



I'm Ready to Leave, Now What?

**Resources to Help You
Escape Abuse Safely**

When you decide to flee domestic violence, it may feel impossible to know where to start.

There are a variety of things to consider when you decide to leave an abuser. From safety planning to orders 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
- Lists
- Danger Assessments
- In-Depth Videos
- Survey Results
- Support Communities
- How to Find Help

Remember, there are trained domestic violence advocates available to help you, many reachable 24/7. Learn more [here](#).

If you have children, we encourage you to check out our toolkit "[What About My Kids](#)" for more relevant information about how to safely escape abuse with children.



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 “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 find you when you call for help.

[Seeking Help Could Save You](#)

Much less likely to be killed by seeking help when fleeing.

[Escape Plan](#)

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

[Thinking About Going to Shelter?](#)

Here are some of the things to expect once you get there.

[Finding a Safe Place](#)

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

[Partner Violence After Leaving](#)

Predict & prepare for potential violence from an abuser.

[Fleeing an Abuser with Your Kids](#)

5 precautions you should take to protect yourself and your kids.

[A Safety Planning Worksheet](#)

A DIY plan to prepare for safety when it's time to go.

[Documenting Abuse](#)

Your records may be allowed as evidence in court.

[If an Abuser Does That, Do This](#)

8 response strategies to help you leave safely.

[Lifesaving Apps](#)

Apps that can record, recognize abuse and call for help.

[Planning for Pet Safety](#)

We list four steps you can take to ensure the safety of your pets.

[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](#)

How to ensure your safety after receiving an order of protection.

[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.

[Abuse Almost Always Escalates](#)

It's most likely going to only get worse.

[I Got Arrested, Too. Now What?](#)

What to do if you're arrested just like the person who abused you.

[Is Your Support System Unclear?](#)

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

[Is It Ever Safe to Go Back?](#)

When they promise things will be different. Don't believe them.

[How Do I Ask for Help?](#)

When you know it's time to tell someone where do you begin?

[Get Money Matters In Order](#)

Make sure you know where your money is before you leave.

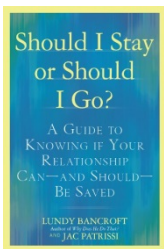


Reading books can be a helpful way to understand if you're a victim of abuse and understand the abuser's behavior.

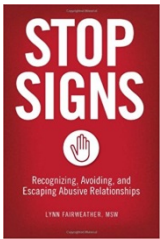
Here are our recommended reads:



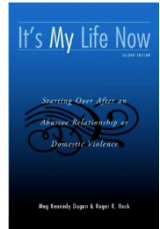
[Scared to Leave, Afraid to Stay: Paths From Family Violence to Safety](#). This book presents stories of ten women as they fought the courts and their abusers to gain safety for themselves and their children. The author demonstrates how courts handle divorce, custody, visitation, support, child abuse,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



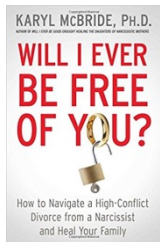
[Should I Stay or Should I Go?](#) Women involved in frustrating relationships will learn to tell the difference between a healthy, yet difficult, relationship, and one that is not working. They will be able to recognize the signs that their partner has a serious problem, stop waiting to see what happens 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 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 to-the-point. 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](#)

To view all list items at once, click the SEE ALL button located below the list text.



There are two well-known, free online assessment tools available 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 1) a calendar and 2) 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 that have gotten worse. After creating a confidential account and answering the questions, a detailed report is compiled immediately and tells you how a situation compares to others like it, rating it on a scale of 1 to 10.

[Click video thumbnail to watch](#)



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A lot of lessons can be taken away 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 chats 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 1,000,000 posts, including recent posts and many useful posts from days and months past.

[Pathways to Safety International](https://www.PathwaysToSafety.org) If you're an American overseas, your situation is different than 99% of your fellow countryman, and this site will be a wonderful 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 where domestic violence survivors. You'll find conversation, past experiences and unvarnished stories, and occasionally advice from professionals who have joined in on a topic.

[DomesticShelters.org Facebook Group](#) is a private group designed to be a safe space for domestic abuse victims, survivors, advocates and others affected by abuse to support one another through meaningful dialogue and helpful insight.

[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 offer information and advocacy to those involved in dating abuse. 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 24/7.

[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 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.

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 about how to stay safe online [here](#).

Also, keep in mind that local shelters may offer in-person or virtual support groups. You can find shelters in your area at [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.DomesticShelters.org).



Another way to determine if you're experiencing abuse is to contact a trained domestic violence advocate near you or through a national service.

To search for domestic violence program staffed with trained advocates, visit [DomesticShelters.org](https://www.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, reach out directly by calling the phone number listed. Most are open 24/7.

To speak to an advocate at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, also 24 hours a day, seven days a week, call 800-799-SAFE (7233) or visit [thehotline.org](https://www.thehotline.org) to chat online.

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