

HERE ARE STEPS TO CREATE AN EMOTIONAL SAFETY PLAN SO YOU CAN FEEL MORE EMPOWERED AND CONFIDENT TO GET THROUGH AN EMOTIONAL CRISIS:

1. **Identify your 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.)
2. **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.”)
3. **Things to distract you:** What can you do to help distract yourself and take your mind off the problem or crisis situation? 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.)
4. **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 more calm. (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.)
5. **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.)
6. **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.)
7. **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.”)

8. **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.(National Suicide Crisis Line: 214.828.1000, Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741, National DV Hotline: 1.800.799.7233 or chat with someone at thehotline.org.)

After experiencing a trauma like domestic violence, it is normal to become dysregulated more easily and more quickly when in an overwhelming situation. If you are experiencing an emotional crisis, try following the steps of your emotional safety plan. After you have finished steps 1-7 and if you are still feeling overwhelmed, go back through and try again. Then, reach out to professionals and organizations that can support you. You don't have to go through this emotional crisis alone.

Adapted from Article Written By Victoria O'Connor, MS, LPC Intern, NCC at Genesis Women's Shelter.