



ASSESSING YOUR SAFETY

Certain factors can help you predict when a violent encounter is likely to take place. Being aware of these factors can help you tailor your safety plan. Ask yourself the following:

Does the abuser change just before becoming violent?

- Look for changes in body language:
 - Changes in eyes
 - Posture changes (fist clenched, stands taller, etc.)
 - Changes in facial expression
- Voice changes (angry, harsh, strained, louder, etc.)
- Nonverbal threats (pretends to hit you / jumps at you) before striking you
- Verbal threats to harm you before striking you

Do you notice changes in yourself before a violent incident?

- **Physical responses before an attack:** stomach pains, headaches, difficulty breathing, pain in chest, etc.
- **Emotional responses before an attack:** anxiety, fear, loss of sleep, loss of appetite, increased nervousness, etc.

What circumstances usually exist before a violent incident?

- Presence or use of alcohol/drugs
- Lack of money
- Pay day
- A specific day of the week
- A specific time of the year (holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, special events)
- When certain people are around
- When certain people are *not* around
- When you are at home
- When you are outside of the home



Other things to consider when assessing your safety:

- The abuser expresses fantasies or threats of homicide or suicide
- Pending or actual separation
- Pending or actual serving of court orders (divorce papers, restraining orders, etc.)
- If you are in a new relationship with someone else
- Other dates that trigger the abuser or remind the abuser of diminished control
- Pregnancy
- Children in your home
- Threats of, or actual child abuse
- Children witnessing (hearing, seeing, knowing about) the violence.
- Depression and or psychiatric history
- Prior use of, access, or possession of weapons (guns, knives, ropes, knowledge of martial arts or other fighting techniques, etc.)
- Military or paramilitary (police) training
- Being isolated; where you live, your culture, your race, your religion, your disability, etc.
- Isolation of the abuser; fired or laid off from work, disconnected from friends and family, disconnected from culture, religion, etc.
- Obsessiveness about your connections to friends, family, and co-workers
- Possessiveness and control over you (accuses you of cheating, stops you from speaking to friends and family)
- Demands access to your private information (passwords, bank accounts, social media accounts, e-mails, your phone, etc.)
- Extent and escalation of prior violence (Has it happened before? How often has it happened? What kind of violence took place?)
- Threats of violence to you or to others (children, family, friends)
- Previous police intervention
- Known violence with others (family, friends, past relationships, children, etc.)
- Ignoring or violating court orders
- Pet/animal abuse