

# Breaking up safely

Adult life and work

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Staying with someone you are no longer happy with does more harm than good, especially when unhealthy behaviours are present. All relationships have their ups and downs, but if there are more downs than ups, then it's time to leave. Here are some tips for knowing it's time to leave:

**1.** You would rather not hang out with your partner. Being independent is a good thing. Having time away from each other to be yourself, see your friends and explore your interests makes for a healthy relationship. But when you would rather do anything than hang out with your partner, that's a sign that something is wrong.

**2.** Your partner is into you one minute and ignoring you the next. This kind of hot/cold or push/pull dynamic is a way of manipulating people and can leave you feeling very insecure and confused. You don't need that in your life.

**3.** Cheating – if you experience sexual, emotional, cyber or text cheating it's a sign of betrayal. While you might be able to work hard to forgive it once, it's definitely grounds to break up if you feel unable to move on, or cheating happens more than once.

**4.** Know the 10 signs of an unhealthy relationship – for example, manipulation, volatility, belittling and isolation. If you can identify one or more of the 10 unhealthy signs in your partner's behaviour, it's time to consider getting out. Left unchecked, all of these behaviours can escalate into physical or emotional abuse.

**5.** If you are fearful of your partner's reactions and have changed your behaviour to suit them, it is time to make a safety plan and break up safely. Feeling fearful, on edge, as if you are walking on eggshells, not wanting to rock the boat, and giving in to your partner's whims and wishes are all signs that you are in an abusive relationship. (There are different types of abuse, physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial and digital. If you want to know more go to [refuge.org.uk](https://www.refuge.org.uk))

If you are in an abusive relationship, you need to make a safety plan before you break up.

Visit [lmkletmeknow.org/get-help](https://www.lmkletmeknow.org/get-help) for a list of organisations that can give you urgent help, support and advice.

[f](https://www.facebook.com/LMKLetMeKnowCharity) @LMKLetMeKnowCharity [i](https://www.instagram.com/letmeknowuk) @letmeknowuk [x](https://www.tiktok.com/@lmkletmeknow) @LMKletmeknow

# Safety plan

## What is a safety plan?

A safety plan is a personalised strategy to remove yourself from potentially dangerous situations. A plan should be unique to the relationship and designed to make sure that you are leaving in a safe and healthy way.

## Why is it important?

If you are in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, it's crucial that you create a breakup plan, whether you are planning to leave or stay. The most dangerous time in an abusive relationship is during a breakup and after you have left your partner. During this period, your partner might escalate their aggression to keep you from leaving. It is especially important that you take precautionary measures to keep yourself as safe as possible.

## Remember...

Breakup plans can be altered and changed as time goes on. If you're concerned about how your partner might react to a breakup, start your plan by answering a few basic questions and add more safety measures, if you feel increasingly threatened.

If you're in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, know that the abuse is not your fault and that you deserve to feel safe. Asking for help to leave a relationship that no longer makes you happy or threatens your safety is a sign of strength, and there's no weakness in leaning on people and resources around you. You don't have to be in immediate crisis to use these resources. Preparation is key to keeping yourself as safe as possible.



Seeking information and advice from professional bodies such as the National Domestic Abuse Helpline ([nationaldahelpline.org.uk](https://www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk)), National LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline ([galop.org.uk](https://www.galop.org.uk)), National Centre for Domestic Violence ([ncdv.org.uk](https://www.ncdv.org.uk)), local domestic violence services, the police or your doctor can help you leave a relationship safely and support you to live a life free from abuse.

## Tips for Breaking Up Safely

### Abusive relationships

- Don't tell your partner in advance that you intend to break up with them.
- Use professional organisations to plan leaving safely – they are trained to assess your situation and help you plan accordingly. (Freephone 24-Hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline: 0808 2000 247)
- Save screenshots of threatening communication from your partner, police reports, A&E visits related to injuries caused by your partner, etc. as evidence of any abuse.
- Identify your support system early and lean on them when necessary.



### Unhealthy relationships

- Let your friends, parents, or a trusted adult know that you're ending a relationship, especially if you think your ex will try to confront you when you're alone.
- If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. Sometimes the safest way to break up is by phone or social media, even if it feels impersonal or cruel.
- If you break up in person, always do it in a public place. Have friends or parents nearby and take a mobile phone with you if you have one.



**If you are in immediate danger call 999 to seek protection.**

# Questions to consider

if you are an adult but not at school, college or university

- What is my workplace domestic violence policy and what support can work give me? (They should be able to help you draw up a safety plan and give you 2 weeks off from work while considering your options.)
- Can I speak to my line manager or HR in confidence to change my shift patterns or hours or to change my branch I work at?
- What are my local domestic violence support services?
- Am I registered with a GP?
- Who is my housing officer? (They have a duty of care to keep you safe from Domestic Violence.)
- Who do I call to get the locks on doors and windows changed?
- Who do I call if I need a safe place to stay?
- Who can I travel to/from work with?
- What are the local community and legal resources available to me?
- Is a restraining order a viable option? (include workplace in language)
- Do I have a trusted friend or neighbour I can leave clothes/money/keys with?
- Where can I save documentation of abusive, threatening, or harassing comments/posts/texts, and photos of physical abuse?
- Do they have access to my virtual location - FindMyFriends, FindMyiPhone? Do they know any of my online passwords?
- Where is security located at my job and what help can they offer me? Provide a picture to them.
- If I live alone, who can I ask to stay with me or who can I stay with?
- Do they know my personal routine? (Where I park my car, where I grocery shop, etc.)
- Do they know my route to/from work?
- Do they know the building code to where I stay, or where to find the spare key?



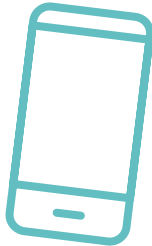
## If you are living with an abusive partner and/or children are involved:

- **Create an emergency bag:** If it is safe to do so without your abuser noticing, keep a bag with some cash, important documents (including birth certificates, marriage certificates, tenancy/mortgage documents, ID documents, National Insurance number, driving licence), a set of keys, some clothes, any medication, phone charger and emergency numbers. This could be kept safe at a neighbour or friend's house, so you can leave in a hurry and still have your essentials.
- **Make a plan:** Think about your partner's routines and choose a safe time to leave your home. Consider where they will be, and plan a safe route – for example, you might want to avoid using a local taxi service in a small town, in case the driver tells your partner where you have gone.
- **Arrange a place to stay:** This might be the home of a trusted friend or family member, but make sure your abuser doesn't know the location. Or you might want to go into a refuge. As a woman fleeing domestic abuse, you can seek housing advice from any local authority even if you do not live in the local area.
- **Consider ways they might track you:** It is important to think about all the ways your partner might be able to find out where you are. For example, if you think your abuser might have access to your phone or messages, you could use a friend's phone to make arrangements to leave, or buy a cheap 'burner phone'. Similarly, you may need to delete any searches related to looking for support on your internet history. You should also turn off any geo-location settings on your phone.

# Questions to consider

if you are living with an abusive partner  
and children are involved:

- Where are the safe areas of my house where there are no weapons and have easy ways to escape?
- If arguments occur, how will I get to that space? Practice how to leave safely from this place ahead of time.
- Is it possible to have a burner phone hidden and programmed with important numbers?
- Do children have access to a 999/ burner phone and know how to use it?
- Where can I safely save documentation of abusive, threatening, or harassing comments/posts/texts, and photos of physical abuse?
- Where is a safe place in the home the children can go?
- Do I have a code word with my children so they know when to call or implement the safety plan?
- Where is a safe place I can take the children if we need to leave the house in a rush?



- Where can I begin setting aside money, or what trusted friend or family member will keep it hidden for me?
- What trusted friend or family member will keep extra clothes, keys, and important documents like credit cards, drivers license, birth certificates (or copies of these documents)?
- Who at my children's school can I alert to the situation?
- Do I need to remove or add a person (parent or non-parent) from the emergency pick up list?
- What ways can I change my routes to/ from work or children's school?
- What frequented places do I need to change - grocery stores, dry cleaners, etc.?
- Do they know the building code to where I stay, or where to find the spare key?



## Post Breakup Planning

Most of the questions posed above apply during the post break up phase as well. You should keep those measures in place as long as necessary to remain safe. Below are a few additional questions that you should consider as you get further away from the initial breakup.

- Is there a support group of other survivors I can join?
- What do I have to do to make sure the restraining order remains enforced?



- Have I checked my devices for electronic spying?
- If I share children with someone who is abusive, have I retained a lawyer to determine what next steps to take regarding custody?
- Remember it's normal to miss your partner after a breakup, even if they've been abusive. After you have left the relationship safely, you can write down your reasons for ending the relationship and keep them as a reminder. Give a copy to a trusted friend as part of your support system.

