



IMMEDIATE HELP

When my counsellor recommended I make an escape plan and call Women's Services, I could not believe it. I did not WANT to believe I was in a toxic, abusive relationship. I did not WANT to escape, I still had hope for my relationship. But it didn't take long before this "just in case" vague idea became necessary.

My plan included leaving when my partner wasn't home. We both worked, so I planned to move while he was at work. I alerted my employer and took a day off.

I packed some bags and stashed them in the basement. I collected VIN numbers, bank account numbers, mortgage papers, and anything I thought would be relevant in case I couldn't access them after we separated. I contacted a lawyer and started looking for apartments. I confided in my parents who agreed to let us stay with them if needed.

When the final "blow-out" happened..... I was ready. And grateful for my counsellor's advice.

After hearing sad stories from women who weren't prepared and found themselves destitute and without essentials, I learned more about escape plans. Accepting that you need to plan is often the hardest step.

The following comes from the Public Health Agency of Canada's website: [How to plan for your safety if you are in an abusive relationship - Canada.ca](https://www150.ca.gc/eng/1133/1133_0001/1133_0001_02/1133_0001_02_01.html)

1. **Do your research:** talk to family, friends or a trusted professional who can help you make plans. Get legal advice about your rights. Find services in your area such as shelters and financial aid.
2. **Decide how you can leave quickly or stay safely:** Tell someone you trust about the abuse. Think about your partner's past use and level of force. This will help you predict danger and decide when to leave. Create a plan to get out of your home safely and practice it with your children. Choose the closest place to call for help (coffee shop or neighbour's house). Decide where you will go and how you will get there. Ask your neighbours, friends and family to call the police if they hear abuse and to look after your children in an emergency.

Other tips: Park your car by backing it into the driveway and keep it fuelled. Hide your keys, cellphone and some money near your escape route. Have a list of phone numbers

to call for help. Your local shelter or police may be able to equip you with a panic button or cellphone. Make sure all weapons and ammunition are hidden or removed from your home.

In an emergency: If an argument is developing, position yourself near an escape route (door or window). Avoid rooms you could be trapped in, or where there are weapons that could be used against you. Avoid wearing scarves or long jewelry. Avoid running towards your child during an emergency. See a doctor if you are injured and have the injuries documented.

3. **Make contact with services:** Find out about local women's shelters, contact them and let them know you are planning to leave an abusive situation. Ask for their support in safety planning. Consider contacting the police.
4. **Gather important items:** government documents (copies or originals), financial items (mortgage, lease, loans, assets, cash, credit/debit cards, cheques) and personal items (phone numbers, keys, phone, medications, toiletries, photos, sentimental items). If you are worried your partner will discover missing documents, copy them and leave them with a friend, your child's care provider or local women's shelter.
5. **Be careful about your computer:** abusers may monitor emails and internet search histories. Consider using a computer elsewhere (library, friend's house, work). Log out after using a computer and clear the browser's history. Never share your passwords.
6. **Be careful about social media:** don't use your own name or post personal information. Update your privacy settings. Consider closing your accounts.
7. **To find a shelter near you, click here:**
www.sheltersafe.ca