

Thinking of running away? Think safety first.

If you are experiencing violence at home, are at risk of being kicked out of your home, or are thinking of running away, you should think about your safety first.



Before you run away, ask yourself these questions:

1. Is it dangerous to stay at home?
2. What would have to change to make me comfortable staying at home? Is there anything I can do to improve my home situation before I leave?
3. Who can help me improve my home life? Is there someone at home who will listen if you can find the right way to let them know there's a problem? Do you know anyone else you can talk to - someone who can help you figure out a way?
4. Is running away safe? If I leave, where will you go the first night? What about the next nights?
5. Who can I count on to help me?
6. What are my other options?

If you are experiencing violence or abuse of any kind at home:

- Find someone you feel comfortable with to talk to about the problem at home.
- Think about what you can do to keep yourself safe while living at home:
 - Recognize the signs of when an abusive situation is developing (ie. questioning, interrogating, accusing, blaming, arguing, etc) and try to leave the area.
 - Tell people you trust about the abuse, even if it's in the past, and ask them to call the police if they ever think you are in danger.
 - Develop code words or a signal to use with friends when you are in immediate danger and need help.
 - Make an escape plan that includes 3 places you could go to be safe if you needed to get away in a hurry. (ie. emergency shelter, police station, a friend or neighbour's house).
- If you are planning to leave your home to escape abuse:
 - Keep important phone numbers with you at all times. (ie. police, hotlines, family, friends, youth shelter) Keep some change for phone calls with you at all times.
 - Carry your own documents such as your birth certificate, identification, or social security card, and other important items such as medication, or ask someone you trust or an agency that helps you to hold them for you.
 - Pack a bag of some clothes and any other items you might need if you were to leave in a hurry. Keep the bag hidden somewhere safe where you can get it if you need to leave - such as outside the home or at a friend's house.

For your own safety, don't just run away. The best thing you can do is talk about the problem with someone you trust.



MISSING
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SAFETY TIPS
FOR TEENS

It really *IS* all about you.



- Always tell your parents where you're going, who you're with and when you'll be home. Call them if your plans change. If there is an emergency at home, they will need to know where they can find you OR if something happens to you; they need to know where to start looking.
- Keep identification with you at all times and make sure your parents have a list of everyone you hang out with (friends, co-workers, acquaintances, teammates) and their phone numbers.
- When walking or traveling by bus at night, always travel with one other person. If you must travel alone, always have a cell phone with you.
- Whether it's day or night, whether you have a friend with you or not....NEVER hitchhike and NEVER accept a ride with someone you don't know...even if they tell you it's an emergency. Trust your instincts!
- Don't accept offers of gifts, drugs, alcohol or cigarettes from people you don't know. Better yet, if it's illegal, don't accept them at all.
- Before going to a job interview, discuss the opportunity with your parents. Let them know where you are going, who you are meeting with and at what time. If possible, take someone with you.
- Keep to well-lit, public places – never go into dark, isolated places, especially at night, and never take shortcuts.
- Only babysit in the homes of families you know.
- Respect yourself.** No one has the right to touch you or be physically demanding. You have the right to reject any attention (physical or verbal), that is unwanted or that makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Keep alert.** Be aware of people following you, hanging around your school, home or places you go. Be observant – your description might help Police.
- Never just run away.** Life on the streets is not as easy as it may seem. If things are bad at home and you need to leave immediately, talk to someone you trust like another relative or a friend's parents. See the back page of this handout for more tips.
- Remember....once you are on the streets there are a number of forces working to keep you there. Don't take any chances.
- Always trust your instincts.** Do not be afraid to be assertive. Remember...you have the right to be safe, and to say NO – even to adults.

R U 4 REAL?



Facebook, texting, cellphones: *Who's really on the line?*

Think about what you post.

Sharing provocative photos or intimate details online, even in private emails, can cause you problems later on. Even people you consider friends can use this info against you, especially if they become ex-friends.

Read between the "lines."

It may be fun to check out new people for friendship or romance, but be aware that, while some people are nice, others act nice because they're trying to get something. Flattering or supportive messages may be more about manipulation than friendship or romance.

Don't talk about sex with strangers.

Be cautious when communicating with people you don't know in person, especially if the conversation starts to be about sex or physical details. Don't lead them on – you don't want to be the target of a predator. If they persist, tell someone you trust or call your local police.

Avoid in-person meetings.

The only way someone can physically harm you is if you're both in the same location, so – to be 100% safe – don't meet them in person. If you really have to get together with someone you "met" online, don't go alone. Have the meeting in a public place, tell a parent or another adult you trust, and bring some friends along.

Be smart when using a cell phone.

All the same tips apply with phones as with computers. Except phones are with you wherever you are, often away from home and your usual support systems. Be careful who you give your number to and how you use GPS and other technologies that can pinpoint your physical location.

Source: 'Social web safety tips for teens', www.safeteens.com

