

My Emotional Safety Plan

A seven-step plan to support your emotional safety at any stage of leaving an abusive partner.

1

UNDERSTAND EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Emotional safety means feeling accepted as your authentic self. After you leave an abuser, you need to find a person with whom you can find emotional safety. This may be:



- A support group, either in person or online
- A trained domestic violence advocate through a helpline
- A counselor or psychologist with training in domestic violence
- A supportive friend or family member who doesn't judge your feelings, doubts, guilt or fears

MY EMOTIONAL SAFETY PERSON OR PEOPLE COULD BE:

2

UNDERSTAND YOUR MIXED FEELINGS

You may miss your abusive partner after you leave them. You may still feel like you're in love with them. Children may miss their other parent, even though that person was causing them harm. As a survivor, you may feel both relief and guilt, hope and regret. These mixed feelings are normal.

STEPS TO TAKE TO UNDERSTAND MIXED FEELINGS:

- Educate yourself on different types of domestic violence as well as tactics abusers use, some of which may have been used against you.
- Read more about trauma bonding and how it's not rooted in actual love for a person.
- Learn about triggers that can send you back into a state of panic or anxiety. This can help you prepare better to deal with them when they arise.
- Explore articles on **DomesticShelters.org** about how trauma can show up in children and how to help them process that trauma.

3

PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

When you find yourself replaying decisions or wondering what you could have done differently, recognize that you made the best decisions you could with the information, resources and safety available to you at the time.

Instead of: ***"I should have seen the red flags earlier."***

Say: ***"I didn't know how abusers could escalate and I had hope things would get better."***



My Emotional Safety Plan

Remember: You deserve to feel safe.

WHAT'S A PHRASE YOU KEEP HEARING THAT YOU NEED TO REPLACE WITH SOMETHING MORE COMPASSIONATE?

Critical Self-Speak	Self-Compassionate Replacement

4

CREATE A NEW BEDTIME ROUTINE

Scientists say that sleep reenergizes our body's cells, helps regulate our mood, creates more white blood cells to defend against illness and helps us to heal from injuries. It's difficult to get the recommended seven to nine hours when our brains stay on high alert during and after trauma. A new bedtime routine could include pre-sleep tasks such as journaling (aka, brain dumping any stressors that threaten to keep you awake), listening to soft music, taking a warm bath, making a soothing cup of tea and turning on a sound machine (the Calm app is great for this).

MY NEW BEDTIME ROUTINE:

Start time:

Bed time:

Step 1:

Set alarm to wake up at:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:



My Emotional Safety Plan

Remember: It gets better.

5

CHECK IN WITH YOUR HEALTH

The physical and emotional aftereffects of abuse can take a toll on a person's ability to make a plan and put it into action. A traumatic brain injury [TBI] or post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD] can make it more difficult to process information and make plans. In this step, it's time to consider seeking out medical professionals to be screened for a TBI or PTSD or to address any other physical or mental trauma symptoms you weren't able to seek help for while with an abusive partner.



UPCOMING MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS:

Date, Doctor's Name, Location	Reason for Appointment	Questions to Ask

6

REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT

Abuse often shrinks your world. Reconnecting with safe people can help expand it again. Try making a list of people you lost touch with during your relationship with the abuser. Think about old friends, family members, coworkers, faith leaders, teachers or mentors. You may not reach or reconnect with everyone on your list, but you may be surprised at the people who can help—or the number of people who can relate to what you're going through.

PEOPLE I MAY WANT TO RECONNECT WITH, WHEN I'M READY

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

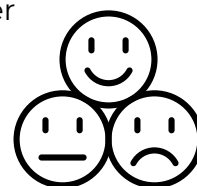
My Emotional Safety Plan

Remember: Self-care is not selfish.

7

FIND WAYS TO PROCESS YOUR FEELINGS

Trauma can feel like carrying around a backpack full of bricks. These heavy, emotional bricks can include sadness, regret, guilt, anger, anxiety and many others. Over time, the goal is to set those bricks down. There's no one "right" way to process what you've been through, so over time, consider trying some different methods and seeing if they make that load you're carrying feel any lighter.



ACTIVITY

THIS MADE ME FEEL...

Journaling	
Meditation	
Trauma-Sensitive Yoga	
Massage	
Movement	
Creating Art	

FOR ADDITIONAL HELP

Visit [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org) and enter your city or ZIP code to connect with a local domestic violence organization. You can also chat with Hope Chat, our AI assistant, for information about abusive behaviors, safety options and support resources.