

# Safety...

## Maintaining your privacy and safety

### **Keeping your new location private and undisclosed**

For some women who have left a violent relationship may choose to keep their new contact details private. This may increase their sense of safety and security.

If this is what you want, it is important that you explain this to all the people that you share your new details with and ask that they respect your need for privacy.

You may choose to use a post office box address for your mail and on documents. You can also apply to have your address withheld on the electoral role.

## Making your home more secure

There are a number of general security precautions you can take to protect you and your property.

### Keys

- Never leave spare keys outside your home (eg. in pot plants)
- Don't have personal details such as your name, address and telephone number on your keys
- If someone contacts you saying they have found your keys, ask them to drop them at a police station
- If no locks are in place, put wood dowel in windows to stop them being slid open.
- Check that you have locked your door when you go out and when you return home, especially when you are at the back of the house.
- Do not leave messages on the front door. It lets people know whether you are home or not.
- Don't have parcels delivered to your front door, use a PO Box, this provides additional security
- Keep cash and valuables out of sight
- Always check your peep hole to identify anyone at your door

### Windows and doors

- When returning home, it's always good to have a look around before opening the front door to ensure no one is watching you
- If your windows are fitted with locks, ensure you use the locks when going out and at night.
- If possible, have deadbolts installed on all external doors
- Place sliding bolts on man holes so it can't be accessed by the roof

## Yards, gates and cars

- Make sure you keep the yards secure by ensuring all gates are shut and/or locked. The rear and sides of homes are often targeted because of low visibility
- Ensure you always lock your car when you leave it.
- When you get into your car, it's always a good idea to check that no one is in the back seat. Then lock the car once you are in the drivers seat.
- Keep any valuables out of sight

If you are renting a public housing property, request a security up-grade under their Domestic and Family Violence Policy, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service or Beryl Women Inc. can assist you in this.

## Staying safe on social media

Keeping your details and whereabouts restricted can be difficult especially if you use social media to share information or photos.

To avoid unintended sharing of information about you on social media such as Facebook:

- Do not have location services switched on in your phone or ipad or any other device that you use to photograph, make calls or send messages
- Ensure your privacy settings are set appropriately on Facebook so that you cannot be tagged in photos without your permission and your posts shared to people you do not want
- Revisit privacy settings weekly or monthly as these features are updated regularly

- Do not accept friend requests from people you do not know or do not know well
- Speak to people that you are friends with on Facebook and tell them what you want and block people who are not willing to meet your requests
- Logout every time you access Facebook and do not share your passwords with anyone
- If you are really concerned, take a break from Facebook for a while
- If you have children or teens using social networking or gaming websites, talk to them about whom to friend, help adjust their privacy settings and be aware of their online activities.
- Consider creating a new profile using non-identifying information and an image such as a flower, a sports team logo or other image as your profile picture

## Safety tips for smartphones

Your mobile phone is an important safety device. We suggest you have your phone fully charged and with you at all times. However, your phone can also be used to track your location, to listen in on your conversations and to eavesdrop on your text messages and emails.

### **Some tips to help you stay safe:**

- Lock your smartphone and do not give the PIN to anyone.
- Turn off the GPS (location settings) on your phone and Facebook.
- Turn off Bluetooth on your phone when not in use.
- Avoid buying or using a 'jail-broken' phone as this phone will be more vulnerable to spyware.

- Talk to close friends and family members; ask them to have their phone on standby in case of an emergency call. You may want to have a 'safe' word/phrase to let them know you're in trouble.
- Memorise the numbers for Beryl Women Inc: 6230 6900 and Domestic Violence Crisis Service: 6280 0900, and those of your close friends and family members.

Remember, your phone is usually the first casualty in a violent struggle. If you got to a pay phone, would you be able to phone a friend?

Smart phones with internet capability are the most vulnerable to being used to spy and monitor you. Spyware can be installed on a smart phone with relative ease and will enable another person to track calls,

location, conversations, emails and browsing history. Spyware can also turn your phone into a microphone, allowing the perpetrator to hear everything you're saying... even with the phone turned off.

If you are concerned that your phone has spyware installed take the phone to your telephone service provider and ask them to investigate for you.

If you do want to be certain that a conversation is not recorded or overheard you should remove the battery, if possible, from the phone or leave it at another location.

Old fashioned mobile phones without internet capability are still available and cheap and allow you to receive and make calls and are not able to be tracked or hacked.

If you suspect that your partner is monitoring you, DON'T suddenly change your phone or computer habits. For example, don't erase your entire browsing history on your computer. Instead, you can browse for jobs, housing or DV support in 'incognito' mode, meaning that internet sites you visit will not show up on your history. You can temporarily go 'incognito' by pressing **CTR SHIFT N** on your computer.

## Choosing to stay and being Safe

You and your children's safety is extremely important regardless of whether you choose to leave or stay in the relationship. Women make the decision about staying in or leaving relationships for many different reasons. Some women may choose to stay in a relationship as they consider it to be the safest option.

A specialist Domestic Violence service can work with you to increase your safety while you are still residing with your partner. The service will be respectful of your choices and if you seek support you will not be pressured to do anything that you are uncomfortable with.

The service will work with you to plan for the safety of you and your children and to understand the

dynamics of a relationship in which domestic violence occurs.

It may be helpful to think about and develop a safety plan in advance so that if at any time you decide to leave, you are prepared.

For your safety plan to work it is vital you don't let your partner see the plan, but it is a good idea to talk about it with someone you trust that is close to you.

It is important to understand that while you can take steps to avoid violence, you cannot stop the violence. The only person who can do that is the person who is using violence.

## Safety plans

Make a plan to assist you to avoid serious injury during a violent incident. Some of the following may help.

- If possible leave the situation
- Know the easiest escape routes from the house doors, windows etc.
- Plan where you will go in advance.
- Have a safe place to stay organised in advance.
- Identify a neighbour you can ask to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your house. Develop some sort of a code or signal between you so that they will know you are in danger.
- Teach your children to phone 000 and practice what to say.

- Have the 24 Hour Domestic Violence Crisis Service number 02 6280 0900 memorised or in a place that is easy to find. This service provides refuge referral and 24 hour support.
- Call the Police as soon as it is safe to report the incident. The police can also support you to access safe accommodation for you and your children.

Children may also need a simple safety plan so they know what to do when domestic violence is occurring, this could include:

- Warning children to stay out of the adult conflicts.
- Decide ahead of time on a safe place the children can go when they feel unsafe.
- Teach children how to use police and other emergency phone numbers.
- Making a list of people the children can trust and talk to when they are feeling unsafe (neighbours, teachers, relatives, friends).