

# Facing your experience of Domestic Violence

## *Understanding domestic violence*

Domestic violence is a pattern of violent behavior employed by one partner to retain power and control over the other. Abuse can take various forms, such as physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, and financial. Survivors may feel isolated, scared, or uncertain of their next steps. Recognizing abuse is the first step toward healing and taking back control of your life.

## **Signs of Domestic Violence**

- Physical abuse: Hitting, pushing, choking, or other physical harm.
- Emotional abuse: Manipulation, gaslighting, continuous criticism, or threats.
- Verbal abuse: Yelling or belittling statements.
- Sexual abuse: Coercion, unwanted sexual contact, or assault.
- Financial abuse: Controlling money, restricting access to finances, or preventing employment.

## *Steps to Safety & Planning Ahead*

Leaving an abusive relationship can be difficult, and safety measures are important. A well-thought-out plan can help you reduce risk and prepare for your future decisions.

### **1. Creating a Safety Plan**

- Identify safe places to go if you need to leave quickly.
- If you have access to them, keep important documents in a secure place or take photos of them. (ID, birth certificate, social security card)
- Establish a code word with someone you trust to signal when you need help.
- Memorize emergency contact number(s) if you lose access to your phone.
- \*Set aside emergency funds if possible.



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## 2. Seeking Support

- Consider speaking with a therapist or counselor who specializes in trauma recovery.
- Connect with local domestic violence shelters and support groups for resources and legal assistance.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233) or text “START” to 88788.

## 3. Legal & Protective Measures

- Document incidents of abuse with dates and photos if safe to do so.
- Contact legal aid organizations for free or low-cost legal support.
- If children are involved, use legal support to understand custody rights and protections.

## *Healing & Emotional Recovery*

Recovering from domestic violence is a journey that involves emotional healing and self-empowerment. It's important to be patient with yourself as you process your experience.

### *1. Coping with Emotional Trauma*

- Acknowledge your feelings without judgment—all feelings are valid.
- Practice self-care through journaling, meditation, art, and other activities.
- Learn about trauma responses (fight, flight, freeze, fawn) and how they may impact your healing.

### *2. Building Self-Esteem & Confidence*

- Set small, achievable goals to rebuild confidence and regain independence.
- Use affirmations and positive self-talk to counteract negative beliefs instilled by abuse.

### *3. Finding Professional Support*

- Therapy & Counseling
- Support Groups
- Advocacy Services: Many local organizations offer case management, housing assistance, and job training programs for survivors.



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## Conclusion

Leaving an abusive situation or facing the trauma of past abuse is a difficult but courageous step. Remember:

- You are not alone
- The abuse was not your fault, and you deserve safety and respect.
- Healing is possible, and support systems exist to help you through this journey.

No matter where you are in your healing process, reaching out for support can make a difference. You are worthy of a life free from violence and control. Take each step at your own pace, and know that there is hope for a brighter future.

## Resources for Immediate Help

### National Hotlines & Crisis Support

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233) | Text "START" to 88788 | [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

### Legal & Housing Assistance

- National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV): [www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org)
- WomensLaw.org (Legal Support for Survivors): [www.womenslaw.org](http://www.womenslaw.org)
- HUD Domestic Violence Housing Assistance: [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

### Therapy & Support Services

- Find a Therapist: [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com)
- Local Women's Crisis Centers & Shelters: Search online for any in your area.
- Online Support Groups

