

On your way to being free: things to consider when fleeing domestic violence

Leaving an abuser takes immense courage. While planning can help, it can also feel overwhelming. Here is a gentle guide to use as a starting point, highlighting key things you might want to consider if and when you are able.

Remember, this is not your fault. Remember, you matter.

Your safety

In case you have to leave unexpectedly, think about keeping important documents, medications and other key items in a bag, and your phone charged. Do you have a friend or trusted person whose place you could go to?

While the police may not feel like a safe resource for everyone, if you are comfortable doing so, call them on 999 in an emergency.

You can use the silent solution by pressing 55 if you can't safely speak aloud.

Do you know how to turn your phone's location services off, and how to change your email passwords? If these are likely to be necessary tasks once you leave, try to familiarise yourself with the process.

Your finances

If your abuser has access to your finances, think about familiarising yourself with the process of changing online and telephone banking passwords, so that you can do this quickly once you leave.

Try to keep any cash you do have with you at all times, in case you need to leave at short notice.

If you are struggling financially, there may be help available.

A useful resource for finding personal grants is Turn2Us: [grants-search.turn2us.org.uk](https://www.turn2us.org.uk)

Your wellbeing

The National Domestic Abuse Helpline is a 24 hour service which you can call for free: 0808 2000 247.

You may also want to save your GP's number in your phone.

Lean on friends, family and/or other people you trust. Perhaps you could think about concrete things they can do that would help you.

Think about what self-care looks like for you, whether it's reading, meditation, being creative, exercise, mindful breathing, or something else. Can you try to build some time for those things in your day?

Know that others have been where you are now, and have come out the other side. It is possible.

You are not alone.

Your children

When leaving an abuser, take your children with you, if you can, along with any important items and medications they may need.

It could be useful to rehearse your escape plan with your children.

Consider teaching your children to call 999 in an emergency, including the silent solution of responding to the operator by pressing 55.

You may want to save the number/s of your children's school/s in advance, so you can inform them of the situation and advise them how to proceed once you have left.

Your home

When you are ready, your local domestic abuse service can help you find refuge if you need temporary accommodation.

Find it via the Women's Aid Directory: www.womensaid.org.uk/womens-aid-directory

You might find it helpful to look up the number for a solicitor in advance. If you are worried you won't be able to afford legal advice, the legal aid scheme may be able to help.