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SAFETY PLANNING FOR EVERYONE: BASIC TIPS TO SAFETY PLANNING WITH SURVIVORS FOR THE NON-ADVOCATE

Presenter

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Learning Objectives



- Outline the Do's and Don'ts of talking with victims about their domestic violence situation
- Describe the warning signs and danger indicators in abusive relationships
- Identify basic safety steps and practices with victims who are in an abusive situation or who are in the process of leaving

Why is Safety Planning Important?


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What is Safety Planning?

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- **Formal Safety Plan**
 - Often uses a template
 - Focus on physical safety and violence prevention
- **Domestic violence advocates** create the safety plan in partnership with the survivor
 - Expertise
 - Knowledge of resources
 - Training

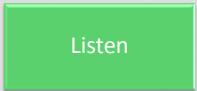


...But anyone can offer safety planning help!

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Engage



Listen



Offer suggestions and support

What is Safety Planning?

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1800RESPECT
1800 737 732

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Safety Planning Do's

- "I care about you," or "I'm worried for your safety."
- Be specific – give examples
- Stay calm
- Offer to help connect with resources
 - Do some legwork
- Take a non-judgmental approach
- Ask open-ended questions
- Offer suggestions



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Safety Planning Don't

- Don't make blaming statements – "I would never let someone treat me like that..."
- Don't give advice or try to persuade
- Don't tell others
- Don't push printed material
- Don't trash talk the abuser



"Mr. Fuzzy"

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Danger Indicators

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SIGNS THAT COULD SIGNAL INCREASED DANGER



History of violence and violence is escalating



- **Prior violence is one of the strongest and most consistent risk factors**
 - Threats to kill
 - Threats with weapon
 - Strangling “choking”
 - Abuse during pregnancy
 - Forced sex
 - Emotional abuse
 - Controlling behaviors
- **Violence escalating in severity and frequency**

Separation

- More at risk when leaving or have left
- Survivor is taking steps to end the relationship
- Filing a TPO, moving out or “breaking up”
- Emotional separation or planning phase
- Abuser may or may not know yet



Firearms



- From 2010-2017, gunshot was the cause of death in 73% of all known DV-related deaths in Georgia
- The presence of a firearm in DV incidents raises the likelihood of homicide, regardless of who owns the weapon

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

- History of depression
- Sleep disturbances
- Suicide threats and/or attempts
- Fantasies of homicide
- History of problem drinking and/or drug abuse



Obsession and ownership

- Obsessed with victim
- Restricting activities
- Isolation
- Extreme jealousy
 - May include sexual jealousy either real or perceived
- Stalking behaviors



Criminal history and prior system contact

- Abuser has prior criminal history
- Prior agency involvement, particularly the police
- Failed criminal justice intervention
- Abuser is not deterred by interventions



Safety Planning Strategies

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Goals When Safety Planning

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- How to get away and get help
- Where to go and be secure at the new location
- How to stay connected to helpers
- Traveling in and out of the community
- How to keep kids and pets safe
- Ways to protecting belongings
- How to anticipate circumstances: work, leisure, family
- How to anticipate and respond to abuser's actions

Information Gathering

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Tell me about your partner. What are they like when they're really angry or scary?

Do they give off signals before they are violent?

Have you left the relationship before? How did your partner behave?

Strategies for Safety

- How can she summon help and receive support?
- What is the best escape route?
- What can she take if she has to leave quickly?
- What if she is **not** able to leave?

Strategies for Safety

- Does the abuser have allies, like children, family, coworkers?
- Is there a way to be alerted about the abuser's whereabouts?
- What are home security procedures for after the break-up, like alarms, locks, notifications, etc.?

Don't Forget About Technology!

Technology Can Be a Benefit . . .

In what ways can technology be helpful when safety planning with survivors?

- Devices and Cell Phones
- Caller ID
- Pre-Paid Calling Cards
- Voice Mail
- Social Networking
- Call Blocking and Tracing
- Last Number Re-Dial
- Car Alarms
- Door and Window Alarms
- Security Apps on Devices

. . . or a Risk

The abuser can:

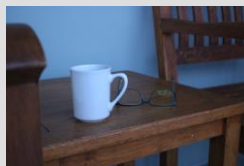
- Monitor phone calls through caller ID, re-dial, voicemail . . .
- Monitor computer use through Spyware, password hacking, Internet cache.
- Locate and track the survivor through personal data revealed on internet (social media) or GPS device.
- Send harassing emails, phone calls, direct messages through social media etc.



Emotional Safety

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- Help survivors manage feelings
 - Caring and calming presence
 - Help with overwhelming tasks
 - Identify achievable goals
 - Offer frequent breaks
- Provide information about trauma
 - Explain trauma triggers and responses
 - Normalize survivor's reactions
- Provide a soothing place
 - Corner of a quiet room, comfortable chair, privacy



NCDV/TMH, 2011

Emotional Safety and the Abuser

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- **Acknowledge and accept emotions**
 - This is/was an intimate relationship – all break-ups are hard!
 - It is ok to miss the abuser, think about going back, or to not be ready to leave
- **Reduce exposure to emotional triggers**
 - Prepare for contact with abuser
 - Texts, voicemails, social media
- **Increasing support systems – friends, family, faith, community, advocates/programs, crisis line,**
- **Counseling**



Survivor-led Safety Planning

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What the survivor is willing to do

- Stop contact with abusive partner?
- Relocate?
- Call 911 or filing a police report?
- Disclose abuse to family/friends/neighbors?
- Tell employer/coworkers about situation?

Survivor-led Safety Planning

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What the survivor is able to do

- Stay sober?
- Risk being "outed"?
- Access a support system?
- Afford an attorney?
- Risk losing custody of children?

Key Takeaways

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- Safety planning is a process
- How you approach the conversation is more important than having all the answers
- Work with the survivor where they are
- Provide concrete support – research options, ask questions, identify new options
- Connect the survivor to a trained advocate
- Don't give up!

Questions...

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Thank You!

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