



Trauma-informed support for survivors rebuilding after abuse

Understanding Safety Planning

A safety plan is a personalised plan designed to help someone increase emotional, physical and practical safety during or after an abusive, controlling or emotionally unsafe situation.

Safety planning is not only for emergency situations.

For many people, it is about creating more stability, preparation, support and understanding while navigating difficult circumstances.

Every person's situation is different.

Some people may be preparing to leave a relationship, some may still be living with the person causing harm, and others may be rebuilding safety after separation.

A safety plan should always be shaped around what feels realistic, manageable and safe for the individual.

1. Emotional Safety Matters Too

Safety is not only physical.

Living in fear, unpredictability or emotional pressure can affect confidence, nervous system regulation and emotional wellbeing.

A safety plan may include:

- Identifying emotionally safe people
- Reducing isolation
- Creating calmer routines where possible
- Recognising triggering situations

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Registered Address: c/o RISC, 35-39 London Street, Reading, RG1 4PS

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- Planning support after difficult interactions
- Building emotional boundaries over time

Example:

Someone may arrange to call a trusted friend after contact with an abusive ex-partner to reduce feelings of panic or emotional overwhelm.

2. Trusted Support Networks

Having safe and supportive people around you can make a significant difference.

This may include:

- Trusted friends or family members
- Support workers or advocacy services
- Schools or workplaces where appropriate
- Domestic abuse organisations
- Counselling or wellbeing support

It may help to identify:

- Who you feel safest contacting
- Who can help in an emergency
- Who can provide emotional support without judgement

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Example:

A person may choose one or two trusted contacts rather than sharing everything with multiple people.

3. Important Documents & Practical Information

If safe to do so, it can help to keep important information accessible.

This may include:

- Identification documents
- Passports or birth certificates
- Important phone numbers
- Financial information
- Medication or medical details
- Housing or legal paperwork
- School or childcare information

Some people choose to keep copies digitally or with someone they trust.

4. Digital Safety

Technology can sometimes be used as a form of monitoring or control.

Digital safety may include:

- Changing passwords regularly

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- Using secure devices where possible
- Reviewing privacy settings
- Being cautious with location sharing
- Logging out of shared accounts
- Using safe email addresses for support services

Example:

Someone may choose to access support information through a private browser or trusted device.

5. Planning Around Conflict or Escalation

If a situation feels emotionally or physically unsafe, it may help to think about:

- Safe places you could go if needed
- People you could contact quickly
- How to leave an unsafe situation safely
- Ways to reduce risk during conflict
- What helps you feel calmer or more regulated afterwards

Safety planning should never increase risk.

It is important that plans feel realistic and manageable for the person involved.

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6. Children, Dependants & Pets

Many survivors worry about the wellbeing of children, dependants or pets when navigating unsafe situations.

Safety planning may involve:

- Identifying safe adults for support
- Creating calming routines for children
- Keeping emergency contacts accessible
- Thinking about transport or temporary care where appropriate
- Accessing specialist support services

Example:

A parent may create a simple safety plan that helps children know who to contact if they feel frightened or unsafe.

7. Safety After Separation

For some survivors, abuse or intimidation may continue after leaving a relationship.

Post-separation safety planning may include:

- Managing communication boundaries
- Keeping records of concerning behaviour
- Informing trusted people about safety concerns
- Reviewing social media privacy

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- Accessing legal or advocacy support where needed

Many survivors continue feeling emotionally unsafe for some time after separation.

This is a normal trauma response.

8. There Is No “Perfect” Way to Leave

People often feel pressure to leave quickly or in a certain way.

In reality, safety planning is complex and deeply personal.

Many survivors are balancing:

- Emotional attachment
- Fear and uncertainty
- Financial pressures
- Parenting responsibilities
- Housing concerns
- Trauma responses and nervous system overwhelm

Support should reduce shame, not increase it.

If This Feels Familiar

You deserve support that prioritises both emotional and practical safety.

Small steps toward stability, support and preparation can make a significant difference over time.

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You do not have to navigate difficult situations alone.

Support & Further Resources

If you are in immediate danger, contact emergency services or a domestic abuse support organisation in your area.

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Turning silence into understanding through lived experience.

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