



HOW TO BEGIN SAFETY PLANNING

The following interview guidelines can help elicit a safety plan based upon a survivor's strengths and experience.

- Ask questions that help you to learn about useful coping strategies and resources. Ask what the person has done in the past and what the outcome was.
- As the person tells her story, be sure to acknowledge out loud times she showed courage, resourcefulness, or strength. Note, for instance, how remarkable it is that, in spite of the abuse and how she might be feeling, she gets up in the morning, goes to classes and does well, holds down a job, maintains friendships, or whatever “every day thing” the individual accomplishes.
- Ask specific questions about coping and self care—what activities, places, or people can and/or have functioned as an oasis for the person, and if it is possible to build on that oasis experience.
- Let the person know that she have a right to feel the way they do, whether it is overwhelmed, terrified, angry, bitter, exhausted, tearful, desperate, or some other emotion.
- Let the person know that you know how much courage and strength it is taking for her to be talking with you about their situation.
- Ask specific questions about support people—does anyone in the individual's life know about the violence? Can she think of even just one person whom she would trust to start talking to about her situation? How have the other people in her life reacted to the situation?
- When it is feasible, work with the individual on a plan to further develop the strengths that you have identified together.