

Safety Tip of the week

11/06/2021

Safety during Holidays

Planning a trip can be stressful, but if you're leaving your home with an abusive partner, you might be more concerned about your own safety while traveling.

We always emphasise creating a safety plan for any given scenario. Having a plan can help you cope while traveling or provide opportunities for escape if necessary. If you are traveling with an abusive partner, consider making a plan for your emotional safety. What this looks like can differ from person to person, but it might include books, music or other favourite activities that calm you or make you comfortable. Don't forget to incorporate self-care while on the whilst away.

If you are pregnant and traveling, you may want to talk to your pre-natal care provider about suggestions for staying safe during travel, including stress-reducing strategies. Keep their number in a safe place so you can contact a nurse or doctor in case of emergency during your travel.

Our top safety tips for victims/survivors:

1. Put the right numbers on speed dial. If you have a mobile phone, put the following numbers on speed dial/in your address book, check which DV service is available if required at your holiday destination. Use fake names if you need to minimise suspicion:

- Local DV service
- The local police number and 000
- The number of a close friend, co-worker or family member who can be on standby to get you out of the situation or act as witness.

For those who fear that their phone may be taken away from them, memorise all important numbers so, if need be, you can call from a public pay phone.

2. Have a 'Safe' word/phrase. In violent or emergency situations, you may not be able to text or say much. Have an agreed 'safe' word or phrase with your close friend/co-worker or family member who agrees to have their phone on standby to receive any emergency calls/texts. Keep it short and simple.

3. Keep your phone (and some money) on you at all times. Also remember to keep it fully charged at all times. You will never know when a situation will erupt, so it is crucial to have it on hand, especially if you know you might be alone with your abuser. Also have cash in hand in case you need to make a run for your life for taxi etc.

4. Arrange for an ally in advance. If you are going to spend the holiday season with extended family and you know who would believe and support you, call that person in advance to ask him or her for support and intervention should a situation turn violent. This option may not be available for all victims/survivors but it would be a feasible one for many, especially if visiting their own parents, siblings, cousins etc.

5. Always have an audience. Use holiday visits to extended family and friends as a chance to minimise being alone with your abuser. At best, being in company will keep the violence in check. At worst, if violence does happen, it will happen publicly and you may have others stepping in to intervene or at least a few witnesses.

6. Defuse it. Walking away from a potentially explosive situation may help temporarily alleviate the abuse and avoid injuries and deaths. Plan ahead with an ally (a friend or family member who will be with you for Christmas and who will support you) to run interference and get your abuser distracted by food, alcohol, a sporting event etc.

7. Have an escape plan. When you are away in a household that is not your own, quietly check out all possible escape routes in the house itself. Better yet, take time to set up a plan of escape including the numbers of people willing to help you get away. If there is a good chance that your abuser will be in a drunken or drug-induced sleep over the holidays, it may be your chance to escape with your kids and pets.

8. Give your itinerary, including where you'll be staying and all contact information, to a trusted friend or family member.

9. Keep copies of your documents (passport, driver's license, visa, etc.) with you if possible, and/or leave copies with a trusted friend or family member who will not be influenced by your partner.

