A safety plan for young people experiencing relationship abuse

These instructions will help you fill in a safety plan which can help you think about ways to keep yourself safe if you are experiencing any kind of relationship abuse.

You should not create a safety plan without telling someone else about what is happening to you. Pick someone you trust, preferably an adult, who can help you.

Is what is happening to me relationship abuse?
Relationship abuse can happen to anyone, adults as well as young people. It is important to remember that you are not alone, that there are other people who can support you.

Relationship abuse is not just physical violence. Controlling behaviour and emotional abuse are as harmful as physical abuse. Violence can also escalate, starting off with pushing and shoving, and moving onto more serious harm. Here are some examples of abuse that might happen in a relationship:

Controlling behaviour: Stopping you from seeing your friends or going out; looking at messages on your phone or social networking sites and telling you what you can and cannot say; never letting you be on your own; taking your money if you have some; threatening you, your friends or your family; isolating you from your friends

Physical abuse: Hitting; pushing; scratching; punching; kicking; threats of physical violence; throwing things; smashing things up, hair pulling, pushing you around or dragging you.

Sexual abuse: Pressurising you to have do something sexual you do not want to do, either with physical force, verbal abuse, or threatening you; sexual insults, forcing you to send sexual pictures of yourself via the internet on your phone or computer.

Emotional abuse: Putting you down; insulting you; being made fun of; making you feel bad or worthless; unreasonable jealousy; lying to you; threatening to hurt themselves if you leave them; withholding affection; making you feel that you are alone and no one will help you.

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What is a safety plan and why do I need one?
A safety plan can help you if your (ex) boyfriend or girlfriend or someone you are or were seeing behaves in a way that makes you feel scared, worried, nervous, controlled or isolated. Your safety plan is just about you and your situation, and will help you to think about your safety.

Everyone deserves to have a relationship that is supportive and safe, and it is important to remember that it is not your fault if your boyfriend or girlfriend is behaving in an abusive way. It is important to remember that you are responsible for your behaviour, you cannot control or make your (ex) boyfriend or girlfriend behave a certain way. If you are in a relationship where you are not being treated well by your boyfriend or girlfriend, it is important to remember that it is not your fault. It is also important for you to start thinking, along with trusted friends, family or other adults of ways to keep yourself safe.

When should I NOT use a safety plan?
You should not use the safety plan if your (ex) boyfriend or girlfriend who behaves in a way that makes you feel scared, nervous, controlled or isolated is over the age of 18. You should tell an adult you trust who can support you in seeking help.

How do I make a safety plan?
The plan needs to be about you, what is happening in your life, how you can avoid the places and situations that are not safe, and where you can get support from others to keep you safe. Not all sections of the safety plan need to be completed for everyone. You will need to decide which sections are important for you to think about.

You should only fill in the plan when you are feeling calm and in control. It is hard to think clearly about the actions you need to take when you are feeling scared or threatened. If you feel threatened you should seek help immediately by ringing 999.

When you create your plan, think about who you can get support from – friends, family, a teacher, school nurse or support worker. It is important to have at least one adult that you trust help you with completing your plan, so that they can help support you in thinking about your safety.

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When you make the safety plan, you should also think about how your (ex) boyfriend/girlfriend will react to the actions you are taking. For example, if you change your phone number or block them on social media and you are still in a relationship, this may cause violence to escalate. Actions like these could put you in more danger, so it is important to talk them through with somebody else before you do anything, so that they can help you manage the reaction/response of your partner

When creating your safety plan, you need to think about your safety for every part of your life – do you need to plan for your safety:

- ☐ At school?
- ☐ At home?
- ☐ When you are out and about?
- ☐ In the evening or at the weekend?
- ☐ When you are online – on your phone, tablet or laptop?

The plan should be easy to follow and simple. The more complicated your plan, the harder it will be for you to remember and follow.

What if I am helping a friend fill out the plan?
If it is your friend who is experiencing relationship abuse you can support them in filling out the safety plan. You may want to help your friend find an adult or introduce them to someone who you think may be able to support your friend in writing the safety plan.

My safety plan - who can help me?
Remember that you are not alone; there are other people who can help you when you are feeling worried, nervous and scared.

1. Choose an adult in your life who you feel you can trust and talk to about the relationship. For example this could be your parent/carer, teacher, social worker, school nurse, leaders in activities you may be doing outside of school. These are only examples it can be any trusted adult in your life.
2. Choose an adult at school who you feel you can talk to about the abuse, so this person can help to increase your security and safety at school.
3. Once you have chosen your trusted adults, make a note of their timetable so you know how and when you can contact them.

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4. There may be times when you may not be able to talk to them; however you can still leave a message on their phone or write them a note or letter.
5. Agree a code word with your trusted adults and friends, this can be used to alert them if you are in danger or at risk without anyone else knowing you are asking for help.
6. If your trusted adults are from school, you will need to think of an adult outside of school who you can contact during school holidays. A list of organisations and names of people you can contact will be included in your safety plan; you are not alone even if you need help outside of term time.
7. If you are ever in danger call 999 for emergency services and ask for the police.

Where else can I get help?

Ring 999 for the police, ambulance and fire brigade

ChildLine: 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

National helpline for domestic abuse: 0808 2000 247

www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk

Brook for sexual health services and advice:
0808 802 1234 www.brook.org.uk

Women's Aid Website for children and young people
experiencing domestic violence www.thehideout.org.uk

'This is abuse' website contains lots of advice if you are worried about relationship abuse http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/

All Wales Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Helpline
0800 80 10 800

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Staying safe at school
It is your right to be able to attend school and get on with your education without feeling unsafe, these are some ways you can keep yourself safe at school:

1. Discuss with your trusted adult from school any problems/areas or concerns you have being at school. For example attending class trips or after school clubs.
2. With your school's permission agree a 'safe place' on school grounds where you can go if you feel scared or upset.
3. Change your school locker or lock.
4. Change or vary your journey to and from school e.g. leaving at a different time, changing your route.
5. Avoid passing through or taking short cuts through isolated areas.
6. Arrange for friends to walk with you between lessons so you arrive at the classroom safely.
7. If possible ask friends if they can keep you company on your journey to and from school.
8. Call an adult to tell them when you have left school and then again when you arrive home. Do this on your journey to and from school even if you have a friend keeping you company.

Some schools operate an **'exit card'** system; this is where a young person can leave a classroom at any time if they are feeling overwhelmed or scared. Teachers will be aware that the young person may need to request to leave the lesson and will be aware of where they are going.

How can I stay safe outside of school?
It is important for you to feel safe when you are outside of school. To ensure your safety, plan different actions so you are prepared for potential situations which may occur.

Create a plan of action for when your (ex) boyfriend or girlfriend behaves in a way which makes you feel worried, nervous, anxious and controlled.

1. Write down your partner's triggers of abuse. If you are able to identify the triggers which precede behaviour that makes you feel worried, nervous,

anxious and controlled, you may be able to leave before the situation escalates and seek help.
2. Do you know where you could go if you needed to get away quickly from your (ex) partner?
3. If you are stranded and unable to get home, is there anybody you could call to take you home? If you do not have credit or are unable to use your mobile phone do you know how to call an operator from a pay phone to reverse charges?

Some areas run a **'Safe Haven'** scheme where young people can go to a designated place if they feel scared or are in danger. Safe places are sign posted with the 'Safe Haven' scheme logo and can include shops and public buildings such as libraries or community centres.

Safety behaviours
Safety behaviours we would encourage all young people to follow:

1. Always keep with you: spare change, numbers for local shelters, numbers for someone who can help you, any restraining orders paperwork.
2. Ensuring that your mobile phone is fully charged.
3. Follow general safety tips such as locking doors and windows, monitoring phone calls and try to never walk alone.
4. If there is a change in your timetable or if you need to move temporarily, such as going into care, being off ill for a period of time, moving somewhere new for any length of time, then ensure you contact your trusted adults and let them know where you are and of any changes that may have happened.
   If you are using public transport:

   - **Bus**: Use a busy, well-lit bus stop if possible. When on the bus sit downstairs and as close to the driver as you can.
   - **Station platforms**: try to stay in well-lit areas and if possible stay near the ticket office or platform staff until you board the train.
   - **Tube and train carriages**: Look for a carriage which looks fairly busy or has at least several people in it. Try to sit between the front and middle carriages as they are the more likely to stay busy. When you get on the carriage check where the emergency alarms are.

Staying safe when using your mobile phone and the internet
The internet and mobile phone can be a big part of your social life, below are a few steps you can take to make you feel more comfortable.

Think very carefully before taking these steps if you are still with your partner.

1. Contact your network provider and ask if you can change your mobile number. Some phone companies will do this for free if the reason you give is for your safety.
2. Change your password/code on your mobile phone, or put a passcode or pin on your phone if you haven't already done so.
3. If you are using a pay-as-you-go phone, then get a new SIM card with a new mobile number.
4. If you lose your phone, report it as stolen immediately.
5. Make sure security settings for social networking sites and websites used to talk with other people are set to private.
6. Switch off location settings on social networking sites and mobile phones. This needs to be turned off at all times so your partner is unable to locate you.
7. Tell your friends not to post pictures of you or their location when they are with you.
8. Block the young person using aggressive behaviour from your profile. If there isn't a blocking system in place then we would suggest deleting your account.
9. Report any offensive and upsetting behaviour from the young person on the social networking site.
10. Change passwords of all online accounts for example social networking sites, email and school logins.
11. If you are using the internet to look for help, remember to delete your browser history to ensure your (ex) boyfriend/girlfriend does not know you are trying to seek help. Alternatively you could use a friend's computer, the school library or a public computer.

Emotional support and coping strategies
An abusive relationship can make you feel down, depressed or anxious. It can prevent you from doing things you need to do, like studying or going to school. It is important to have a list of organisations so you can contact them when you are

feeling down and upset. For example ChildLine, who are always available to talk to when you need them.

- ☐ Keep list of local and national resources: shelters, helplines, agencies, advocates, websites where there is an advice service and a list of any other services or resources which could help you.
- ☐ Other resources could be may be seeing a school counsellor or being referred to Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- ☐ To help you feel better you could write a list of positive things in your life. This can help you cope with what is happening to you. This is something which can be discussed and included in your safety plan.

What if I am pregnant or have a child?

- ☐ It is important to notify your trusted adults (if they do not already know) if you are pregnant or have a child. They can include any additional information which is specific to keeping you and your baby safe.
- ☐ You can also call the National Domestic Violence Helpline to speak to any of their advisors who can help you with different options that are specific to you.

Ending the relationship
Ending an abusive relationship can be frightening but it is important to make a plan with **your safety being the main priority.**

It is important for your safety that you DO tell either your family, trusted adults and/or friends the details of when, where and how you are going to end the relationship.

It is important that you make a plan for your safety. **DO NOT** do it on the spur of the moment when you are feeling angry. This could lead to a more dangerous situation and it is important that you can stay safe.

Things to consider:

1. What are you going to say; it might be helpful to write down notes to help you remember.
2. Think about when do you plan on doing it?

3. Where are you going to do it? Think about how you want to end the relationship, could you do it on the phone when you are in a safe place or would you prefer to do it face to face

If you are planning on doing it face to face:

4. **DO NOT** do it when you are alone; plan to meet in a public place. It would be good to do it somewhere you feel safe or could access help easily for example outside a Safe Haven.
5. Take someone with you; they don't have to be directly there they can wait nearby, somewhere where they can see you.
6. Plan how you are going to get home safely after.
7. After you have ended the relationship contact your trusted adults, some details of your safety plan might need to be changed.
8. If you are in any danger at any time call 999 immediately.

I have finished my plan, now what do I do?
Once you have finished your plan, decide with the person helping you when you should review your plan to make sure it still works for you. If something changes that means you need to think about your safety in a different way, such as an incident happens, make sure you change your plan. Remember that even if you cannot control the behaviour of your (ex) boyfriend or girlfriend, you can make a plan that will help you to think about your safety and help you to feel more in control.

Make sure you keep your safety plan in a safe place. Here are some suggestions on ways you can keep key information from your safety plan safe but still have quick access to it:

- ☐ In your mobile phone create an appointment for once a week; keep it vague such as 'call mum' or 'buy bread'. In the calendar event keep a list of phone numbers or important details relating to your plan.
- ☐ In a school exercise book, disguise it as part of your school work.
- ☐ In your school planner, but putting emergency numbers under different headings.
- ☐ Giving a copy of your safety plan to a trusted friend who will be able to store it for you.
- ☐ Store numbers for services under different names. Pick a name which will not arouse jealousy or suspicion.

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My safety plan

Who can help me?

My trusted adult is …….....

My trusted adults contact details …….

My trusted adult at school is …….

My trusted adult at schools contact details ……..

My trusted adult's timetable is:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Trusted adult 1:							
Trusted adult 2:							
Trusted adult 3:							

Staying safe at school

My code word is ……..

My 'safe place' at school is …….

Friends who are walking with me are

……

……

How can I stay safe outside of school?

My (ex) partners triggers scared

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Places I can go if I am in danger or

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I can reverse charges on my mobile phone or pay phone using this number.

_____

Staying safe when using your mobile phone and the internet

- ☐ I have changed my mobile phone number
- ☐ I have put a passcode/password on my mobile phone
- ☐ I have changed my security settings on social networking sites to 'private'
- ☐ I have switched off the location settings on my social networking sites and mobile phone
- ☐ I have blocked my (ex) partner
- ☐ I have changed my passwords for all my online accounts

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Emotional support and coping strategies
The telephone numbers and website address of people and organisations I can contact when I am feeling sad and upset are:

Resource 1 _____ Resources 2 _____

_____ _____

Positive things in my life:

1. _____ 6. _____
2. _____ 7. _____
3. _____ 8. _____
4. _____ 9. _____
5. _____ 10 _____

Ending the relationship

When am I going to end the relationship? _____

I am going to end the relationship: face to face / on the phone / other

_____

If face to face:

- ☐ Where am I going to do it? _____

☐ Where is my nearest:

• Safe place to go_____

• Police station _____

☐ I am taking this trusted adult with me _____

I have told these people where and when I am doing it _____

How am I going to get home after? _____

I have told my trusted adult about ending the relationship and I am meeting her to change my safety plan on

_____