

Safety Planning – Emotional Health and Wellbeing

No matter what type(s) of abuse you have experienced, it has likely had an impact on your emotional well-being. The experience of being abused can be exhausting, emotionally draining, and confusing. The more aware you become of ways of staying emotionally healthy and safe, the better able you are to keep yourself safe in other ways, if needed.

Know that whether you choose to stay in the relationship or keep having contact, whether you are thinking about leaving or have already left, there are steps you can take to feel stronger, to feel more in control and/or to increase your support system.

Some reminders that can be helpful...

- I can be gentle with myself and trust myself and my own experiences. I believe in my own strengths. I am my own best source of knowledge and strength and I already have the tools needed to survive.
- I can remind myself of all of the ways I have resisted, and continue, to resist abuse and mistreatment.
- I can give myself permission to seek support, to take the time that I need to decide what I want, and to seek new information to take positive steps towards a healthier and happier me.
- I can tell myself, "I'm in charge of my life and confident in my decision-making abilities or (other positive statements about my abilities) when I feel others are trying to control or abuse me". My personal affirmation I choose is:

You know your situation best. My biggest fear right now is:

This is my personal safety plan:

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Some things I have already done to increase my safety include:

Sometimes it can be difficult to recognize and name emotional abuse. Some common behaviours that would fall under emotional abuse include:

- Abusive expectations-unreasonable demands, demand for constant attention, constant criticism
- Aggressive name calling, accusing, blaming, ordering, humiliation, intimidation
- Constant chaos, deliberately starting arguments
- Denying a person's emotional needs, deny your sanity, deny your memory, 'silent-treatment' and invalidation of reality
- Dominating, controlling, speaking over you
- Emotional blackmail, plays on your fear, guilt
- Ignoring and invalidation-minimizing, unpredictable responses (tells you one thing one day and something different the next), explosions
- Denial and Blame - blaming you for their abuse.

Whenever people are abused, they do many things to oppose the abuse and to keep their dignity and their self-respect. *This is called resistance.* The following are ways in which I have resisted abuse in an attempt to stop or prevent abuse, to minimize the abuse that is happening, or to keep myself (or others) safe:

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The feeling I am most worried about feeling right now (lonely, hopeful, scared, suicidal etc) is:

Strategies to help me cope and stay safe if I begin to feel this way are:

If I choose to communicate with or have contact with the person who has used abusive behaviours in the past and they choose to use abusive behaviours again, I can:

If I am feeling isolated or like I may be in an unsafe situation (emotionally, physically etc) I can:

In the past I have used _____ (drugs, alcohol, food, impulse shopping, self-harm etc.) to deal with stressful situations and as a way to cope. I recognize there are healthier ways to deal with stress and will make a commitment to find alternatives to help me. These can include:

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The following are things I already do to take care of myself:

I can do these things to help me feel stronger and more in control of my life:

Some things I would like to try are:

I know that the Shelter Help-line is available 24-hours a day and I can contact them for additional support. Their number is 403-529-1091 or 1-800-661-7949. Other places/people I feel safe talking to when I need support include:

Below are some strategies that others have sometimes found to be helpful in increasing independence, and in maintaining a healthy emotional and mental state. Check off ones that you want to try and discuss with a worker if you need help getting started.

I can:

- attend workshops and support groups offered through community and resource centres, through the shelter, health unit, etc. to gain support and strengthen my relationship with other people.
- learn and practice new ways of communicating that ensures everyone in my family feels safe and respected.
- read my spiritual teachings, poetry, self-help resources, etc. to help me feel stronger.
- use a journal to write about an event or feelings, create a success or gratitude journal.
- become involved in community activities to reduce feelings of isolation
- explore resources that can increase financial independence
- enrol in school to increase skills, decrease isolation or to explore a new hobby

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- take part in social activities or community events such as _____
- take care of my sleep and nutritional needs
- try a creative outlet (crafts, dance, music, writing, painting etc) and do what makes me feel good
- write something positive about myself everyday – my own personal affirmations
- try exercising; it will increase my energy level and increase my sense of well being
- It is OK to feel angry, but I can find positive and constructive ways to express my anger. Some things I can try are: _____

- Other: _____

One area that I still feel I need support/help in is: _____

NOTE: If you would like additional information on safety plans for other situations such as: having contact with an abusive person, for planning to leave, if you have children, for in public, if you have a pet, for stalking or harassment concerns or other personalized situations please contact the Medicine Hat Women's Shelter at 403-529-1091.