

MY *Guide* TO SAFETY



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Dear You,

I am so grateful you have found this tool and are taking the time to read this letter. You've been on my mind for days and I've really thought about what I'd like to share with you. Once, when I was in high school, my family moved away from the only place I've really really loved. Teachers I adored. I wrote one of them a letter and he wrote back. In his response, he said, "I'm sad I didn't get a chance to give you a hug goodbye to show I do care about your welfare." I clung to that line in the letter like a lifeline. Maybe you need one now like I did then. As hard as it may be to hear it or believe it, I care about you.

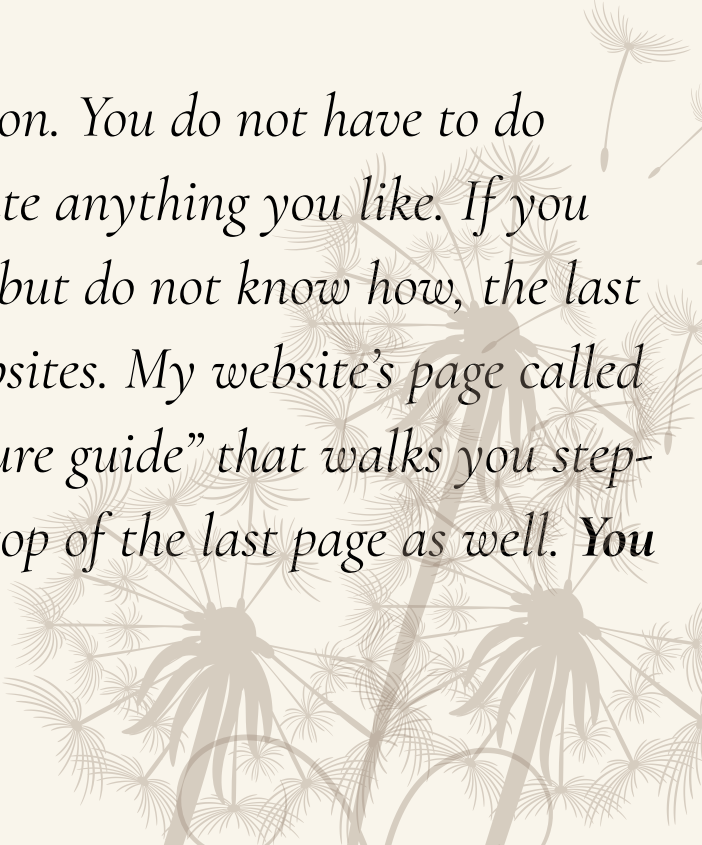
I've spent nearly all of my adult life working to support you: becoming certified in all kinds of things so that I might be able to connect with and support you. I'm a lot of things: I'm a mother whose very heart beats for her daughters. I'm a certified trauma-informed, compassionate focused life coach. I'm trained as a MAP, I'm a court appointed Guardian ad Litem for foster children, I'm a member of the Speaker's Bureau for RAINN and a longtime hotline specialist. I've written sixteen books dealing with abuse. **I am also a survivor.** As a survivor, I understand fear and pain. I know what it is like to be at the absolute rock bottom of life, not sure why tomorrow matters. I've felt invisible, broken, dirty, too.

We are not completely different.

But you have been my inspiration for a long time. You're reading this resource. You sought out the website. You've scraped and clawed your way to tomorrow every single day... even on the days you didn't think you would. Winnie-the-Pooh said, "You are smarter than you think and braver than you believe." That simple-minded bear is right.

*You are the expert of you. You know your unique set of circumstances better than anyone else. So, this guide is not meant to **tell you what to do**; it is simply meant to offer options. I'm not a counselor, and nothing I can offer will replace that kind of support, but these are tools I've compiled over many years of working with others, some of whom have found these pages helpful.*

*A "safety plan" is unique for every person. You do not have to do every page. You change, add or eliminate anything you like. If you find that you need to talk to someone, but do not know how, the last page of the guide has numbers and websites. My website's page called The Holding Room, also has a "disclosure guide" that walks you step-by-step to sharing. My email is at the top of the last page as well. **You are not alone.***



*In case you are not sure or have never heard it said, **you do not deserve trauma.** Whether you have been physically, sexually, emotionally or spiritually harmed, **it is not your fault.** Nothing you can say or do can justify someone causing you harm. **You deserve to be safe.***

*Tomorrow does not have to be a threat; it can be a promise. The greatest lie of abuse is that you're alone and have something to be ashamed of. If there is no one to contradict the lies, then it makes complete sense that it sounds like the truth. It's why those who harm alienate you from those you love and demand silence... but that does not make them right. **You matter. Your story matters.***

Thank you for taking a step forward by picking up this guide. Doing just that reminds me what courage looks like, what hope looks like.

Joyfully,



WARNING SIGNS

Sometimes it is hard to know what we are experiencing when we are going through it. Below are some common signs of domestic violence. If you are experiencing any of these, or are afraid you will, it is okay to reach out. Resources are on the last two pages of the packet.

Name calling

Explosive temper or outbursts that are unpredictable

Checking your phone or computer without your permission

Excessively texting or calling you when you are not together

Isolation - telling you that those you love aren't good for you

Intimidation

Gaslights you into believing things happened differently

Humiliating you on purpose

Controlling decisions

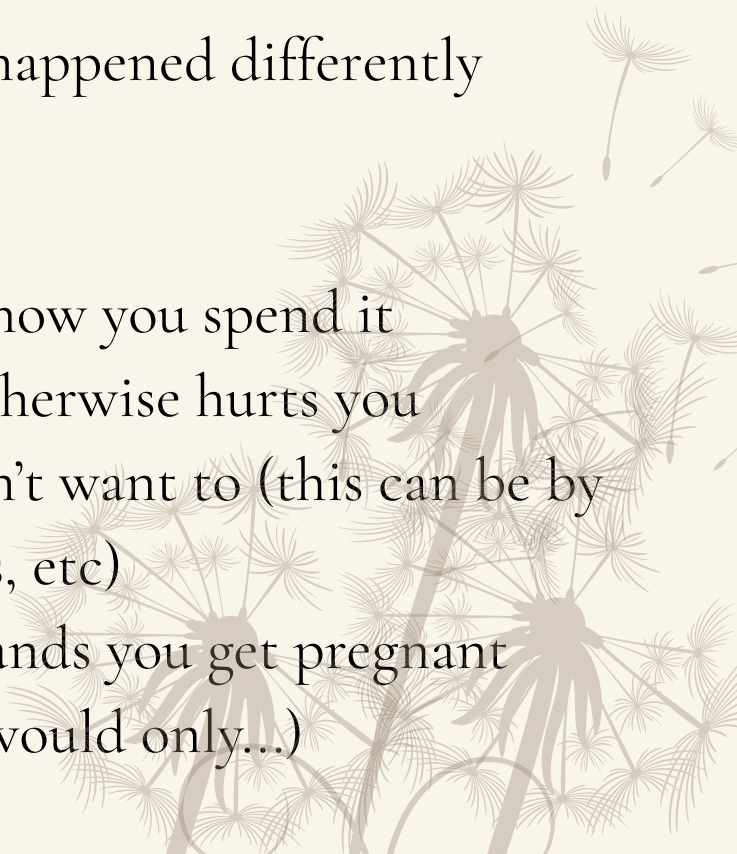
Tries to control access to money or how you spend it

Hits, kicks, bites, slaps, chokes or otherwise hurts you

Forces you to have sex when you don't want to (this can be by pure force or by coercion, guilt trips, etc)

Controls your birth control or demands you get pregnant

Blames you for the violence (if you would only...)



WARNING SIGNS

You are the expert of you. No one knows the patterns better than you. How do you know when things are getting worse? What are signs that tell you unsafe behavior is escalating? When you feel like you're drowning, how does your body tell you it's struggling? These are your signs that things are unsafe.



The form consists of five horizontal, rounded rectangular boxes stacked vertically, intended for writing. A faint, artistic illustration of dandelions is visible in the bottom right corner of the page, partially overlapping the last two boxes.

COPING STRATEGIES

What are some things I can do that help me feel more at ease when I am struggling? These can be as simple as drinking a cup of coffee by a window or taking the dog for a walk.

Anything that helps you take a deeper breath in.



The worksheet features five horizontal rounded rectangular boxes for writing coping strategies. A faint illustration of dandelions is located in the bottom left corner, with several seeds floating upwards across the page.

NEW COPING SKILLS

These are not meant to be cures.

They can help bring you back to a state of calm.

Fill in the circle of the one(s) you will add



Sensory bag: Create a bag that includes 1 item for each sense (a pic for sight, gum for taste, stress ball). When you feel upset, take 1 item out at a time and describe it in as much detail as possible.

☐ I will try this



Movement This can be as simple as rhythmic tapping of fingers against your wrist, taking a walk, moving to a different room, exercising, shifting your weight from side to side. Go for a drive.

☐ I will try this



Temperature Change As easy as it sounds. Shift the temperature of your body: hold an ice cube, take a hot or cold bath, put an ice or heating pack on your neck. **Bonus:** try adjusting the lights

☐ I will try this



Creative Expression Shoot baskets. Play golf. Write or journal (try doing this to music). Bake something. Do art. The goal is a masterpiece. The goal is the release of emotions.

☐ I will try this



Box Breaths Find a comfortable spot. Place a hand on heart and one on belly. Breathe in slowly for 4 seconds. Hold that breath for 4 seconds. Release slowly to the count of 4. Repeat three times.

☐ I will try this

A SAFE WORD

A safe word is a word that is used **only** if you feel unsafe or as a safety check for children. The word can be absolutely anything **but should be completely random** with no significant meaning. If it is ever used, it is then changed. It is **only given** to safe people.

A safe word can be required for your children to leave with someone. It can be a code word between you and a trusted friend. If the code (safe) word is used, it can mean whatever you pre-determine (call 911, come get me, create a distraction by calling me and telling me I have to leave, etc). **Rules:** if the safe word is used, the predetermined action is **immediately** enacted because it means “help.”

A sample script: “This is going to be our **safe** word. If I use it, please (call 911, come get me, etc) immediately because I am in an unsafe situation” or for children “if someone tells you to go with them, ask them for the safe word. If they do not know it, do not go with them. The safe word is ____”

Who is (are) my trusted friend / family member(s)?

What is (are) the rule(s) for the safe word? (under what circumstances can it be used? What happens if it is used?)

What is my safe word?

KNOW MY HOME

Kitchen

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?



Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

Living Room

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

Can I lock / unlock / install cameras into any of these rooms? Which ones?

Master Bath

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

Second Bath

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove



KNOW MY HOME

Master Room

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?



Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

Guest Room

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

Can I lock / unlock / install cameras into any of these rooms? Which ones?

Kids' Room(s)

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

Garage

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

KNOW MY HOME

_____ **Room**

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?



Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

_____ **Room**

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

Can I lock / unlock / install cameras into any of these rooms? Which ones?

_____ **Room**

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove

_____ **Room**

Safest exit:

Can I leave a window unlocked
or create a safe exit?

Most Dangerous Spot

What should I add / remove



SAFE & UNSAFE ROOMS

Which rooms are
the most dangerous?

If possible, I want to lead my
abuser **away** from these rooms:

**Rooms with a lot of glass or sharp
objects**

Bathroom
Kitchen

Rooms that do not have a safe exit:

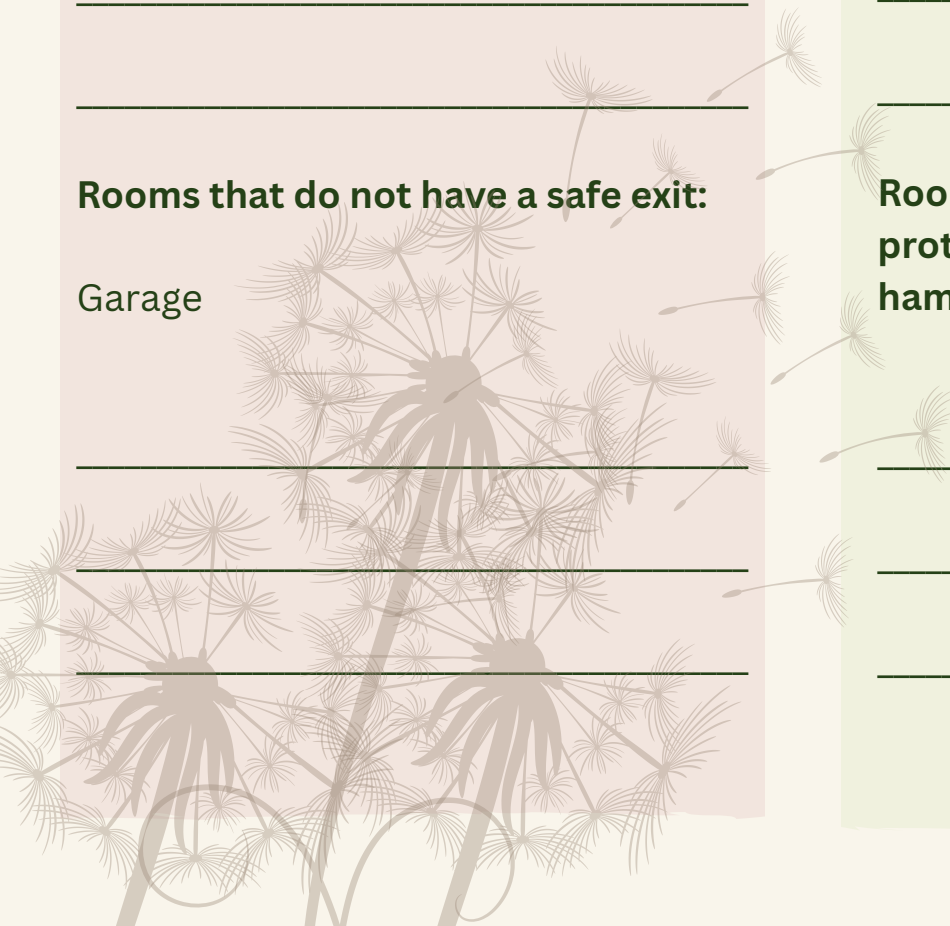
Garage

Which rooms are
the safest?

If possible, I want to lead my
abuser **toward** these rooms:

**Spacious rooms where it's harder to be
cornered, rooms with safe exits or
cameras**

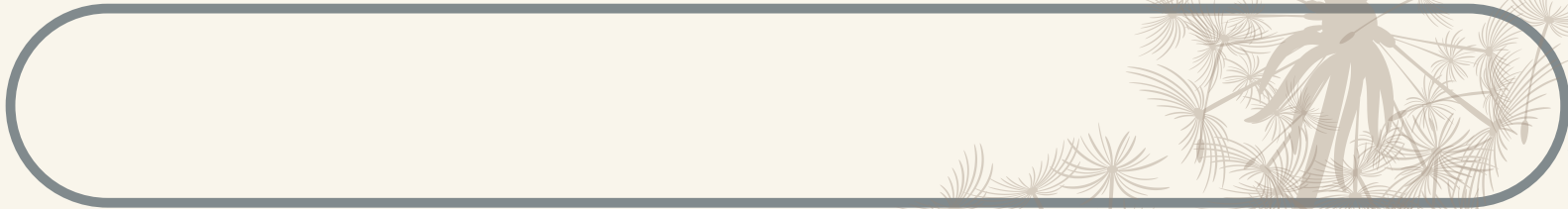
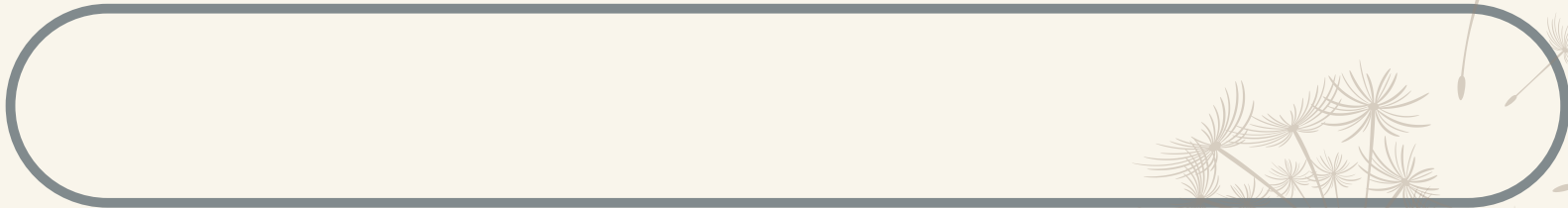
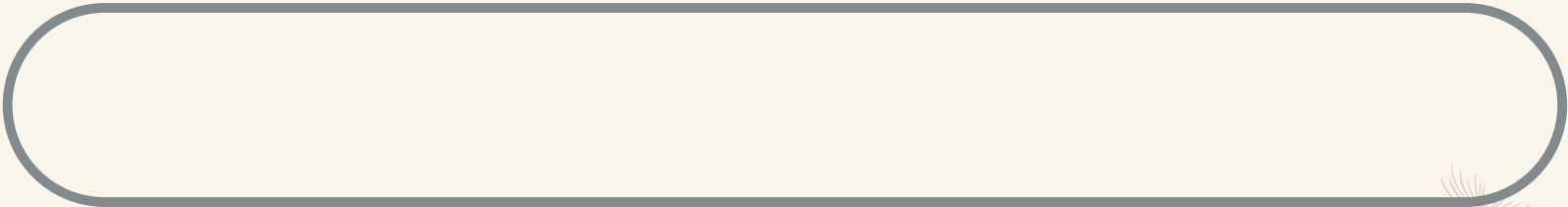
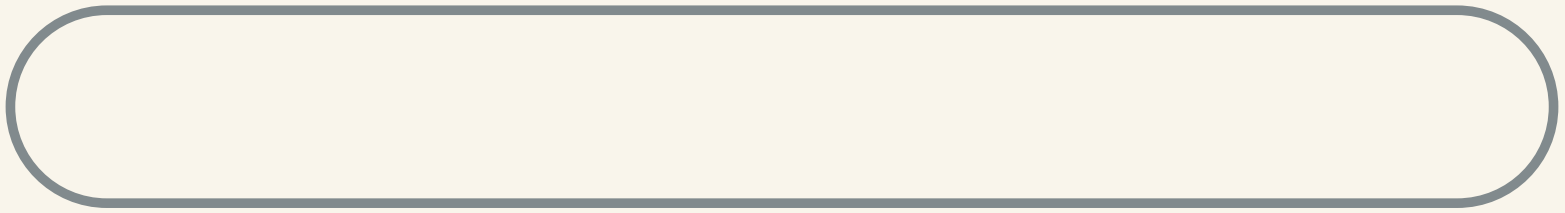
**Rooms with a phone or where I have
protective tools (firearm, knife,
hammer, etc) stashed**



MY ENVIRONMENT

Consider the environments you live and work in. What can you remove, add, limit or change to help improve safety? This might include things like:

remove picture frames or anything with glass, install cameras, lock my bedroom door at night, sleep in a different room, hide or throw away a certain object known to be dangerous, move this piece of furniture to a different location, ask HR to change my shifts or department. Try thinking strategically. When there is danger, what do you need to be hard to find or absent?



MY SAFE ROOM

Use this page to create a safe room in your home. The idea is that it's something distinctly yours because you have shaped it to feel safe.

What is a room in my house that I could safely make mine? It might be a bathroom, a bedroom. It might be a walk-in closet or the pantry. It can even just be a corner of a room

What is an object that helps you feel safe? (Maybe this is your sensory bag; maybe it's a blanket or a particular stuffed animal)

What is another object that could help you feel calm? (Maybe it's a picture of someone you love, or a memento from a special trip. Maybe it's a journal).

Fill in the circle beside the things that make you feel safe.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ☐ Organization | ☐ Music | ☐ Plants | ☐ _____ |
| ☐ _____ color(s) | ☐ Windows | ☐ Blankets | ☐ _____ |

Safe spaces work best when there is intention behind them. Which would help you feel most able to unwind and disconnect from everything else outside this space?

What electronics are allowed here? _____

When will I come here? (every day for 10 minutes? Only if I feel unsafe?) _____

Will I name the safe space? If so, what? _____

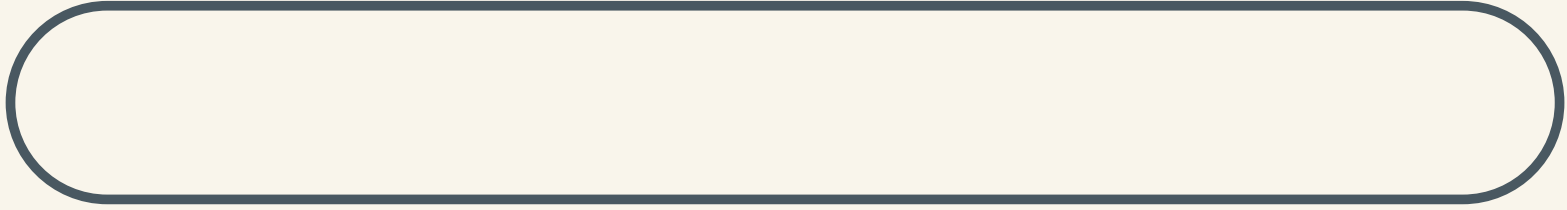
Use the blank space to write in any other "rules" for your space: _____

What is another object that could help you feel calm? (Maybe it's a picture of someone you love, or a memento from a special trip. Maybe it's a journal).

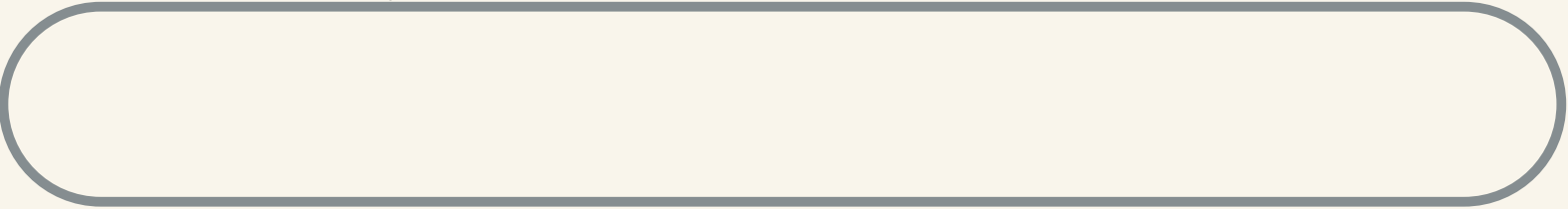
MY ROUTES

Develop alternate routes you can take to places you routinely go.
if you feel you are followed or at risk while traveling. Intentionally mix up your routes -
traveling Primary on a few days, secondary on the other. Try to stay unpredictable.

Home: Primary Route

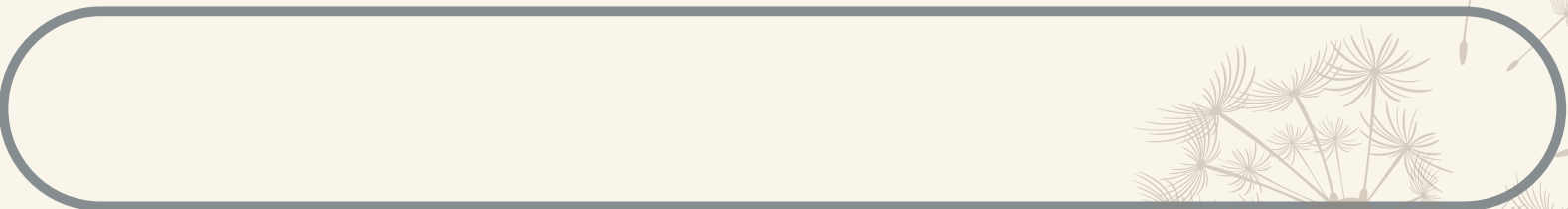


Home: Secondary Route

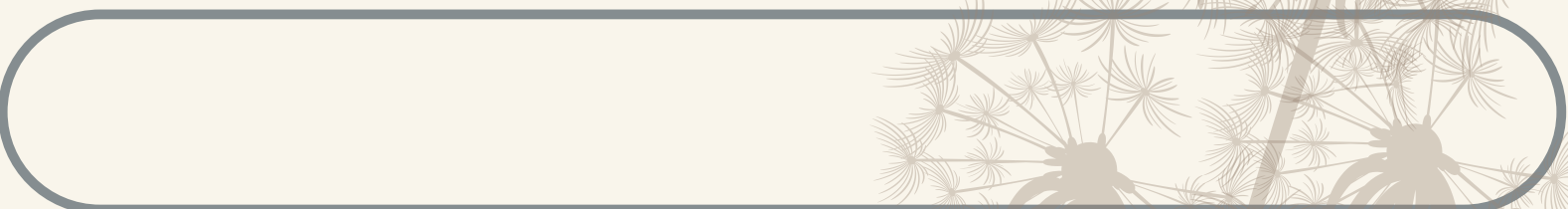


Home: I can also carpool? ☐ Use Public Transport? ☐

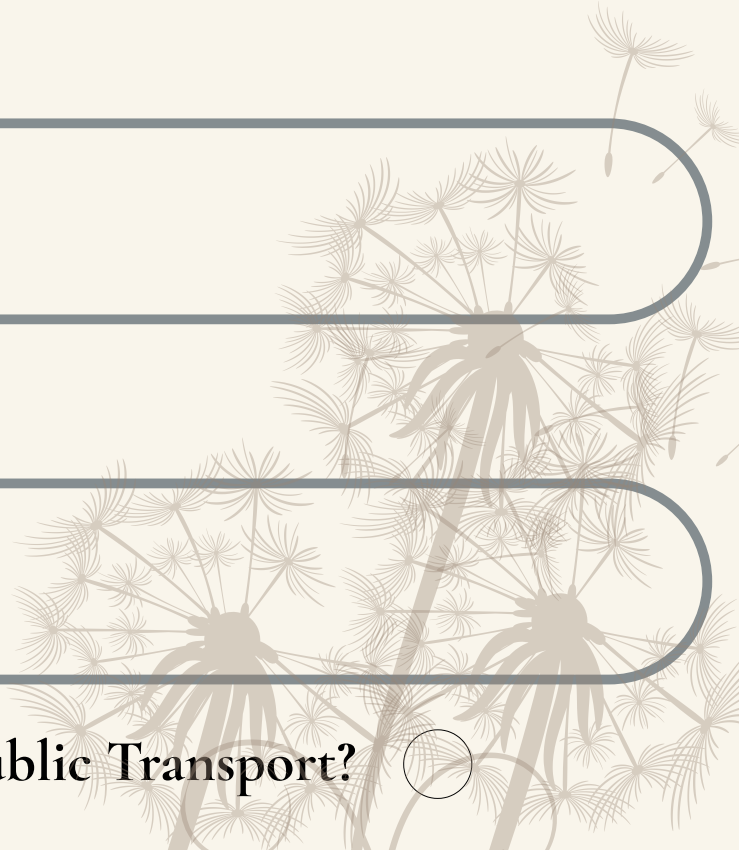
Work: Primary Route



Work: Secondary Route



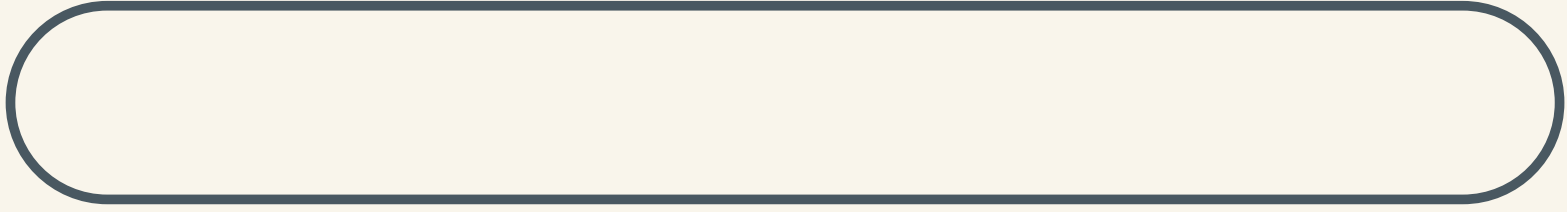
Work: I can also carpool? ☐ Use Public Transport? ☐



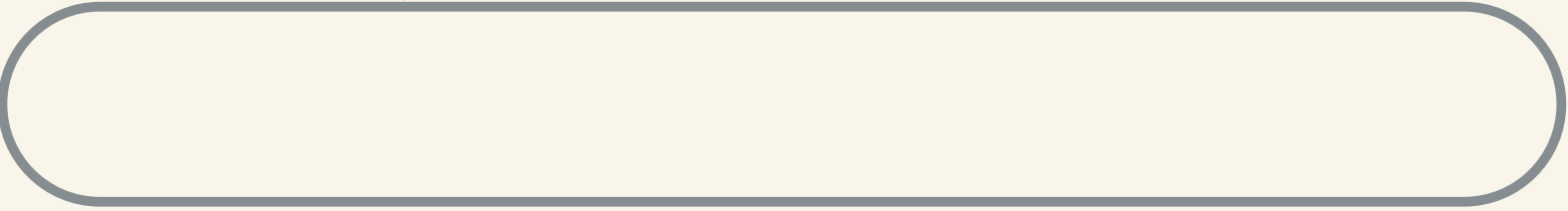
MY ROUTES

Develop alternate routes you can take to places you routinely go.
if you feel you are followed or at risk while traveling. Intentionally mix up your routes -
traveling Primary on a few days, secondary on the other. Try to stay unpredictable.

School Primary Route



School: Secondary Route



School: I can also carpool? ☐ Use Public Transport? ☐

-----: Primary Route



-----: Secondary Route



-----: I can also carpool? ☐ Use Public Transport? ☐

MY GO-NOW BAG

Just as if you were planning to have a baby, or go on vacation, having an 'emergency response plan' can only help. It is better to create one than to wish you had one. It does not mean you have to use it. The following pages will guide you through creating your plan.

Checklist

Identification:

- ☐ Driver's License
- ☐ Birth Certificate
- ☐ Social Security
- ☐ Credit Cards
- ☐ Checking account info
- ☐ Kids' Documents (social security cards, birth certificates)

Legal Papers

- ☐ Protective Order
- ☐ Deed, lease, rental agreements
- ☐ Car Registration
- ☐ Car, health and life insurance
- ☐ Medical records
- ☐ School records
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Divorce and Custody Papers
- ☐ Marriage License
- ☐ Work permits / visa / green card
- ☐ Any saved records (photos, voicemails, text messages, call logs, screenshots, emails, medical records, recorded call) of harm (verbal, physical, sexual) and harassment

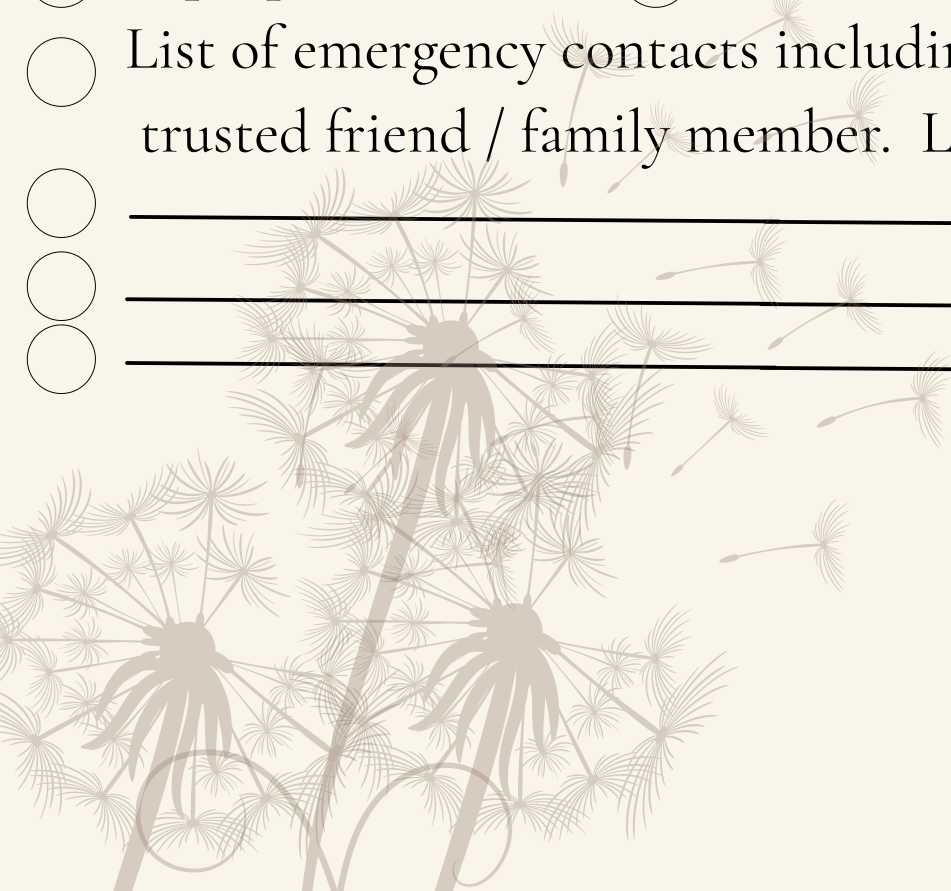
MY GO-NOW BAG

Personal Items:

- ☐ Extra Cash
- ☐ Birth Certificate
- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Car / house keys
- ☐ Eyeglasses / contact lenses
- ☐ Prepaid mobile device with data purchased in advance

Other / Miscellaneous

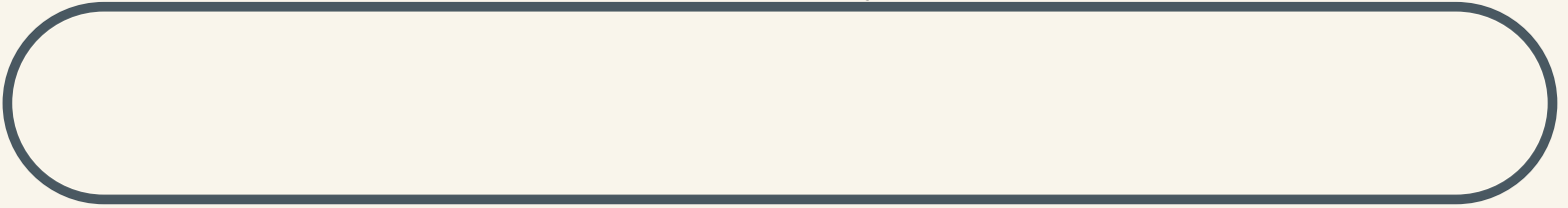
- ☐ Valuables
- ☐ Sentimental items / photos
- ☐ This safety plan
- ☐ Clothes for you and kids
- ☐ Toiletries
- ☐ Small flashlight, whistle
- ☐ Laptop
- ☐ Kids' devices
- ☐ List of emergency contacts including local shelter, police, trusted friend / family member. Last page has safe numbers.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____



MY RESPONSE PLAN

Considering and mapping these questions out can help you know what to do if an emergency evacuation becomes necessary or you feel it's time to explore a different path

If I have a choice, is there a better day or time to leave?



Where would I go?

A friend: _____

A relative: _____

A shelter: _____

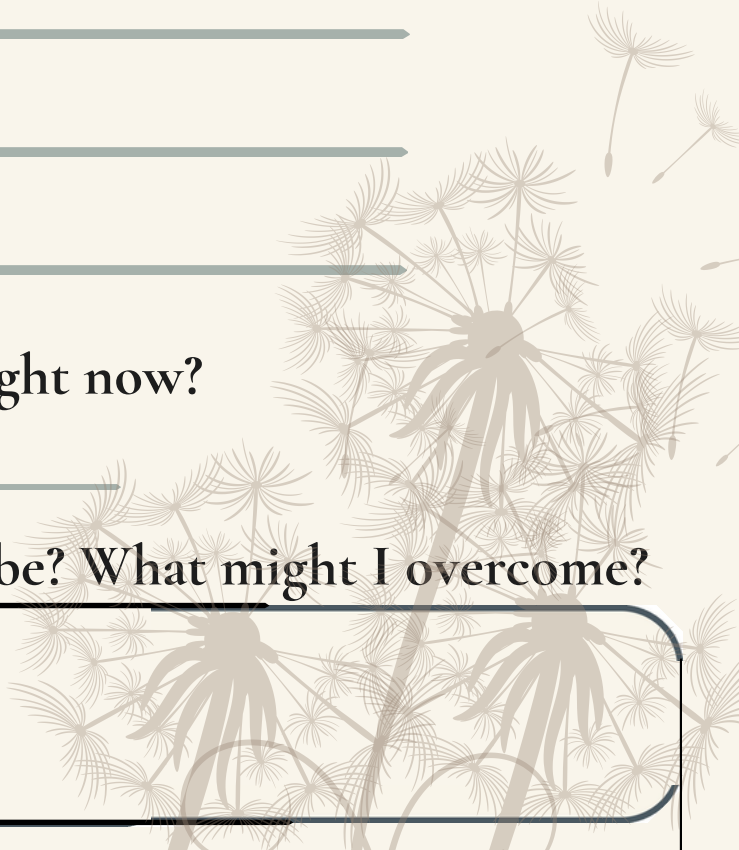
A different state: _____

Who would I call / tell?

How much money would I have right now?

\$ _____

What would the greatest obstacle be? What might I overcome?



WORKSHOPS

www.tiffinijohnson.com
tiffini@tiffinijohnson.com



ashRISE is a free six-week, trauma-informed workshop that blends nervous-system education, grounding and somatic tools with creative reflection, helping participants recognize the “smoke signals” of survival and shape what they have carried into something visible, useful and entirely their own. It does not ask anyone to erase the past or perform healing; it offers practical ways to feel more present while honoring the parts of us that worked so hard to survive.



Be the Hope is an interactive human-trafficking awareness workshop that moves beyond statistics to examine how exploitation begins, why vulnerable people may not recognize or name what is happening to them, and how ordinary people can notice warning signs and respond with compassion rather than judgment. It is built around the belief that hope is not merely something we feel, but something we can choose to become for another person.



HERO is an interactive workshop for survivors of sexual and physical violence, created to make room for honest stories, personal expression and the stubborn truth that survival itself is evidence of courage. Through connection, optional sharing and creative work, participants are invited to challenge shame, recognize the hero within themselves and discover that what happened may have changed their lives without becoming the whole of who they are.



The Storynlight Circle offers personalized, trauma-informed coaching for people ready to understand the stories, survival patterns and protective responses they carry with greater curiosity and compassion. Through one-on-one conversation, grounding tools and support between sessions, the work honors each person's pace while helping them move toward self-trust, boundaries and a life shaped by more than what happened to them.

THE HOLDING ROOM

Below are some safe resources that can help. They include web addresses for a directory that can lead you to local resources.

The Hotline: National Domestic Violence Hotline

Phone Number: 1.800.799.SAFE (7233)

Text: "START" to 88788

Website: www.thehotline.org

Directory of local providers in your zip code:

<https://www.thehotline.org/get-help/directory-of-local-providers/>

RAINN: Rape and Incest National Network

Phone Number: 1.800.656.HOPE

Text: "HOPE" to 64673

Website: www.rainn.org

Directory of local providers in your zip code:

<https://centers.rainn.org>

My Local Police Department:

Phone Number:

Address:

Nearest Hospital:

Address:

Trauma Level:

SANEs (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) on staff?

My Safe Person

Name:

Phone:

Address:

