



You are not alone

RESOURCES FOR ADULTS AND THEIR CHILDREN
AFTER LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

NOVA SCOTIA



There can be practical and emotional barriers
to leaving an abusive relationship.

It is important to acknowledge that you are a survivor.
You and your children may have many mixed emotions about
what you have been through and about the uncertain future.

Moving Forward

When leaving an abusive relationship, it is important you do so with support and engage in safety planning. You may expect to feel good about your choice to leave your abusive partner right away. However, this often takes time. You may feel confused, scared and a deep sense of loss. Your sense of self-identity and confidence is likely to be negatively affected and you may have difficulty in trusting the people around you. Allow yourself time to heal and understand that recovery is a journey and a process that takes time and energy. You have bravely taken the first steps in this process.



Yourself

There are many strategies to help you move forward, starting with the following:

REFLECT

Now that you're in a safer place where you cannot be reached by your abusive ex-partner, it is important to limit contact with them as much as possible. If there are guardianship or custody concerns, seek legal guidance on how to proceed. If you feel the need to communicate with the abusive partner you have left, write your feelings in a journal or write a letter without sending it. Getting your thoughts and feelings down on paper is an excellent way to help you release some of the very difficult emotions you are going through right now.

FIND A SUPPORT NETWORK

Ask for help and consider sharing your story. Think about joining a support group, find a counselor or therapist for yourself and for your children. Look to family and friends that have shown support and that you feel that you can trust to continue to help maintain your safety right now. There are intimate partner/domestic violence advocates and support services that are able to help you navigate through this process and to remind you that you are not alone. A list of local support services can be found at the end of this booklet.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

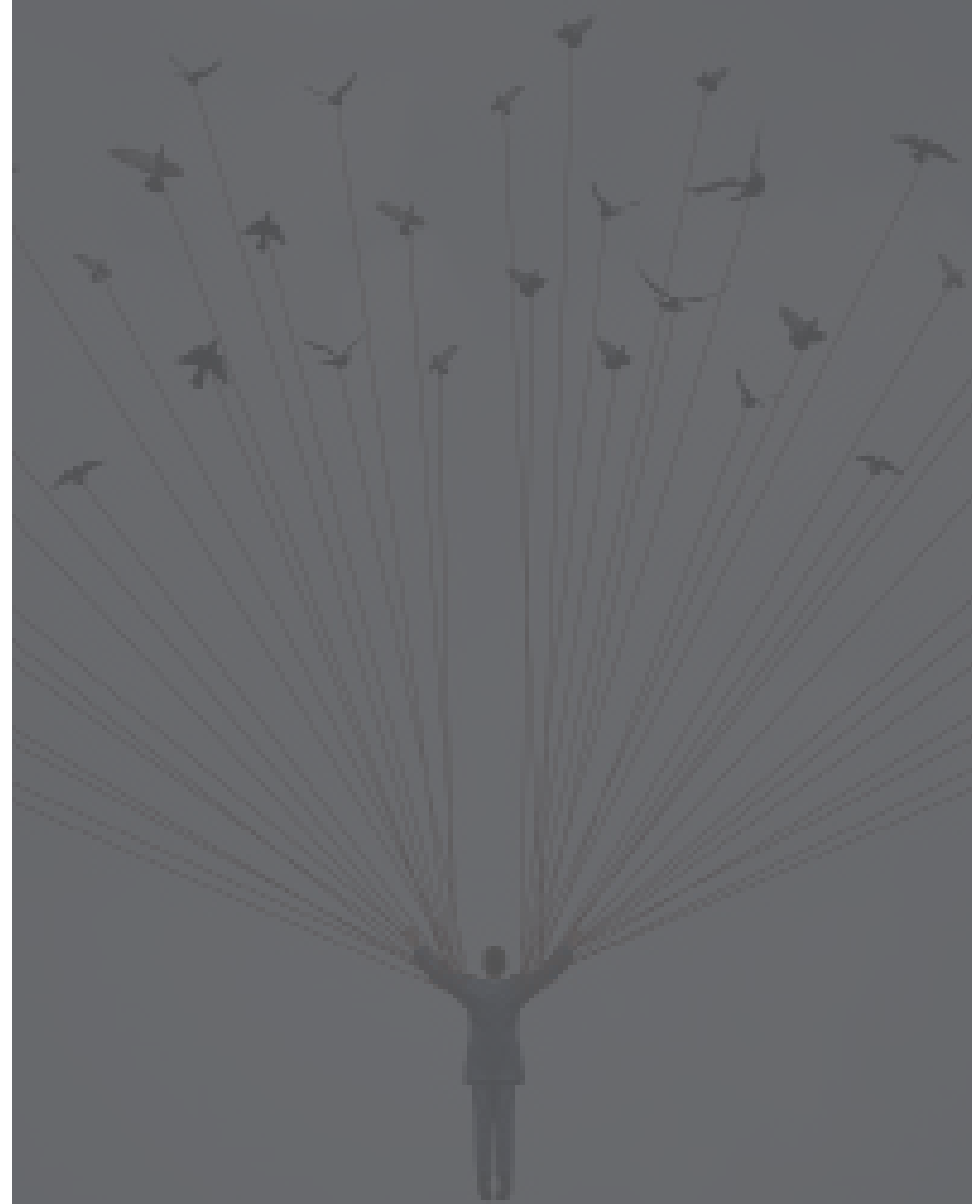
It may be difficult to sleep, eat, or be active. Remind yourself that you are in a safe place and try to create a plan of care for you and your child/children's immediate needs, like sleep and nutrition. A plan can help with the transition to a new and different place and pace of life. If you are experiencing flashbacks, consult with a therapist (see resource list at the end of this booklet) to help find strategies to alleviate those feelings and images.

RECONNECT WITH YOURSELF

After leaving an abusive relationship, it is important to reconnect with yourself. Make yourself a priority and practice self-compassion, patience and self-kindness. Taking care of yourself is a way to take care of your children because as you heal, your capacity to help them heal too will grow. There

are many ways in which you can practice self-care including: positive affirmations, regular exercise, breathing, spending time in nature, and being creative through art. Note that some activities, like meditation can be challenging for survivors of trauma, and only do activities that relax you. Seeking support from a therapist can help you process what you have gone through and are still going through, as well as help you find strategies that work for you. **Take your time.**

Exposure to intimate violence can have long-term implications for children. Your children will have their own reactions and feelings to the current situation, and may experience and process it differently than you. There is help for children who have witnessed and/or experienced violence at home and many ways to support them. Their connection to you, as well as the bonds they have created with other caring adults will help them through the recovery process. Compassion and empathy are important factors when supporting children with the trauma they may have experienced and the grief they may begin to feel as they move through their own healing journey.



Remember that healing is a process and it is essential
to give yourself permission to take the time you need to recover.
Your life is your own to live.



Your Children

Here are some of the many ways that you can help to support your children:

BE PRESENT

Try to take some time every day to spend being present with your children. Give yourself permission to continue your bond with your child without distractions: connect with your child or children by reading a book, taking a walk, having a conversation, or by simply playing together. This can be difficult as you are still dealing with your own powerful feelings, but even a few minutes of time dedicated to connecting with your child or children can be beneficial to their wellbeing. Be kind to yourself.

FOLLOW YOUR CHILD'S LEAD

Your children may react very differently than you after leaving an abusive situation. It is not uncommon for children to express anger towards the abused parent upon leaving. Give them the time they need to work through their feelings and help them navigate the best way they can express themselves. If they are open to talking with you, do your best to listen actively and without pressure - sit beside them, repeat back what you hear, ask them to tell you more, let them know that you hear what they are saying, and try to respond with supportive words.

BE HONEST

After leaving an abusive relationship, it is important for you to help make your child feel safe and to not make promises you can't keep. Answer questions they have honestly while remembering to keep your answers age appropriate.

HELP THEM DEVELOP COPING SKILLS

Teaching your child coping skills and giving them the tools that they need to move forward and feel safe will take time. We can help children reduce stress by asking what helps them best. Some suggestions could include breathing and mindfulness exercises, creating art, writing activities, being active, and getting into nature. Connecting your child to a children's mental health therapist can be one way to help your child develop and enhance their coping skills. A list of mental health support services is provided at the end of this resource booklet.



Resources

NON EMERGENCY CRISIS LINES (EMERGENCIES DIAL 911)

These lines are available 24/7 unless other hours are specified.

Specializing in Intimate Partner/Family Violence

Juniper House: (902)-742-8689

Millbrook Family Healing Centre (for First Nation adults and children): (902) 893-8483

Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS):
1-855-225-0220

General Mental Health Lines

CMHA Nova Scotia: 1-902-429-8167

Eskasoni Mental Health (for Mi'kmaq people):

1-855-379-2099

Live Chat: facebook.com/eskasonicrisisworker

Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1-855-242-3310

Live Chat: hopeforwellness.ca

Serves Indigenous peoples in English, French, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868, Text 686868

Live Chat (7pm - 12am): kidshelpphone.ca

"...a safe environment for survivors and witnesses
of violence to talk about their experiences..."

FREE SINGLE-SESSION COUNSELLING

Pause: Mental Health Walk-In Clinic offers single-session counselling to anyone living in Nova Scotia on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5pm-8pm (currently by appointment). Culturally informed counselling from clinicians who identify as having African ancestry is available.

Telephone: 1-800-598-5270

Web: nehc.com

PROGRAMS AND ONGOING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS AND THEIR CHILDREN

Various agencies offer individual and/or group counselling for survivors of intimate partner and/or family violence and their children. They provide a safe environment for survivors and witnesses of violence to talk about their experiences and process their emotions. Survivors and their children may be treated together or separately depending on the program. Waitlists, age limits, and costs are noted as applicable. Services are open to the public.

Alice House offers individual, group, and family counselling to women (18+) that have experienced abuse and their children (4-18) who have witnessed it. All services are woman-centered and focused on the immediate holistic needs of each family. There is a sliding scale fee for counselling. Service is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Telephone: 902-466-8459

Web: alicehouse.ca

Juniper House offers confidential and supportive counselling to people that identify as women who have been impacted by intimate partner/family abuse and their children.

Telephone: 902-742-8689

Web: juniperhouse.ca

Millbrook Family Healing Centre offers culturally-relevant and holistic programming to all First Nations adults and children. Group and individual supports are provided by workers who are knowledgeable of their language, values, and lifestyle.

Telephone: 902-893-8483

Email: beverly.walker@novascotia.ca

Web: thans.ca/millbrook

PROGRAMS FOR SURVIVORS

Women's Abuse Recovery Program offers individual counselling and group support twice a year to women in all regions of Nova Scotia that are currently in or have been in an abusive relationship. Group support for men is also available through the Abuse Intervention Program. (~3-month waitlist for individual counselling).

Telephone: 902-897-6665

Web: bridgesinstitute.org/group-counselling

"Give them the time they need to work through
their feelings and help them navigate
the best way they can express themselves."

FUNDING ASSISTANCE FOR FIRST NATIONS AND INUIT CHILDREN

Funding assistance for a wide range of health, social and educational needs, including counselling, is available through the following programs:

Inuit Child First Initiative

Telephone: 1-855-572-4453 (24/7)

Web: canada.ca/supporting-inuit-children

Jordan's Principle

Telephone: 1-855-572-4453 (24/7),

Teletype 1-866-553-0554 (24/7)

Web: canada.ca/jordans-principle

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Disclaimer: Resources included in this booklet are for information purposes and does not infer endorsement of the organization or their practitioners.

It is not uncommon to feel shame or self-blame after
leaving an abusive intimate partner relationship.
Being the survivor of an abusive partner is not your fault:
you are not to blame. What you and your children have
been through is violence and can feel traumatic.
Experiencing abuse affects how we feel and how we
respond to ourselves, other people, and the world around us.
Understand that you are not alone. Your children are not alone.
There are many support systems in place for you and your children.
There is help.



www.mylesahead.ca

