

Technology & Social Media

Relationships and (ex)partner's behaviours change before, during, and after a break-up. The use of technology and social media can be used as a form of domestic violence and sexual violence to help an (ex)partner control, coerce, stalk, monitor, threaten, and harass.

- ☐ Consider changing your email address and phone number.
- ☐ Change your passwords (cell phone, social media, computer, etc..)
- ☐ Remove (ex)partner's name from your cell phone provider's account.
- ☐ Consider blocking, changing privacy settings, or de-activating your profile from social media
- ☐ If your phone has a location function or GPS, such as 'Find my Phone' on the iPhone, consider turning it off.
- ☐ If you have left your (ex)partner, consider having a secondary phone, such as a landline, in your house and use it for private or sensitive conversations.
- ☐ Be cautious about photos that give clues as to where you are, live, frequent, etc. Turn off GPS capability in your camera and smart phone camera.
- ☐ GPS should be disabled on your mobile phone – check frequently to ensure this has not been altered without your knowledge.
- ☐ Check your Bluetooth setting and delete devices you are not aware of or turn off completely.
- ☐ For car GPS, do not use specific home address, instead be vague about home location.
- ☐ If the abusive person knows where you are, where you have been, or that you are in your car, have someone (mechanic) check your car for hidden location devices.
- ☐ Spyware can easily be downloaded onto your phone. If spyware is on your phone your conversations, texts, and locations may be available to your (ex)partner. Have your phone set to manufacturers setting, or get a new SIM card, and get a new unlisted blocked number on it. Get support from your cell phone provider if needed.
- ☐ Keystroke monitoring programs on your phone is undetectable – pay attention to if your (ex)partner is aware of things that you texted/emailed and shows up places where you arranged using your phone.
- ☐ Perform a "Google" and/or "image" search on your name. Search social media platforms to see if a profile was created to impersonate you.
- ☐ Do not share detailed/personal information with a professional over the phone or by email until you confirm their identity (contact person using their phone number and extension).
- ☐ Take screen shots or pictures of any unwanted contact by (ex)partner, or abusive/threatening comments made by (ex)partner on social media.

- ☐ Be aware your social media posts, emails, and texts could be used by your (ex) partner in family court and/or criminal court proceedings.
- ☐ When using the computer, be aware your (ex)partner may track the websites you have visited or read your email messages. Computers have what is called a cache file, which automatically saves web pages and graphics. Anyone who looks at the cache file on your computer can see what information you have viewed recently on the Internet. Also, most web browsers (the software that lets you search the internet – like Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari) keeps a list of the most recent web sites and links that you have visited in a history file. You can look at your own history by clicking on the history button on your toolbar.
- ☐ There are steps you can take to make it more difficult for someone to track your activities however if your (ex)partner knows a lot about computers it may be safer to use a computer outside the home such as school, library, a friend's house, internet café, Women's Centre of Halton, etc.
- ☐ While it is possible to clear the cache and history files so that your computer doesn't keep a list of the sites you have visited, you should be very cautious about doing this. If your (ex)partner is comfortable with computers and sees that you have cleared all the cache and history files on your computer (including the sites they have visited), they could become suspicious or angry. If this is a possibility, consider deleting only a few of the website/caches to cover your tracks, or it may be better for you to use a computer that they cannot access.
- ☐ If you do decide to clear your browser history, using a safe computer, Google how to erase your cache file and Internet history for your specific Internet search engine (Safari, Internet Explorer, Chrome, Mozilla).

Technology is always evolving often at the detriment to survivors, however, also in development is technology designed to help keep survivors safe.

- ☐ Consider downloading an emergency alert or app, such as the Red Panic Button app: redpanicbutton.com, that allows users to contact pre-arranged emergency contacts (including 911) on their cell phone with a message along with their GPS location. For a fee, this app can expand to allow the user to take pictures or videos, or create an outgoing voice message.
- ☐ If financially possible, home security cameras are available that connect to your phone, are motion activated, work at night, connect to your smartphone, speakers to share message while inside or away from your house. These devices are available for purchase on-line or at any electronic store.
- ☐ For communication with your (ex)partner regarding issues related to your children, consider using an app that facilitates communication, maintains children's schedules and appointments, stores all communication, and reduces the frequency of contact between parents, such as Our Family Wizard (annual subscription) or 2 Houses (free).