

WHAT CAN I DO?

Escaping Abuse



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What is Abuse?

Abuse is the when someone takes actions or uses words to control another person by causing negative feelings and fear. This purposeful manipulation is used to intimidate can happen in several different ways.

These are some common forms of abuse:

- Punching, kicking, slapping, strangling, or using other physical force.
- Words or actions that are meant to purposefully lower self-esteem.
- Threats, shaming, stalking, blaming, name-calling, and mocking.
- Isolating you from friends or family.
- Threatening the wellbeing of your children.
- Controlling money, even money that you earned.
- Sexual behavior that you do not consent to.
- Controlling your religious or spiritual beliefs.
- Using beliefs to control you.
- Threatening the wellbeing of your pets.
- Restricting you from caring for your pets.
- Demanding to check your phone for communication.
- Acting excessively jealous or possessive.
- Threatening to suicide if you leave them.

The abuser may make excuses for the abuse such as saying it won't happen again, that they are trying to teach you to be better, or that they only do it because they love you so much. They may also gaslight you by claiming that you're being dramatic, or giving another reason why you're making a big deal out of nothing.

Sometimes abuse can be difficult to recognize, but looking for the above signs can help. If you are afraid of the person, that is a strong sign of abuse.

Abuse can happen to anyone in any relationship, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, marital status, health, or appearance. Remember, abuse is never your fault. Reaching out for help is a big decision, and can be a complicated choice.

What Do I Do?

An abusive relationship is an unsafe relationship. It is important to take certain steps to ensure your safety.

Safety Plans

Developing a safety plan for when a situation becomes violent or abusive is an important first step. This is your plan for leaving the relationship and means deciding what you will bring, where you will go, important telephone numbers, and how you will put this plan into action. You may also have to make a safety plan for your children and pets.

Keeping Record

Keeping a record of events is important to help your decision-making and will be helpful if you decide to report the abuse to the police or take other legal action. Your documentation of events should include what happened, your feelings, a list of things that may have been taken from you, printouts of threatening communication, and pictures of injuries. **It is important to hide your documentation and other materials (like this pamphlet) hidden where the abuser cannot find it.**



Using Technology Safely

It is vital that you keep your communication and searches secret from your abuser. It is possible to monitor your activity by looking through search history, emails, location information, or social media.

When using the internet, be sure to delete your browser history or use something like Google Chrome's "Incognito Mode" to prevent monitoring.

Ensure that if you are using social media, that your privacy settings are high so that your abuser cannot find information you do not want them to see.

Your email account should be secured with a strong password and you should ensure that you sign out when you are done using it. Your phone can be secured in a similar fashion with a pin, fingerprint, or password. This will keep your communications secure. Your phone also has location tracking, which can be used to monitor location. This feature can be turned off to keep your whereabouts secure.

Finding Help

If you are in immediate danger or need emergency medical attention, call 911.

There are services available to you to help you leave an abusive relationship. Many of these services are listed in Saskatchewan 211, which can be reached by calling or texting 2-1-1 visiting sk.211.ca or using the web chat on the website. Saskatchewan 211 can connect you to Crisis Support, Counselling and Support Centres, and Emergency Shelters and Transition Houses (such as YWCA Prince Albert). You can also call 811 in Saskatchewan for mental health support.

Leaving

The most common reason that leaving an abusive relationship fails is because the victim was unable to find support. Be sure that you have a plan in place prior to leaving to give yourself the highest chance of success.

Creating a support network by choosing trustworthy people to assist you during this process is important. Your support network can consist of friends and family and people from service organizations.

Financial planning prior to leaving is also important, but do not let a lack of money deter you from leaving. Choose a new bank that your abuser does not use, and contact the Ministry of Social Services if you need financial assistance.

Leaving is difficult and can be a challenge, however when it is time to go, leave.

Starting Over

There will be a lot of changes in your life after you leave, which can be scary. Don't be afraid to reach out to your friends, family, or trusted others for support.

At this time it is important to cut ties with the abuser if you can. This will reduce the chance of returning. You may still have feelings or care for your abuser, and this is normal. Be sure to keep yourself as safe by securing your new home and seeking help when you need it.

Remember: you can do it! You deserve to be safe and healthy and free from abuse.