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**SAFETY PLANNING
DEMISTIFIED – PART TWO: HOW
TO BRING SURVIVOR SAFETY INTO
EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS**

**Safety Planning – Leaving and
Beyond**

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**SAFETY WHEN LEAVING, WHEN
STAYING, AND WHEN RETURNING
TO THE RELATIONSHIP**

**SAFETY PLANNING WITH
CHILDREN**

Presenters

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Alexis Champion
Training Manager
404-209-0280, ext. 23
achampion@gcadv.org



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Questions...

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Review – Key Qualities of Good Safety Planning

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal vs. Informal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Filling out a form ○ Spontaneous, as-needed • Multifaceted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Batterer-generated and life-generated risks • Trauma-informed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emotional safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor-led <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What the survivor is willing and able to do • Fluid and ongoing • In the moment
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Review: Batterer-Generated vs. Life-Generated Risks

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Batterer-Generated	Life-Generated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of physical and sexual violence • Child-related risks • Financial risks • Risks of psychological harm and drug and alcohol use • Risks to friends and family • Risks involving arrest or legal status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial considerations • Home location • Physical and mental health • Inadequate response from major social institutions • Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other bias

Davies, 2014

Review – Trauma-Informed Safety Planning

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- **Reduce Re-traumatization**
 - Emotional Safety – feeling accepted; safe from emotional attack or harm
 - We are skilled at attending to physical safety, but emotional safety is harder to measure
 - Emotional abuse more harmful than physical
 - Hard for survivors to find sense of calm and safety

NCDV/TMH, 2011

Who is the survivor?

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- How the survivor identifies is important
- Be humble, inquisitive
- What is possible or normal for you may not be the same for the survivor
- Allow for possibilities, but don't make assumptions or rely on stereotypes

Safety Planning and the Batterer: Leaving, Staying, and Somewhere In Between

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<p>MYTH</p> <p>"IF IT WERE THAT BAD, SHE WOULD JUST LEAVE"</p>	<p>TRUTH</p> <p>"WOMEN STAY WITH ABUSIVE MEN BECAUSE IT CAN BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO LEAVE"</p>
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The Decision-making Process

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- Staying in an abusive relationship does not necessarily mean accepting the violence.
- Leaving does not necessarily mean that the violence will end.
- Advocates: respect the survivor's decision-making process and understand that situations are complex

Davies, 1998

Safety Planning When Staying

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Safety When Staying

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- New focus of advocacy
- Survivors use incredibly creative, complex, and varied safety plans for themselves and their children
- Support and respect the survivor's decision
- Let the survivor know that you are concerned for their safety and why
- Let the survivor know that your services are always an option

Davies, 1998

Safety Planning: Protection Strategies

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- Prevent and respond to physical violence
 - Plans to flee – escape path
 - Code words for children
 - Asking someone to intervene
 - Law enforcement
 - Neighbor
 - Friend/family
 - Self-defense
 - Keeping weapons out of reach
 - Fighting back
 - Not part of the pattern of coercive control

Davies, 1998

Protection Strategies for Children

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- Sending the children away
 - Family, friend or neighbor
- Sleeping in the children's bedroom
- Feed/put to bed early
- Never leave children alone with batterer
- Involve them in lots of extracurricular activities
- Put children's rooms far from their own to avoid overhearing violence

Davies, 1998

Safety During a Violent Incident

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- Avoid certain places in the home during an argument
 - Bathroom, garage, kitchen, rooms without exits, access to weapons
- How to calm or placate the batterer
- Identify an escape route
- Teach children what to do during an argument
 - How to call 911
 - When to go to the neighbor
 - Something they have control over
- Trust their judgment and intuition
- When to stay, when to get out

Other Safety Strategies When Staying

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- Resources for gaining self-confidence or support
 - Getting a job
 - Joining religious or support group
 - Taking classes – fitness, art, cooking
- Checking in with DV program periodically
- Therapy/counseling sessions
- Identify ways to placate partner
 - Avoid arguments
 - Give him what he wants
 - Comply with roles

Davies, 1998

Other Safety Strategies When Staying

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- **Preserve support system**
 - Rotate family and friends
- **Maintain connections to support system without the batterer knowing**
- **Find ways to save or set aside money**
 - Secret bank account
 - Family or friends
- **Preserve assets for the children**
 - Life insurance policy
 - Separate account

Davies, 1998

Scenario - Lorin

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- Has 3 children, ages 2, 5, and 7
- Married John 2 years ago, father of youngest
- Father of older children died 4 years ago
- Quit her minimum-wage job when she married John
- She and her children rely exclusively on John's small income and on support from her in-laws, who provide them with a house rent-free
- John is physically abusive and cheats on her
- John has told her, "If you ever try to leave, I'll get custody and you'll never get a dime from me or my family."
- Lorin has a long-term plan
 - Stay on good terms with in-laws (provide childcare while she's in school)
 - Go back to school for computer programming
 - Do not confront John about cheating

Davies, 1998

Questions...

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Safety Planning When Leaving

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Safety Planning When Leaving

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- **Leaving is the most dangerous time in an abusive relationship**
 - Safety planning reduces the risk around leaving
- **Short term and long term plans**
 - Walking out the door today
 - Preparing to leave after graduating, finding a job, etc.
- **Does the batterer know?**
 - Risks around batterer finding out
 - Taking formal steps: TPO, divorce
 - Disconnecting emotionally
- **Immediate safety vs. long-term safety**
 - Where will you stay tonight? Tomorrow? Does your batterer know where that is?
 - Transportation and safety
 - Emotional support

Escape Plans

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- DV hotline number – 1-800-33-HAVEN
- How to get out of the home (think fire escape)
- Code word/plan for children
- Hide money, car keys, packed bag
- Copies of important documents
- Care for pets (Ahimsa House)
- Burner phone
- Social media posts/location tracking
- Bank accounts, passwords
- Name/SSN change (complicated!)

Safety Planning When Leaving

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Batterer-generated risks

- How will he react?
- Have you left before? Did he look for you? Make threats? Talk you into coming back?
- Do you need a confidential location? Protection? Consider the following:
 - Shelter
 - TPO
 - Staying with friends or family
- Children’s safety

Life-generated risks

- Financial support
- Safe housing or shelter
- Access to transportation
- Support from family and friends
- Identity (immigration status, sexual orientation, etc.)

Emotional Safety Planning

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- Acknowledge the complex emotions involved in ending an intimate relationship
- What support system is available to the survivor?
 - Is it safe to call friends/family?
 - Who provides the right kind of support?
- Self-care practices
 - Avoiding places or things that remind them of the batterer
 - Having a plan for when emotions come up
 - HALT: Hungry, angry, tired, lonely
 - Finding things to do that maybe they weren’t able to do before
- Acknowledge unhealthy coping mechanisms and safety
 - Drinking, drug use
 - Under or over-eating
 - Dating new people

Scenario - Lucas

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- Lucas, age 23 has been living with his abusive boyfriend, Greg, for 3 years
- Violence has been escalating – last night they got in a fight, and Greg shoved Lucas into the wall, hit him on the head, and broke his glasses. Lucas called police – the officer did not arrest Greg, who left the apartment before the officer arrived. Lucas did not feel like the officer really believed his story or thought he was in danger
- Lucas is ready to leave Greg, but his part-time job at the library does not pay enough to support him moving into his own place
- Lucas is afraid that Greg will pick the fight back up when he gets home after work today
- Lucas has a few close friends, but they are also friends with Greg and don’t know about the violence
- Lucas is cut off from his family in rural Georgia – they disowned him when he came out as gay when he was a senior in high school
- Greg, age 46, is a successful business owner in town and financially stable

Questions...

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Safety Planning Around Contact with the Batterer

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Contact with the Batterer

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Why would a survivor have contact with a batterer after leaving?

- Children
 - ✦ Custody/visitation exchange
 - ✦ Child support
 - ✦ Parent/teacher meeting
- Money
 - ✦ Spousal support
 - ✦ Bills due
- Shared property
 - ✦ Selling a home or car
 - ✦ Exchange of belongings
- Safety
 - ✦ Checking in
 - ✦ Deescalating
 - ✦ Taking his temperature
- Reinforcing decision to leave
 - ✦ Seeing if he has changed
 - ✦ Providing him with emotional support
 - ✦ Missing the relationship

Contact with the Batterer

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- Regardless of the reason, it is not the advocate's place to prevent the survivor from contacting the batterer
- It is the advocate's place to offer safety planning and support around that contact

Contact with the Batterer – Safety Considerations

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- Where and when the contact will happen
 - Public vs. private location
 - During the day
 - Over the phone, email
- Who knows about it, who will follow up
- Escape plan
 - If something goes wrong, how to get away
 - Access to help, transportation, 911

Contact with the Batterer – Safety Considerations

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- Children
 - Friend or family member to supervise
 - Talking with children about safety
 - Including exceptions in the TPO
- Emotional safety
 - Practice self-care
 - Prepare for emotional impact
 - Have a plan to fall back on for emotional support

Scenario - Emily

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- Emily is staying at the shelter, has been there for 2 weeks with her two children, ages 2 and 4 (not batterer's children, they are not married)
- Relays that her batterer, Ryan, contacted her and wants to meet, wants to talk about what happened and apologize
- Emily misses Ryan, but is not sure she wants to go back
- Children witnessed the last violent incident
- Emily has her own car
- She has shared that Ryan owns a gun, but has never threatened her with it
- Emily does not want a TPO, fears that would make Ryan angry and provoke him

Questions...

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Safety Planning with Children

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Safety Planning with Children

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- Begins with a partnership between advocate and parent
- Understanding the strengths and resources of each child
 - Every child is unique – has different strengths, resources, risks and cultural contexts
- Survivors make decisions for their children in the context of their whole lives, not just domestic violence
- Approach parent with a conversational, non-judgmental tone
- Be open and up front about mandated reporting requirements

Information Gathering

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- *“Tell me about your kid(s). How are they? What do you love about them? Does anything worry you about them?”*
- *“What’s their relationship like with dad/abusive partner?”*
- *“Has your partner ever threatened to take the kids? Call CPS? Used them to control you?”*
- *“How strategies have you or your kids used in the past to stay safe?”*
- *“Are you worried about leaving your kids alone with your partner?”*
- *“How do you feel about talking with your kids about safety planning around _____ (visitation, going to school, talking to dad/partner, etc.?”*

Safety Planning with Children

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- Create a safety plan for when abusive incidents arise
 - What to do?
 - When to call for help?
- Create a familiar code word that children and non-abusive parent can use
- Discuss options for children to find a “safe space” when abusive incidents arise

Safety Planning with Children

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- Create a safety map of the community for safe places that the child can escape to
- Discuss children learning their address, how to use a phone, dialing safe phone numbers and how to dial 911
- Plans for confidential location
 - If in shelter, or with family/friends, will child disclose location to batterer?
 - Depending on age, maturity – talk to child about keeping location a secret
 - Child should be prepared that batterer may ask questions
- Emotional safety
 - What to do when feeling sad, scared?
 - What helps me feel safe, strong, loved?

Risks of Safety Planning

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- Be very cautious of the serious risks that can be involved with safety planning
 - Higher risk of harm if abuser is aware of the plan
- Safety planning can sometimes make children feel more fearful
- Children can feel at fault if they are unable to protect themselves, cannot enact their safety plan, or if their non-abusive parent gets hurt

Safety Planning – Things to Consider

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- Keep in mind age-appropriateness, maturity and safety issues of the children
- Make sure all steps of the safety plan are realistic and simple
- Educate non-violent parent in empowering ways rather than giving advice
- Remember, it is not possible for us to guarantee safety. Try not to make promises.

Scenario – Linda and Caleb

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- Linda, age 28 and her son Caleb, age 5, are staying in the shelter
- Caleb misses his dad, Paul (Linda’s abuser) and is eager to go back home
- Linda wants Paul to have visitation with Caleb, but is worried that Caleb will tell Paul where they are staying, what they’ve been doing, etc.
- Linda has shared that Paul does not hurt Caleb, but that Caleb has witnessed a few violent episodes
- Caleb has had some angry outbursts at Linda since they’ve arrived, and he is frequently acting out in the shelter
- Linda wants to take Caleb to meet Paul this weekend for a few hours at a MacDonald’s

Questions...

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Conclusion

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- Staying in an abusive relationship does not necessarily mean accepting the violence.
- Leaving does not necessarily mean that the violence will end.
- Advocates: respect the survivor’s decision-making process and understand that situations are complex
- Safety planning with children begins with a partnership between advocate and parent

Thank You!



Alexis Champion
Training Manager
404-209-0280, ext. 23
achampion@gcadv.org


