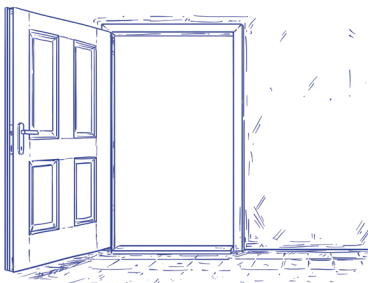


Leaving an Abusive Relationship:



12 Tips

Tip #1

Make a safety plan

For you:

Escape routes, what to take, names & numbers of people you trust, emergency numbers, change your routine (example: places you shop, your doctor, or bank).

For children:

Pick a safe place to go, what they should do if they see you being abused, rehearse calling 911, know their own name and address.

Tip #2

Apply for custody ASAP

Get legal advice as soon as possible.

If there is no custody order, you and your ex-partner have equal rights to your children. This means if your ex-partner decides to keep the children after a visit, you may have to apply to the family court to get them back. Legal Aid can help, or a lawyer you would pay who does family law.

Tip #3

Take what you need when you leave

Birth certificates, passports, health cards, children's comfort items (toys, blankets, books), house and car keys, driver's license, bank or credit cards, money, legal papers (custody, divorce, property, business, etc.), pets (or make advance arrangements for care), cell phone and other mobile devices, photos (including one to identify your ex-partner), sentimental items or heirlooms, and prescriptions.

Tip #4

Gather financial information

Gather as much financial information as possible before leaving your relationship. Scan, make copies or take clear photos of everything: mortgage documents, RRSPs, TFSAs, pensions, bank accounts with numbers, income tax returns.

If you believe it is safe to stay in the family home, you may apply to court for exclusive possession of the matrimonial home, or exclusive occupation of an owned or rented home, including an apartment.

Tip #5

Find an advocate

An advocate is a professional who is used to dealing with the people and agencies you are involved with. An advocate works with you and on your behalf to help ensure your needs are met and your rights are respected. Examples are a settlement counsellor, Transition House or Victims' Services worker, social worker. An advocate is different from a friend or family member.

Tip #6

Decide whether to report to the police

No matter what decision you make, record everything!

Write down times, dates and details of things like assaults, threats or harassment, skipped parenting time ("access" visits), late pick-ups or drop-offs of children, symptoms in children or any other concerns.

Tip #7

Get a copy of any statements

Always ask for a copy of any statements you make to police, your lawyer, community services, community services, child protection, etc., as well as any notes taken by your advocate. (Example: Transition House worker).

Tip #8

Recognize post-separation abuse

- threats and intimidation
- surveillance, following you
- abuse through the children
- involving the children in the conflict between parents
- multiple family court applications
- financial abuse
- false child abuse allegations against the other parent.

Tip #9

Apply for a protection order

Emergency Protection Order: This is an immediate short term (30 days) protection order, used in cases of family violence where the situation is serious and urgent. It can include a no-contact condition.

Peace Bond: A peace bond is a longer-term (1 year) court order that requires your ex-spouse or partner to keep the peace and be of good behaviour. It can include a no-contact condition.

Cyber-Protection Order: A court order to stop cyber-bullying or unwanted sharing of intimate images. It can include a no-contact condition.

Tip #10

Take care of yourself

Examples of how you can reduce stress:

- find a support person
- join a support group
- get enough rest and exercise
- speak with a spiritual leader or counsellor.

Tip #11

Your children's needs

Beyond tips already mentioned:

- carry court papers with you at all times
- give babysitter, daycare or school a copy of court papers
- learn about the effects of domestic abuse on children and how to help them
- make sure your children understand that they are not the cause of the abuse.

Tip #12

Remember, you are not alone

It is easy to become confused or frustrated by the family law or criminal law experience. Talk with a Transition House worker, lawyer, social worker or other knowledgeable advocate. Speaking with experienced professionals will help you understand the systems you are dealing with.

For more information:

- Legal Information Society of Nova Scotia, 1-800-665-9779 or 902-455-3135 or questions@legalinfo.org, www.legalinfo.org
- Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS) - thans.ca
- 2-1-1 Nova Scotia Information and Referrals - ns.211.ca or dial '2-1-1'
- Cyber-bullying: novascotia.ca/cyberscan/
- Domestic violence: nsdomesticviolence.ca
- Family law: nsfamilylaw.ca
- Legal Aid: nslegalaid.ca