



## Pincher Creek Women's Emergency Shelter Association Emotional Safety Plan

***Emotional safety is also an important aspect of safety that many people fail to consider. Emotional safety is the experience of safely expressing and coping with one's feelings and emotions. By creating an emotional safety plan, survivors of domestic violence have a plan to help them with an emotional crisis that may result from abuse, such as panic attacks, feelings of dissociation, numbness or hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts or overwhelming trauma symptoms.***

### **Personalizing Your Safety Plan**

Just like when creating a physical safety plan for possible violence in the future, it's helpful to have an emotional safety plan in place so you know what to do in the future if you need it to help you get through an emotional crisis. We recommend writing down your emotional safety plan if it is safe to keep a written copy in your home or keep it on your phone, so that you know exactly what to do when you need it.

Here are steps to create an emotional safety plan so you can feel more empowered and confident to get through an emotional crisis:

### **Identifying Your Personal Triggers**

What are things or situations that overwhelm you and trigger you? If you know that a situation will likely be overwhelming, then you can plan to have your emotional safety plan accessible and ready to use when you need it. Triggering situations can include reminders of abuse. (For example: work stress, spending time with a certain friend or family member, the sound of a door slamming or when your partner yells at you.)

**List your personal triggers:**

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### **Identify your warning signs**

What are the signs that tell you that you are starting to feel overwhelmed, and an emotional crisis may be beginning? How do you know when to use your emotional safety and coping plan? Warning signs could be thoughts, feelings, mood changes, behaviors, sleeping changes or body sensations. (For example: heartbeat racing and feeling my face get hot, having the urge to cry and negative thoughts like "I can't handle anything" or "I'm such a failure.")



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List your warning signs:

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### Things to distract you

What can you do to help distract yourself and take your mind off the problem or crisis? It can be helpful to focus your attention on something else to give your heart and mind a break. (For example: watch your favorite TV show or funny YouTube videos, go on a walk outside or play a game on your phone.)

List things you can do to distract yourself:

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### Calming coping strategies

What are some coping strategies you can use to help calm yourself and calm your body? During an emotional crisis moment, it is normal to feel panicky, on edge, shaky, numb, frozen or feel as if you are out of your body. These feelings are a result of the body's natural response to stress and overwhelming or threatening situations. Using calming strategies such as deep breathing and grounding exercises can help you regulate your body's nervous system and feel calmer. (For example: deep breathing or grounding exercise, listen to music, use a meditation app or look up guided meditation/relaxation exercise on YouTube and visualize a calming or happy place.)

List coping strategies that you can do to help you remain calm:

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### Call people in your support system

Who are supportive people that you can call for help? You don't necessarily have to talk about all the details of your situation or what's overwhelming you. Sometimes calling a support person to talk about something else can help distract you from the current situation. It's helpful to write down their name and phone number. (For example: Best friend Jane: 123.456.7890, Mom: 111.111.1111 and Co-worker John: 999.999.9999.)

### Create a list of your supports:

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### Make changes to your surroundings

What are small things you can change in your surroundings or with your body to help you feel grounded through this crisis moment? Your environment and surroundings can impact your mood, your sense of emotional safety and your ability to cope with difficult feelings. Making a small change may help you feel differently and feel more grounded. (For example: try spending time outside in nature, if the lights are off or low, turn on the lights, light candles or diffuse relaxing essential oils, put on different clothes, or take a shower or bath.)

### List ways you can change your surroundings to remain grounded through a crisis:

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### Truths you can hold onto:

What are helpful truths about yourself, others, or the world that you can remind yourself of? This may be positive affirmation statements, uplifting quotes, mantras or even a word that helps you feel strong and empowered to get through the crisis. Remind yourself that you have value and worth! (For example: "I am a person of worth," "Abuse is never my fault," "I am a survivor," "I am doing my best and that is enough," "This feeling is not permanent.")



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List positive truths about yourself:

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## Reach out to professionals and resources for support

You don't have to go through this alone. There are professionals and organizations that you can call for help and support. It's helpful to write down these names and phone numbers.

Here are some professional resources and space to add your own:

Pincher Creek Women's Emergency Shelter –	403-627-2114
Family Violence Info line –	310-1818
Alberta Health Services Addiction and Mental Health 24 Hour Help Line -	1-866-332-2322
Suicide and Crisis Help Line -	988
Suicide Crisis Line (Samaritans) -	1-800-784-2433
Distress Line -	1-888-787-2880
Addictions Helpline -	1-866-332-2322
24 Hour Crisis Line -	1-800-565-3801

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## References

Genesis Women's Shelter and Support. (2020, August 10). *Emotional Safety Planning*. Retrieved from <https://www.genesisshelter.org/emotional-safety-planning/>