

Safety Planning With Teens Tip Sheet

Safety planning can look different for teenagers. Their situations are different in several ways from that of adults, including:

- An adult may be able to completely avoid all situations where she would run into her abuser. But a teenager might be forced to go to school everyday with her abuser.
- An adult can apply for an order of protection for herself. A teen might not be able to apply herself or may not have this open as an option at all.
- An adult has the possibility of accessing shelter, whereas in many places this is not an option for a teenager.

For these reasons, the ways we safety plan with teens might be quite different than how we safety plan with adults. Below are some common situations you might hear when talking to teens and their family and friends.

Your caller says:	You can suggest:
<i>I'm going out with a new guy I don't know too well</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider double dating the first few times you go out with a new guy. • Before leaving on the date, make sure you know the exact plans for the evening, and make sure a parent or friend knows these plans and what time to expect you home. • Let your date know that you are expected to call or let someone know when you get in. • Be aware of your decreased ability to react under the influence of alcohol or drugs. • If you leave a party with someone you do not know well, tell a friend you are leaving and with whom. Ask your friend to call and make sure you got home safely. • Trust your instincts. If a situation makes you uncomfortable, try to be calm and think of a way out of the situation. • Keep money with you in case you needed to take a taxi home.
<i>My new girlfriend wants me to spend all my time with just her</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay in touch with your friends. Make it a point to keep in contact with people other than her. • Stay involved in activities that you enjoy. Don't stop doing things that make you feel good about yourself. • Make new friends. Increase your support network.
<i>Sometimes I'm scared when I'm alone with my boyfriend</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go out to public places with your boyfriend. Try not to be alone with him, or at least not to be alone in an isolated or deserted location. • Let other people know where you are and what your plans will be. • Try not to be dependent on your boyfriend for a ride. • Always try to keep a cell phone with you. • If you feel you are in danger, don't be afraid to call the police. Don't minimize your fears.
<i>I want to break up with my boyfriend, but I'm afraid of what he'll do</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you think the situation might be dangerous, don't break up in person. Do it over the phone, even email. • If you do end up breaking up in person, do it in a public place and don't leave with him. • Have a friend with you, or tell a friend or a parent what you are going to do and where you will be. • Call a friend or counselor afterward and talk about what happened. • If he gave you a cell phone, get rid of it, he might be able to track your movements with the built in GPS. • Change your passwords to anything he might have access to. • Plan for the times when you will miss him.

Your caller says:	You can suggest:
<i>My ex is threatening me; I'm afraid of him</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider telling your parents or other family members what is happening. They can help you screen calls and visitors. • Try not to be alone at home. • Make sure to always lock doors and windows when you're at home. • Talk to your local domestic violence agency about what you or your parents might be able to do about getting an order of protection. They might also offer group or individual counseling. • Keep a journal of the things he is doing to harass you, or abuse you.
<i>My ex is harassing me at school</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try not to be alone. Let your friends know what is happening and have them walk to classes and have lunch with you. • Tell teachers, counselors, coaches, or security guards about what is happening. • Change your routine. Don't always come to school the same way, or arrive at the same time. Always try to ride to school with someone. If you take the bus, try to have someone with you. • Talk to school staff about rearranging your class schedule. • Change your locker or lock. • Plan things you can do after school other than going home to an empty house. • If he's stalking you, this is illegal and can be reported to the police.
<i>My friend told me her boyfriend slapped her. How can I help her?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to your friend and be supportive. • Don't judge your friend for being in the situation or blame her for what happened. • Tell her you believe her and that it wasn't her fault. • Let her know that you are worried about her safety. • Encourage her to talk to a trusted adult; offer to go with her when she talks to them.
<i>My 15 year old daughter is being abused by her boyfriend. What can I do?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to control your emotions, if you appear too shocked or angry, your reaction might frighten your teen. • Don't blame your daughter for being in a bad situation. • Avoid giving her ultimatums about leaving him. Don't ask her to choose between you. Make sure she knows you will always be there for her no matter what. • You might be able to get an order of protection for your daughter. Call your local dv agency to get more info about this.
<i>My boyfriend is threatening to post revealing photos of me on my Facebook page</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set your profile to private. Block anyone you don't want to view your profile, but know that setting up a fake profile is very easy. • Don't use the same user name/passwords for all accounts. • If photos are already posted, do a screenshot to a Word document so you'll have documentation • Report inappropriate content, messages, etc immediately to HELP section of website. • Never post info about your daily activities and whereabouts online. • If you break up with an abusive partner, change your passwords to these and all online accounts immediately, if not before the breakup.