

**MIYKIWAN TOOLKIT  
FACT SHEET**

**HOW TO  
LIVE WITH  
& EXIT  
ABUSE**

**TO STAY OR TO LEAVE....**

The decision to stay and live within a violent family relationship or whether to leave it may be the single most difficult and important decision you will have to make.

If you should stay, there are a number of considerations to keep in mind for the safety and well-being of you and your children. If you plan to leave, there are significant steps to take to make sure it is the safest exit possible.



*“Many women that are involved in violent relationships often ask the same question, “Can I make the violence go away? The short answer is “NO”. Violence usually gets worse with time not better...It takes a long time to realize that the abusers are the ones that have to change, and that we can’t do it for them.”*

**KEY THINGS TO KNOW**

It is important to remember that in every abusive relationship, there exists the Cycle of Violence. This vicious cycle is made up of three ‘phases’. The time span of each phase can vary from a matter of seconds to years:

- Tension building phase: arguments escalate, abuser yells at partner for no reason, abuser accuses partner of doing wrongs that they have not done, the victim feels that they can not do anything right
- Abusive incident phase: abuse manifests itself through physical, sexual or emotional violence; including assault, rape, screaming
- Honeymoon phase: abuser tells victim that they love them and that it will never happen again or makes excuses for their behavior, often blaming the victim for such behaviour

It is also important to consider the statistics on domestic violence against spouses and partners:

- 48%E (use with caution—Statistics Canada) of Aboriginal women who experienced violence by a current or former partner, experienced the most severe forms of violence; sexually assault, beating, choking, or threats with a weapon (2009)
- 64% of those parents with children who experienced violence by an ex-spouse indicated that a child had seen or heard the violence (2009)

## IF YOU PLAN TO STAY

- Think about the level of force that your partner uses against you and your children and how much he uses it. That way you will know what type of danger you and your children are facing and when to leave should plan to leave in order to stay safe
- Write down a plan to get out of your home safely and practice it with your children as often you can
- Find the closest place to call for help; perhaps a neighbour's house or your local coffee shop
- Keep a list of phone numbers that you can call for help
- If an argument does start between you and your partner, try to move to an area where you can get outside easily; a place that has doors and windows that you can escape through

## IF YOU PLAN TO LEAVE

- Talk to your other family members, friends or a trusted individual who can assist you with your plans
- Contact your local shelter and tell them that you are leaving an abusive situation; ask for support in safety planning
- Gather or make copies of: Government documents such as birth certificates, social insurance card, driver's license, health cards, passports, court orders, immigration papers or treaty cards; also financial items such as: money, including credit cards, debit cards, cheques; personal items such as phone numbers, keys, cellphone
- When you do leave, do so quickly
- Make sure that you have a back-up plan should your partner find out where you are going; much of the spousal violence directed at someone occurs after a relationship has ended

## IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN:

- Let your children know that abuse is never acceptable, even when the person who is being abusive is someone they love
- Tell your children that the abuse is not your fault nor is it theirs; they did not cause it, and neither did you
- Create a plan together to get out of your home safely and practice it
- Have a safe place in the house where they can hide that has a locked door and a phone
- Have a code word to call for help
- If a child has witnessed violence in the home, they will be in need of treatment in order to cope with the emotional trauma
- If a child has witnessed violence in the home, they will be in need of treatment

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If you need help or someone to talk to please contact the National Office for Victims Services Center, toll free at: **1-866-525-0554** or Kids Help Phone, toll free at: 1-800-668-6868, [www.kidshelpphone.ca](http://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

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To obtain more information regarding the CAP Family Violence Prevention Awareness Toolkit, please contact the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples at [www.abo-peoples.org](http://www.abo-peoples.org) or call 1-613-747-6022.

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