



FREE GUIDE 01 • FOR SURVIVORS AND CAREGIVERS

I Left. What Do I Do Today?

A gentle first-steps companion for the hours and days after leaving an abusive situation. You do not have to do every item today. Begin with what is safe and possible.

First, take one breath. Leaving was not a small thing. You do not have to have the next month figured out to take the next safe step.

A note about privacy

If your phone, accounts, location, or downloads may be monitored, avoid saving this guide on that device. A trained advocate can help you think through a safety plan that fits your situation.

Choose one step for today

1 Find your safest way to communicate

Is there a phone, email account, or person you can use without someone else seeing? If you are unsure, do not change settings abruptly; that can sometimes alert an abusive person. Ask an advocate to help you plan.

2 Identify where you and your children can be tonight

Think about a safe place, transportation, medication, and any accessibility needs. If you do not have these figured out, that is a reason to ask for help, not a failure.

3 Make one human connection

Text or call one trusted person: "I'm safe enough to talk for a moment. Could you help me with one next step?" You may also contact a local domestic violence program.



When you have a little more room

Circle or fill in only what applies. Do not carry a written plan if finding it could put you at risk.

People and places

A person I can contact safely:

A safer place I can go or ask about:

A way to get there:

Practical things to ask about

Consider medications, identification, children's documents, money or benefits, school pickup instructions, pets, mobility devices, and a safe mailing address. An advocate can help you prioritize these without trying to solve everything at once.

If children are involved

When safe, tell the school or caregiver who may pick them up and how to reach you. Ask about privacy and safety procedures before sharing a new address. Children do not need to carry the responsibility for adult safety.

A script you can borrow

To a trusted person

"I have left an unsafe situation. I do not need you to fix it. Could you help with [a ride / a safe call / childcare / finding an advocate]? Please do not share my location or contact details."

What matters next

A personalized safety plan is more useful than a generic checklist. The National Domestic Violence Hotline has guidance for after leaving and can connect you with a trained advocate. You may also talk with a peer support specialist at acontagiousmile.com/peer-to-peer-support.

This is educational peer-support information, not individualized safety, medical, mental-health, or legal advice. If you are in immediate danger in the U.S., call 911. For confidential domestic violence support, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-SAFE (7233) or thehotline.org. If you or someone else is in a mental-health crisis in the U.S., call or text 988. Use a safer device if someone may monitor yours.

Sources: thehotline.org/resources/after-you-leave/ • thehotline.org/what-is-a-safety-plan/