

I'm Ready to Leave ... Now What?

**Resources to Help You Leave
an Abusive Partner**

When you decide to escape domestic violence, it may feel impossible to know where to start. You're ready to leave — now what?

There are a variety of things to consider when you make the decision to leave an abuser. From safety planning to an order of protection, to many things in between, the task can feel overwhelming. That's why we created this toolkit: to make the process feel within reach, more manageable, and for added peace of mind and security.

Inside you'll find:

- Helpful Articles
- Recommended Books
- Checklists
- Danger Assessments
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help

Remember, domestic violence advocates are available via national and local hotlines to help you plan your escape and your future.



There are hundreds of articles on [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) covering the many facets of domestic violence. Here are links to those that best answer the question: “I’m Ready to Leave ... Now What?”

[Packing Your Bags](#)

Here’s how to start preparing to leave an abusive partner.

[When It’s Time to Go: Part 1](#)

A checklist of essentials to take with you when you leave abuse.

[When It’s Time to Go: Part 2](#)

How to get out safely and hide well after you leave.

[Leaving Without Dying](#)

Abusers can be most dangerous when a survivor leaves.

[When 911 Can’t Find You](#)

How to make sure 911 can locate you when you call.

[Seeking Help Could Save You](#)

The risk of being killed by your abuser plummets when you find help before leaving.

[Escape Plan](#)

Tips on where to go once you leave an abusive partner.

[Thinking About Going to Shelter?](#)

What you can expect if you're considering going to a shelter.

[Finding a Safe Place](#)

5 questions to ask if your local domestic violence shelter is full.

[Partner Violence After Leaving](#)

Predict and prepare for potential violence when you leave.

[Safety Planning With Your Kids](#)

How to include your children in your plan to leave your abuser.

[Fleeing an Abuser with Your Kids](#)

5 precautions to protect yourself and your children.

[Escaping with Older Kids](#)

Solutions for the challenges of escaping abuse with older kids.

[Customizing Your Safety Plan](#)

3 steps to follow when it comes to creating your own safety plan.

[Planning for Pet Safety](#)

4 steps you can take to ensure the safety of your pets.

[An Emotional Safety Plan](#)

4 ways to begin the healing journey after abuse.

[Will My Abuser Retaliate?](#)

How to determine if violence will escalate after obtaining a PPO.

[FAQs About Protection Orders](#)

Breaking down the basics of a PPO.

[Steps to Safety After a PPO](#)

Staying safe after receiving a personal protection order.

[Violating a Court Order](#)

What to expect if a batterer breaks a restraining order.

[When an Abuser Violates a PPO](#)

Ensuring your safety if your abuser violates your PPO.

[U-Visas Help Immigrant Victims](#)

Special protections help bring survivors out of the shadows.

[Safety for the Undocumented](#)

Undocumented immigrants have protections under VAWA.

[Breaking Your Lease](#)

Options for survivors to terminate their lease and move on.

[Restraining vs. Protection Order](#)

The difference between these two types of orders.

[Finding Support After You Leave](#)

Healing from the psychological and emotional wounds.

[Is Your Support System Unclear?](#)

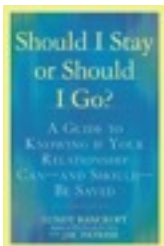
We list the multiple places you can find support as a survivor.



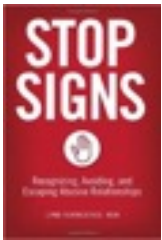
Reading books that take the time to go in-depth can be a very positive way to assess your situation. The below books offer insight on leaving an abusive partner:



[Scared to Leave, Afraid to Stay: Paths From Family Violence to Safety](#). This book presents stories of 10 women as they fought the courts and their abusers to gain safety for themselves and their children. The author demonstrates how courts handle divorce, custody, visitation, support, child abuse, marital property, orders of protection and crimes when domestic violence erupts, and discusses the tactics abusers use to maintain control over their partners.



[Should I Stay or Should I Go?](#) Women involved in frustrating relationships will learn to tell the difference between a healthy, yet difficult, relationship, and one that is not working. They will be able to recognize the signs that their partner has a serious problem, stop waiting to see what happens and make their own growth the top priority to prepare for life without their partner, even if they keep trying to make the relationship work.



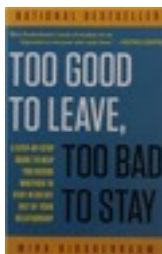
[*Stop Signs: Recognizing, Avoiding, and Escaping Abusive Relationships*](#). This book familiarizes readers with intimate partner violence and explains how to develop self-esteem, preparation and assertive awareness that can protect you from involvement with abusive individuals. It explores the minds of abusers, explains visible signs of danger in their attitudes and action, and provides effective strategies for safe extraction when involved with an abuser.



[*It's My Life Now: Starting Over After an Abusive Relationship or Domestic Violence*](#). After finding a way out, a victim's difficulties are solved: life is good, they are safe, and recovery is swift. Not so fast. Survivors know that leaving does not end the nightmare. It is the beginning of an often difficult journey to healing and happiness. This book offers practical guidance, exercises, reassurance, and awareness that survivors of relationship abuse need to reclaim their lives.



[*Will I Ever Be Free of You?: How to Navigate a High-Conflict Divorce from a Narcissist and Heal Your Family*](#). The author offers advice that will help you protect and nurture yourself and your children through your difficult divorce. From separating from your narcissistic partner and navigating the court system, where a narcissist can be especially destructive, to a restorative healing program of trauma recovery.



[*Too Good to Leave, Too Bad to Stay: A Step-by-Step Guide to Help You Decide Whether to Stay In or Get Out of Your Relationship*](#). The author draws on years of counseling experience to lead readers through relationship ambivalence. A careful line of 36 questions and self-analysis techniques are included to get to the heart of relationship and marriage problems. Straightforward advice designed for newer and older relationships, the book presents a plethora of information and experience in a clear, concise manner.



Sometimes lists are easier on the mind because they are uncluttered and poignant. If you'd rather read a few items vs. articles or books, these lists are for you:

- [50 Barriers to Leaving](#)
- [32 Items to Pack When Escaping Domestic Violence](#)
- [15 Ways to Plan for Pet Safety](#)
- [25 Services Most Commonly Sought by Survivors](#)
- [19 Stalking Signs](#)

After you click on a list to read, there is a handy SEE ALL button that will allow you view all of the items at once.



There are two well-known, free assessment tools available online that can help you understand the level of danger that may be present, but not always obvious.

[The Danger Assessment](#)

The free tool helps determine the level of danger an abused person has of being killed by an intimate partner. There are two parts to the tool: a calendar to keep a record of the frequency of abuse and a 20-item scoring instrument that uses a weighted system to score yes/no responses to risk factors associated with intimate partner homicide.

[MOSAIC](#)

Using a series of questions, this tool assesses how similar a situation is to other situations of violence that have gotten worse. After creating a confidential account and answering the questions, a detailed report is compiled immediately telling you how your situation compares to others like it, rating it on a scale of 1 to 10 of how likely it is to escalate.



A lot can be gleaned from people who have been through it before. Check out the following survey results to learn from the experiences of others:

- [Did you delay leaving due to concerns of escalated violence?](#)
- [How many times did you attempt to leave before escaping?](#)
- [What barrier did you face when you thought about leaving?](#)
- [How supportive was your religion when you contemplated leaving?](#)
- [Have you, or would you, involve your children in safety planning?](#)
- [When you left with your teen, were you able to find shelter?](#)
- [If you've been turned away from a shelter, what did you do?](#)
- [What happened when you obtained an order of protection?](#)
- [As an immigrant survivor, what challenge did you face in getting help?](#)

“ Online forums and chat areas can help you connect with others who are in or have faced similar situations, and find support and ideas from the survivor community.

[AfterSilence.org](https://www.aftersilence.org) aims to help victims become survivors and to communicate in the recovery of domestic and sexual violence. It offers an active message board and chat room for rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest and molestation survivors. There are over 31,000 members and about a million active posts.

[The Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center](https://www.theamericans.com/overseas-domestic-violence-crisis-center). If you're an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site may be a helpful resource for you. Among the services is a 24-hour response to emails, as well as international phone options.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Page](#) offers one of the most active places for domestic violence survivors. You'll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

[Experience Project](#) works to connect people with similar interests, needs and experience on a massive variety of topics, one of which is domestic violence. You may not run into professionals who can guide you, but sometimes finding people who have had similar experiences or offer words of encouragement is just as helpful.

[Fort Refuge](#) is a clever, grassroots site run by survivors for fellow survivors as a safe place to come together and discuss their struggles and victories in healing from various types of abuse. Though the forum and chat do not boast the same numbers as some of the larger organizations, they are one of the more active conversation places on the internet currently. They also add new content to their site regularly.

[Love is Respect - National Teen Dating Helpline](#) focuses on teen relationships and can be accessed by phone, text or live chat. It offers real-time, one-on-one support by trained peer advocates who provide information and advocacy to those involved with abusive dating partners. They also offer support to parents, teachers, clergy, law enforcement, and service providers.

[National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) offers confidential, private, one-on-one chats with advocates every day from 7 a.m. to 2 a.m. Central Time.

[OnYourMind.net](#) is a safe and anonymous place for teens to get information and support from other teens in an online chat room, covering topics such as relationships, school, depression, stress, suicide, parents, cutting, identity and general health.

[Pandora's Aquarium](#) is an online forum with around 2 million posts and over 70,000 members, and is run by Pandora's Project, which provides information, support and resources to rape and sexual abuse survivors and their friends and family.

[Yes!CAN](#) offers live, scheduled chats and a forum for individuals who wish to discuss issues around surviving child abuse and domestic violence, as well as discuss parenting issues. Yes!CAN chats are run by trained facilitators and cover various subjects including teen survivors, male survivors, female survivors, physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, incest survivors, significant others and parenting.

When accessing hotlines, chats or forums from a computer, tablet, or smartphone, please remember to take the necessary precautions to keep your activities confidential from your abuser. Learn more on [protecting personal affects and technology](#) here.

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person support groups. You can find nearby shelters at [domesticshelters.org](#).



When you find yourself ready to leave an abusive partner, it's a good idea to connect with a local domestic violence advocate for support and advice.

Visit domesticshelters.org and type either your city and state or ZIP code into the search bar at the top of the page. A list of organizations and contact numbers near you will be displayed. To reach an advocate, call the hotline numbers listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 1-800-799-7233 or visit thehotline.org where a chat service is available 7 a.m. to 2 a.m.

It's important to know that your call stays confidential and you can always choose to remain anonymous when speaking with an advocate. To know what to expect when calling, read [this article](#).