

# PLANNING FOR SAFETY

- ✓ 1. To help learners recognise the importance of a safety plan for someone who lives in a violent home.
- ✓ 2. For learners to think about how to assisting someone who is in a violent home.
- ✓ 3. To understand the complexities of domestic violence.

45 minutes

Safety Plan Worksheet (provided)

## PROCEDURE

- 1 Begin the class with a discussion of domestic violence. Remind learners that:
  - a. Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive and threatening behaviours inside of a family, a household, or within a romantic, sexual or dating relationship, including marriage.
  - b. Domestic violence takes a number of forms, including physical, emotional, verbal, financial and sexual abuse.
  - c. An abuser uses domestic abuse to hold power and control over the other person.
  - d. Domestic violence is most often used by men against their intimate partners.
  - e. Perpetrators and victims of domestic violence come from all cultural, socio-economic, religious and educational backgrounds.
  - f. Children within abusive households are victims of domestic violence too, even when they don't witness the violence, or aren't attacked themselves.
  - g. Children are NOT responsible for the violence, and can NOT stop it.
- 2 Explain that children are often in physical and emotional danger when they live in an abusive household. It is therefore important to teach them how they can be safe. A safety plan is an important tool for ensuring children's safety because it can help them know where they should go if they are in danger and need help.
- 3 Ask learners to brainstorm things that a child might want to know if they are in a violent situation.

### EXPECT ANSWERS LIKE:

- The telephone number for SAPS (10111).
- Who they can phone for help.
- Whether they can phone family members for help.
- The phone number of an aunt/older sibling.
- Who is the closest person they can go to for help.
- Where they can go so that their mother/caregiver will be able to find them again.

- 4 A critical aspect of developing a safety plan is to recognise what the child is actually capable of doing, and then making a plan based on that. A five-year-old child may not be able to dial a phone, or unlock a door to escape.
- 5 Remind learners that it is also essential to take the situation at home into account. There is no use in planning for a child to phone for help if the only phone in the home is kept by the victim or the perpetrator, if that phone usually doesn't have any airtime, or if the house has only one room and the perpetrator would hear the child making the call. One can also not expect a young child to stay in his/her room for hours while the violent incident plays out. Understanding the environment is critical.
- 6 Ask learners to brainstorm some of the things a child can do as part of a safety plan if they find themselves in a violent situation.

### EXPECT ANSWERS LIKE:

- Go to their room.
- Leave the house and go somewhere safe, for example, a friend, neighbour or relative's house.
- Stay out of the way or hide.
- Call the police for help if there is a phone that they can use without the abuser seeing.

- 7 Hand out the Safety Plan Worksheet (provided). Ask learners to take 10 minutes and to come up with a safety plan for themselves. As they work, you may want to give them some guidance on each section. This is contained in the teacher notes.

Remind learners that completing this activity in class does not mean that any one person is a victim of domestic violence, or that only learners who have experienced domestic violence should complete the task. Safety planning is useful for all teens, and knowledge of how to make a safety plan could be used to help a friend, peer or family member who is in danger.

Also remind learners that if they are in a domestic violence situation, they may choose to keep their safety plan in a secret hiding place (such as a book) or at school or with a friend. They may want to memorise the important phone numbers they have listed on their safety plan so that they can use them even if they don't have the plan in front of them.

- 8 Wrap up the exercise by reminding learners that they should never try to stop the violence themselves, but should rather call for help. Also remind them that a safety plan doesn't always work, and that it isn't their fault if it doesn't. Also remind them that only the perpetrator can stop the violence.

## TEACHER TIPS

### General

Domestic violence is a difficult topic for both learners and teachers. In every class and school there are likely to be perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. It is important for teachers to be mindful of this fact and to make sure that the discussion doesn't single out individuals or vilify people. It is more helpful to focus on the abusers' behaviours, by saying things like 'it is wrong when someone verbally abuses someone else' rather than saying 'your dad is wrong to abuse your mother'.

This exercise requires learners to engage with the issue of domestic violence and it focuses attention on what learners can do to keep themselves safe, which should be empowering for victims.

Different people in the class may have different opinions on what constitutes domestic violence, and what is acceptable behaviour. Do not entertain long debates on this topic, rather refer to the definitions provided by the Domestic Violence Act.

Do not take on the role of counsellor during the class. If a learner discloses that they live in an abusive house, acknowledge their disclosure (by saying something like 'It was very brave of you to tell

us that') and asking them to come to you after class so that you can provide them with more assistance. Be prepared with the telephone numbers and information of NGOs or other counselling services that could be of assistance.

### Making the link with Gender & Violence

This lesson is directly focused on domestic violence, and provides learners with practical safety planning ideas that they can use for their own safety, or to assist others. Learners who live in abusive households may not realise that they too, are victims of domestic violence, and may not know what they can do to protect themselves. Domestic violence is often overlooked, and children in this kind of environment may be in need of assistance.

### Assessment Ideas

Have learners discuss their safety plan with a parent or responsible adult. Ask the adult to sign off on the safety plan, ensuring that it is realistic and executable.



# MAKE A SAFETY PLAN

**Make a safety plan for yourself. You can use this set of questions to help someone else make a safety plan.**

If you experience domestic violence you may choose to keep your safety plan in a secret hiding place (such as in a book or with a friend). You may want to memorise the important phone numbers you have listed here.

**This is a Safety Plan For** \_\_\_\_\_

I am going to use this safety plan when: \_\_\_\_\_

The people I trust who can help me be safe when there is violence in our home are:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Number: \_\_\_\_\_

What should I say if I have to phone one of those people for help?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where is a safe place for me to go when there is violence in our house?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Is there anything I must remember to take with me?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If I can't leave the house, where is the safest place for me to hide?

\_\_\_\_\_

If I can call the police (10111) what should I say to them?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# SAFETY PLANNING: TEACHER NOTES

**This is a Safety Plan For** \_\_\_\_\_

**I am going to use this safety plan when:**

Tell learners to identify situations that are serious enough for them to activate their safety plan. Examples may include things like 'Mom and Dad are arguing' or 'Dad breaks something in the house' or 'Mom and Dad have been drinking/taking drugs and are fighting'.

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**The people I trust who can help me be safe when there is violence in our home are:**

Remind learners that the people they list here should be people who they trust, and who are able to help them. They should not be people who are usually not contactable, or who live far away.

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**What should I say if I have to phone one of those people for help?**

This is where learners should make a plan for what will happen if they need to call for help. For example, they may want to ask the adult to call the police for them, or they may simply want to ask if they can come and stay at their house so that they can be safe.

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**Where is a safe place for me to go when there is violence in our house?**

Examples could be the neighbour's house, a friend's house, a family member's house. This house should be close by and easy to get to.

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**Is there anything I must remember to take with me?**

Here learners want to think about things like school clothes for the following day, medication, their cell phone etc.

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**If I can't leave the house, where is the safest place for me to hide?**

Stay out of the kitchen and bathroom where there may be implements that could be used to harm you. If possible find a room where there is a phone.

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**If I can call the police (10111) what should I say to them?**

This is where learners can write what they will say to the police. They may want to write the address of their house here, for example.