcut:

Windows: Ctrl-Shift-P

MacOS: Command-Shift-P

Alternately, click the menu button - three short horizontal lines- at the upper-right corner, and select "New Private Window".

A link on an existing page can be opened directly into Incognito by right-clicking the link, then choosing Open Link in Incognito Window from the resulting menu.

To close an Incognito window, shut it like any other Chrome window by clicking the X in the upper right corner (Windows) or the red dot in the upper left (macOS).

# Internet Explorer

## Clear Search History & Cache Files

1. Tap on the Tools icon in the menu section, at the top right hand corner of the browser.
2. Click on Internet Options.
3. In the General tab under Internet Options, click on Delete... in the Browsing History section. You will be directed to a new tab.
4. Under the Delete Browsing History tab, click on History. This will clear the pages you've recently visited. You will also have the option of clearing Temporary Internet files and website files and Cookies and website data. We recommend selecting all three boxes.
5. Select the Delete button at the very end for changes to take effect. Press the OK button as a last step to close the Internet Options box.

## Browse in Private/ "Incognito"

Select the Gear icon in the upper-right corner of the browser window. Hover over Safety, then select InPrivate Browsing. A new InPrivate Browsing window opens.

Use the keyboard shortcut:  
Ctrl+Shift+P.

If you download any sensitive documents, go to your Downloads folder on your computer and delete the documents. Empty your recycling bin immediately after.

# Microsoft Edge

## Clear Search History & Cache Files

1. Click the settings button (three dots) located at the top right of the screen.
2. Tap or click on Settings to get the settings menu.
3. Tap or click on "Choose what to clear" under Clear browsing data.
4. Select the option to clear your browsing history (and cookies or cache files if you so choose).
5. You can enable the option to "always clear this when I close the browser."

Web browsers also give the option of browsing in private or 'incognito'.

When you are browsing 'incognito', the browser won't store cookies and site data, information entered in forms, or record your browsing history on your computer, cell phone or tablet.

## Browse in Private/ "Incognito"

Use the keyboard shortcut:  
Ctrl-Shift-P

Alternatively, click the menu at the upper right — it's three dots arranged horizontally — and choose New InPrivate window from the menu.

It's also possible to launch an InPrivate session by right-clicking a link within Edge and selecting Open in new InPrivate window. Doing that when an InPrivate window is already open does not add that as a tab to the private browsing session, but opens an entirely new InPrivate frame.

To end InPrivate browsing, simply shut the window by clicking the X in the upper right corner.

# Safari

## Clear Search History & Cache Files

1. From the Safari menu at the top of the computer, click Clear History.
2. You will be prompted to choose between The Last Hour, Today, Today & Yesterday, or All History. Again, we recommend avoiding clearing all history as this may appear suspicious. Ideally you want to delete your browsing data from the past hour or day to cover your recent tracks.
3. Click Clear History after selecting the type of history you'd like to delete. At this point, you are done.

## Browse in Private/ "Incognito"

To open what Safari calls a Private Window on a Mac, users can do a three-key combination of Command-Shift-N, the same shortcut Chrome adopted.

Otherwise, a window can be called up by selecting the File menu and clicking on New Private Window.

To switch on cross-site tracking, choose Preferences from the Safari menu, click the Privacy icon in the row of icons at the top of the window, check the box marked Prevent cross-site tracking and then close the Preferences window.

A link cannot be opened from a page directly into a Private Window in Safari. Instead, users must first open the site with that link in a Private Window, then right-click the link and select Open Link in New Private Tab or Open Link in New Private Window. This is a more cumbersome process than in browsers like Chrome and Firefox.

Close a Private Window just as any Safari window, by clicking the red dot in the upper left corner of the browser frame.

## Email & Social Media

You can create new email/social media accounts with a different password that your partner will not be aware of. Be sure to fully log out and delete history if using alternate accounts without your partner's knowledge.

Create new accounts with usernames and passwords that don't contain any identifying information such as your name, birth date, etc.

Click 'no' when sites or apps offer to check your contact list to help connect you with your friends already on their site.

If possible, don't allow your profile or account to be searchable on the site itself or from showing up in general search results like Google.

## Cell Phone

Please remember that if your phone can be accessed, text messages can be seen. Consider deleting all sensitive content from your phone as soon as possible.

Consider deleting your call history regularly or immediately after you make a call and/or receive a call.

Keep supports/resources under a different name in your contacts and discuss a 'cover story' with your supports in the event your partner calls these numbers.

If possible, try to obtain another prepaid phone without your partner's knowledge. You can use this phone in emergencies or access it when you need to without your partner being aware. You can purchase prepaid phones at Bestbuy:

<https://www.bestbuy.ca/en-ca/category/prepaid-phones/743456>.

## 04

# CHILDRENS' SAFETY

Exposure to violence can greatly impact children. Children may try to stop the abuse and intervene during a violent incident. The most important thing that children can do when exposed to violence is keep themselves safe. Here are some safety tips for children living in the home. Many of these safety tips are similar to those mentioned previously in the guide.



## Include them in your plans

Include children in your self-care and safety plan. You can also help your child to create their own self-care and safety plans.

## Find a safe space

It is important to let your children know that the best way they can help during an abusive incident is to keep themselves safe. Have your child pick a safe room/place in the house to stay in when abuse is occurring.

## Know emergency contacts

Let your children know who to call for help in an emergency and where to find an alternate phone (if applicable). Teach your children how to call for help including dialing 911, knowing their name and address, and what to tell the support person.

## Use a code word

Tell your children the code word to use with certain support people when they need help.

## Meeting outside the home

Plan a place to meet outside of the home if the children are able to leave and teach your children the safest route to get to the planned place.

## Let them know it's not their fault

Make sure children know that the abuse is not their fault and violence is never OK, even when someone they love is being abusive.

## Additional resources for childrens' safety

Helping Your Child Heal From Trauma

By: Child Welfare Information Gateway

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/trauma\\_ts\\_2020.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/trauma_ts_2020.pdf)

Parenting After Domestic Violence

By: Child Welfare Information Gateway

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/domestic\\_ts\\_2020.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/domestic_ts_2020.pdf)

Building Resilience in Children and Teens

By: Child Welfare Information Gateway

[https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/resilience\\_ts\\_2020.pdf](https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/resilience_ts_2020.pdf)

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