

# I Have Children - What Should I Do?



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When you're a parent in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, it makes a difficult situation even harder. Not only do you have to worry about your safety, but you also have to consider your child's well-being.

Witnessing domestic and dating violence can have a huge impact on children, both physically and psychologically. They may grow up believing that domestic violence is normal and mimic the behaviors they witnessed in their parents' relationship. If you're involved in an unhealthy or abusive relationship, it's important to get help.

## What Can I Do?

Making the decision to leave is very hard, especially if you have a child with your abusive partner. Whether or not you are ready or able to leave, you can take steps to help keep you and your child safe. If you stay:

- Prepare a safety plan with your child and try to follow it whenever possible. Arrange a safe place for your children to go and plan a code word to let them know when they should leave and where to get help. It's also important to tell them that their job is to stay safe, not protect you.
- Make sure your child knows the abuse isn't their fault and violence is never ok, even when someone they love is being abusive.
- Pack a bag you can take with you in an emergency -- be sure to include important documentation for you and your children and anything your kids may need (formula, medicine, diapers, birth certificates, immigration papers). Keep the bag hidden in a safe place or leave it with someone you trust.
- Memorize all important numbers in case you have to leave without your phone.

## If You Leave

- Talk to an attorney about your state's custody laws. Consider getting a protection order. It may award you temporary custody of your children and help with your longer term plans.
- Call the police if you and your children need immediate protection. Be sure to get a police report to use as evidence in your custody case.
- Chat with us at [loveisrespect.org](https://loveisrespect.org). We can help find a temporary place to stay for you and your children.

You know what is best for your child. If you can't leave your partner because you fear for your or your child's safety, you should contact a resource in your community to discuss your options right away.

connect now!

chat at [loveisrespect.org](https://loveisrespect.org)

SMS text "loveis" to 22522

call 1-866-331-9474

Discuss your options confidentially.  
Peer advocates are available 24/7.

For more information, visit [www.loveisrespect.org](https://www.loveisrespect.org)

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