



NAVIGATING A TOXIC/ABUSIVE SITUATION

"WHAT IF..." SAFETY PLAN

Navigating a toxic or an abusive home or situation can come with a lot of barriers. Your Care Advocate can help you through the process.

If you are not already connected with a Care Advocate, you can schedule an appointment via our [Connect with The Care Center](#) form or call the Care Line at 702-895-0602 for immediate assistance.

Below is a checklist of steps that may be helpful. If you've already completed a step or do not want to engage in it, you can skip it.

STEP 1 IDENTIFY YOUR IMMEDIATE SAFETY NEEDS

☐ A) Finding an immediate place to stay (go to Step 3 after completing this step)

**While permanently leaving may not be an option, there may be situations where you need to leave immediately for your safety.*

☐ A shelter (an advocate can walk you through the process and connect you to one of these agencies)

☐ [SAFE NEST](#) Call or Text 24/7 Hotline: 702-646-4981

☐ [SAFE HOUSE](#) Call 24/7 Hotline: 702-564-3227

☒ A friend or relative's home

☐ If you have a trusted friend or relative that you can be honest about what is happening, you may be able to create a plan with them to stay temporarily when needed.

☐ You may have a code word that you can share with them to alert them you need to spend the night.

☐ Name of friend/relative _____

☐ Name of friend/relative _____

☐ B) Creating a plan to leave safely in a crisis:

☐ Identify what documents and materials you may need to leave including:

☐ State IDs

☐ Birth certificates

☐ Phone & Charger

☐ School supplies

☐ Technology

☐ Medication (e.g., asthma inhaler, insulin, Epi-Pen)

☐ Cash

☐ ATM card

☐ House key

- ☐ Car key
 - ☐ A change of clothes
 - ☐ Comfort items (e.g., favorite stuffed animal or photograph)
 - ☐ Baby supplies (formula, diaper, wipes, change of clothes)
 - ☐ Copy of Protection/Restraining Order
 - ☐ Child's birth certificate
 - ☐ Health insurance card
 - ☐ Other _____
- ☐ Put these items together in a bag and keep it in a safe place where it won't be discovered and that you can access quickly if you leave.
- ☐ For example, under your bed, closet, in your car, at a friend's house.
 - ☐ Where are you going to keep your bag? _____
- ☐ Know which exit is safest to use and where to go once you've left
- ☐ For example, run to a neighbor's, a friend's place, or are you able to get into your car and drive somewhere safe?
 - ☐ Keep note of accessibility needs you may have in order to leave and gather necessary assistive devices.
 - ☐ Take note of the bus lines and times for your exit.
 - ☐ Safe exits _____
 - ☐ Where am I going? _____
 - ☐ What do I need? _____
 - _____
 - ☐ Bus line and times _____
- ☐ Have your phone on and charged with the emergency contact you feel most comfortable calling if you need to leave immediately.
- ☐ For example a relative, friend, roommate, neighbor, police, etc.
 - ☐ Identify a word or phrase that you can use as a code in a phone call, text, or instant message to signals you need help.
 - ☐ Emergency contact _____
 - ☐ Emergency contact _____
 - ☐ Safety word/phrase _____
- ☐ If an argument or violence starts, move to a room that doesn't have weapons and has easy access to an exit.
- ☐ For example you want to avoid rooms like the kitchen or a room with guns.
 - ☐ Safe room with access to an exit _____
- ☐ C) Responding to escalation:
- Violence can escalate quickly and an argument can turn physically violent unexpectedly when in an abusive situation.
- ☐ It may be helpful to track what some accelerators are for the violence occurring.
- ☐ Accelerators are not the cause of violent behavior but they can make it more unpredictable or extreme.
 - ☐ For example, accelerators may be alcohol, drugs, stressors like grief or finances.
 - ☐ These things may be used by the toxic or abusive person(s) and increased physical or emotional violence may follow. If you've noticed this, it may be helpful to note this and create a plan to respond.

- ☐ For example, if you've noted that this person(s) escalates their behavior after using drugs or alcohol, you may make a plan to avoid them or your home when they are using.
- ☐ You may use a Stalking Log to track escalation, patterns of abuse, and forms of gaslighting.
 - ☐ Gaslighting is a tactic that makes you feel like you are losing your mind and/or makes others disbelieve you. An example may be the toxic or abusive person lying about something they did to you or hiding your belongings.
- ☐ It may also be helpful to identify "allies" that support you but are also able to de-escalate the toxic or abusive person(s).
 - ☐ For example if there's a roommate or family member that can safely talk to or distract them, it may be helpful to create a codeword to use to request that they step in.
- ☐ If there are weapons in your home, it may be helpful to note where they are and what to do if they are missing or the toxic or abusive person(s) is attempting to use them.
 - ☐ If an argument begins or when the toxic or abusive person is under the influence, it may be helpful to avoid the room where the weapons are located or leave the home entirely.
 - ☐ If you are experiencing sexual violence/non-consensual sex (we use both terms as we believe it's important for you to be able to identify your experience however is most comfortable) here are some resources:
 - ☐ Can include:
 - ☐ Pressure to perform sexual activities you aren't comfortable with
 - ☐ Sexual activities you did not enthusiastically consent to
 - ☐ Sexual contact against your will
 - ☐ Sexual assault/violence
 - ☐ If you are concerned about pregnancy but accessing birth control may be dangerous, are there ways to hide birth control methods?
 - ☐ For example, keeping them with a friend or having a conversation with a healthcare professional on your options?
 - ☐ If you are concerned about STD/STIs and the person(s) is not respecting your request to use protection, you may access the [Student Health Center](#) for testing (a Care Advocate can provide a referral) to track any concerns.

STEP 2 IDENTIFY YOUR EMOTIONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND/OR SPIRITUAL NEEDS

- ☐ Abusive or toxic homes or relationships can impact one's emotional, psychological or spiritual well-being. Surrounding yourself with support may address some of these impacts. Some ideas may be:
 - ☐ Limiting as much time as possible at your home by going to the library, coffee shops, friend/loved one's home, or taking long walks/hanging out at a nearby park
 - ☐ Meeting with a therapist to empower you with affirmations and validate your experience
 - ☐ A Care Advocate can help review counseling options and connect you to campus or community therapists.
 - ☐ Please note that couples counseling when in an abusive relationship can be dangerous due to power and control dynamics. Counseling is meant to be a safe and equitable space and that may not exist when there are inequitable power dynamics.
 - ☐ Review the [Student's Guide to Radical Healing Zine](#) to identify healing modalities that you may want to engage in, or to learn more about the impacts of trauma to validate your experience.

- ☐ Schedule regular check-ins with friends or loved ones who can provide validation, a safe space to share your feelings, and affirmations.
- ☐ Creating affirmations that specifically address some of the toxic or harmful messages the toxic or abusive person(s) uses may help avoid internalizing that messaging.
- ☐ It is common to question yourself and what you deserve when in an abusive or toxic situation. Another form of affirmation may be reviewing the healthy relationships wheel to identify the aspects of a relationship everyone deserves .
 - ☐ The wheel is for romantic partners but can be applied to familial relationships as well.
 - ☐ Please note that it can be dangerous to try and implement boundaries in an abusive dynamic, you are the expert on your situation and what is safe to do.
- ☐ Identifying groups or activities that bring you joy and provide a space of support may also be helpful.
- ☐ Identify emotional accelerators such as certain topics that often turn into arguments
 - ☐ For example, finances, "the future", chores, careers, etc.
- ☐ While it may not be possible to avoid these, it may be helpful to be aware of when an argument is about to start and to have a plan of how you would like to respond.
- ☐ A response may be going to a different room (if safe to do so), changing the topic, asking to discuss later, or using language that has de-escalated arguments in the past.