

## Tips for Leaving an Abusive Relationship

Relationships can be abusive in many different ways: emotionally, physically, sexually, and even financially. Unfortunately, many people looking in at these relationships from the outside fail to understand how difficult it can be to leave them.

The process of leaving an abusive relationship is difficult and dangerous. Safety is the primary concern. Even if you do not think your partner poses a risk, leaving often triggers an increase in violence. It is best to prepare as much as you can ahead of time.

A few tips that can help you leave a dangerous situation include:

- If possible, take time to make a plan ahead of time to remove yourself and your children from the home safely.

Things to Arrange:

- ✓ A plan that safely removes yourself and your children from the home
  - ✓ Transportation for yourself, children and belongings
  - ✓ A safe place to stay
  - ✓ How to manage being gone from home for an extended time
  - ✓ Referral to a lawyer or legal advocate to obtain a personal protection order, temporary child guardianship order, etc.
- Find a safe location – a friend's house, family, or a local shelter – where you can keep items you gather to take with you when you leave.

Things to Stash Away:

- ✓ Money
  - ✓ Contact information for a local domestic violence shelter
  - ✓ Prescribed medications
  - ✓ Legal documents for you and your children (e.g. birth certificates, passports)
  - ✓ Photographs or written evidence of the abuse
  - ✓ Financial records and account numbers
  - ✓ Personal belongings possessing sentimental value
  - ✓ Clothing and personal needs
- Be sure to take all of your important documents when you leave. This includes your Social Insurance Number (SIN) card, driver's license, and passport. If you are taking children with you, be sure to bring their birth certificates and SIN cards if you can.
  - If possible, move out when your abuser is not present. This will help you stay safe as you leave. If you cannot leave at such a time, you may want to call the police and ask for an escort to be present as you move out.
  - Make sure your finances are protected. If you share bank accounts with your abuser, he or she may try to close them or block your access to them. An attorney or accountant can help you financially plan for your escape.

While leaving an abuser is a very difficult process, it can vastly improve your life in the long-term. Friends, family, counselors, and legal resources can all be valuable assets during this struggle.