

Emotional Safety Plan

The process of surviving and building a new life requires much courage and incredible energy. Abuse may isolate you from your friends and family. It is critical to have people around you that care about you. To conserve your emotional energy and to support yourself during hard emotional times there are a number of things you can consider doing:

- ☐ Connect with a counsellor and/or a support group
- ☐ Identify things that reduce your vulnerability to stress such as breathing exercises, eating healthy, exercising, pets, yoga, sleep, and being mindful of alcohol or drug use.
- ☐ Engage in activities you find soothing and that ground you. Involve as many senses as you can (i.e. smell, touch).
- ☐ Learn about mindfulness- try to practice regularly
- ☐ Collect resources/pamphlets about surviving abuse. Keep them in a safe place, not in your home.
- ☐ Become involved in community activities to reduce feeling isolated (eg. Women's Centre of Halton).
- ☐ Explore employment opportunities
- ☐ Enroll in school or continuing education to increase your skills.
- ☐ Learn about the law and your rights.
- ☐ Advocate for yourself and articulate your needs to others.
- ☐ Spend time with people who make you feel good and provide positive support.
- ☐ Take part in social activities, i.e.: movie, dinner, exercise.
- ☐ Keep a journal to write about feelings and experiences (positive or negative). Keep it in a safe place.
- ☐ Take time to prepare yourself emotionally before entering stressful situations (talking with your (ex)partner, meeting with lawyers, attending court). Have a trusted and supportive friend/relative present with you.

- ☐ Pace yourself – it may take time to accomplish what you want.
- ☐ Express yourself creatively – painting, art therapy, etc.
- ☐ Be mindful of coping strategies for stress that may have long term negative impacts, such as alcohol, shopping, food.
- ☐ Staying physically active may balance out your stress level and improve your overall well-being.
- ☐ Take time to understand the emotions you're experiencing. Its ok to feel angry. Explore constructive ways to express your emotions.
- ☐ Remember you are important and need to take care of yourself in order to be able to care for others.
- ☐ If you are thinking of returning to a potentially abusive situation, discuss an alternative plan with someone you trust.
- ☐ If you have to communicate with your (ex)partner, determine the safest ways to do so.

6 Steps to Start Healing from Abuse

(by Carmen Leah Ascencio, www.blackgirldangerous.org 2015)

- 1) Recognize there is nothing wrong with you.
- 2) Learn about common reactions to trauma.
- 3) Know that trauma is remembered in the body.
- 4) Identify what makes you feel safe and stable and do those things.
- 5) Connect with others.
- 6) Know what happened to you does not mean anything about you.

Counselling Services for Survivors

For full list of counselling services available to survivors, refer to the Resources Insert.

Books About Healing:

Abusive Relationships:

When Love Hurts: A Woman's Guide to Understanding Abuse in Relationships, Jill Cory.

Should I Stay, or Should I Go: A Guide to Knowing If Your Relationship Can and Should Be Saved. Lundy Bancroft and Jac Patrissi.

Why Does He Do That? Inside the Minds of Angry and Controlling Men, Lundy Bancroft. <http://lundybancroft.com>

Verbally Abusive Relationship: How to Recognize It and How to Respond, 3rd Edition, Patricia Evans. <https://www.patriciaevans.com/>

Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life, Ginny NiCarthy.

Sexual Assault and Childhood Sexual Abuse:

The Courage to Heal. Ellen Bass and Laura Davis

Recovery From Rape. Linda Ledray

Sexual Healing: Transforming the Sacred Wound., Peter Levine.

Speaking Our Truth: Voices of Courage and Healing for Male Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. Neal King

Victims No Longer: Guide for Men Recovering from Sexual Child Abuse. Mike Lew

Trauma:

Waking The Tiger: Healing Trauma. Peter A. Levine

The Body Keeps Score: Brain, Mind, and Body In the Healing of Trauma. Bessel Van Der Kolk.

Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Violence to Political Terror. Judith Herman

The PTSD Workbook. Mary Beth William & Soili Poijula

Coping with Trauma Related Dissociation: Skills Training. Suzette Boon, Kathy Steele, & Onno Van Der Hart

Invisible Heroes: Survivors of Trauma and How They Heal. Belleruth Naparstek

