



## Danger Assessment

One of the most important functions initiated as a volunteer advocate is the risk assessment and safety planning.

We use the "Danger Assessment" by Jacquelyn C Campbell, PhD, RN. The series of 15 questions on this form are designed to measure a woman's risk in an abusive relationship. This form along with the safety plan form are in the client packet.

While there is no perfect prediction to assess risk, there are many different factors existing in domestic violence that have been identified to increase the risk of fatality.

Because many victims do not identify the seriousness of the risk they face, the "Danger Assessment" can be a valuable tool to use with victims to raise their awareness and move towards safety planning.

A Danger Assessment study found women who were threatened or assaulted with a gun were 20 times more likely than other women to be murdered and women whose partners threatened them with murder were 15 times more likely than other women to be killed.

The following information is from the National Institute of Justice

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- A team of researchers studied the Danger Assessment and found that despite certain limitations, the tool can with some reliability identify women who may be at risk of being killed by their intimate partners. The study found that women who score 8 or higher on the Danger Assessment are at very grave risk (the average score for women who were murdered was just under 8). Women who score 4 or higher are at great risk (the average score for abused women was just over 3). The findings indicate that the Danger Assessment tool can assist in assessing battered women who may be at risk of being killed as well as those who are not. The study also found that almost half the murdered women studied did not recognize the high level of their risk. Thus, a tool like the Danger Assessment— or another risk assessment process— may assist women (and the professionals who help them) to better understand the potential for danger and the level of their risk.

This form can be used and filled out by the victim when you meet or done while you are talking to them on the phone. It gives you an idea of the risk involved so that you can provide as many options as possible to the victim.

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# DANGER ASSESSMENT

Jacquelyn C Campbell, PhD, RN

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Several risk factors have been associated with increased risk of homicides (murders) of women and men in violent relationships. We cannot predict what will happen in your case, but we would like you to be aware of the danger of homicide in situations of abuse and for you to see how many of the risk factors apply to your situation.

Using the calendar, please mark the approximate dates during the past year when you were abused by your partner or ex partner. Write on that date how bad the incident was according to the following scale:

1. Slapping, pushing; no injuries and/or lasting pain
2. Punching, kicking; bruises, cuts, and/or continuing pain
3. "Beating up"; severe contusions, burns, broken bones
4. Threat to use weapon; head injury, internal injury, permanent injury
5. Use of weapon; wounds from weapon

(If **any** of the descriptions for the higher number apply, use the higher number.)

Mark **Yes** or **No** for each of the following. ("He" refers to your husband, partner, ex-husband, ex-partner, or whoever is currently physically hurting you.)

- \_\_\_ 1. Has the physical violence increased in severity or frequency over the past year?
- \_\_\_ 2. Does he own a gun?
- \_\_\_ 3. Have you left him after living together during the past year?  
3a. (If have never lived with him, check here \_\_\_)
- \_\_\_ 4. Is he unemployed?
- \_\_\_ 5. Has he ever used a weapon against you or threatened you with a lethal weapon?  
(If yes, was the weapon a gun? \_\_\_)
- \_\_\_ 6. Does he threaten to kill you?
- \_\_\_ 7. Has he avoided being arrested for domestic violence?
- \_\_\_ 8. Do you have a child that is not his?
- \_\_\_ 9. Has he ever forced you to have sex when you did not wish to do so?
- \_\_\_ 10. Does he ever try to choke you?
- \_\_\_ 11. Does he use illegal drugs? By drugs, I mean "uppers" or amphetamines, speed, angel dust, cocaine, "crack", street drugs or mixtures.
- \_\_\_ 12. Is he an alcoholic or problem drinker?
- \_\_\_ 13. Does he control most or all of your daily activities? For instance: does he tell you who you can be friends with, when you can see your family, how much money you can use, or when you can take the car? (If he tries, but you do not let him, check here: \_\_\_)
- \_\_\_ 14. Is he violently and constantly jealous of you? (For instance, does he say "If I can't have you, no one can.")
- \_\_\_ 15. Does he follow or spy on you, leave threatening notes or messages on answering machine, destroy your property, or call you when you don't want him to?
- \_\_\_ 16. Have you ever been beaten by him while you were pregnant? (If you have never been pregnant by him, check here: \_\_\_)
- \_\_\_ 17. Have you ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- \_\_\_ 18. Has he ever threatened or tried to commit suicide?
- \_\_\_ 19. Does he threaten to harm your children?
- \_\_\_ 20. Do you believe he is capable of killing you?

\_\_\_ Total "Yes" Answers

**Thank you. Please talk to your nurse, advocate or counselor about what the Danger Assessment means in terms of your situation.**

## Safety Planning

***If the individual marks more than three answers with a “yes” on the “Danger Assessment”, it is recommended you follow through with a Safety Plan.***

Also, if you are aware the abuser has used a fire arm during previous DV incidents and the victim indicates there are firearms still in the home, this can be addressed in the Safety Plan.

If the victim remains with the abuser it may not be in her best interest to have a written safety plan the abuser can find. Suggest the victim giving it to a safe friend or family member. You can also offer to keep it in the HLHAS office.

Be as thorough as possible with options so the victim can process the information and use it in the future with a crisis.

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# Personalized Domestic Violence Safety Plan

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The following steps represent my plan for addressing my safety and preparing in advance for the possibility of further violence. Although I do not have control over my partner's violence, I do have a choice about how to respond to him or her and how to best get myself and my children to safety.

**Step 1: Safety during a violent incident.** Battered partners cannot always avoid violent incidents. In order to increase safety, battered partners may use a variety of strategies. **I can use some or all of the following strategies:**

- A. If I decide to leave, I will \_\_\_\_\_ (What doors, windows, elevators, stairwells, or fire escapes would you use?)
- B. I can keep my purse and car keys ready and put them (where) \_\_\_\_\_
- C. I can tell \_\_\_\_\_ about the violence and request they call the police if they hear suspicious noises coming from my house.
- D. I can teach my children how to use the telephone to call 911.
- E. I will use \_\_\_\_\_ as my code word with my children or friends so they can call for help.
- F. If I have to leave my home, I will go \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
- G. I can also teach some of these strategies to some/all of my children.
- H. When I expect the abuse is about to occur, I will try to move to a space that is lowest risk, such as \_\_\_\_\_ (Try to avoid arguments in the bathroom, garage, kitchen, near weapons, or in rooms without access to an outside door).
- I. I will use my judgment and intuition. I have to protect myself until I/we are out of danger.

**Step 2: Safety when preparing to leave.** Battered partners frequently leave the residence they share with the battering partner. Leaving must be done with a careful plan in order to increase safety. Batterers often strike back when they believe that a battered partner is leaving a relationship. I can use some or all of the following strategies:

- A. I will leave money and an extra set of keys with \_\_\_\_\_
- B. I will keep copies of important documents or keys at \_\_\_\_\_
- C. I will open a savings account by \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Other things I can do to increase my independence include: (Increased independence can lead to increased risk.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- E. The domestic violence program's hotline number is \_\_\_\_\_
- F. I can keep change for phone calls on me at all times. I understand that if I use my telephone credit card, the following month the telephone bill will tell my batterer those numbers I called after I left. To keep my telephone calls confidential, I must either use coins or I might get a friend to permit me to use their telephone credit card for a limited time when I first leave.
- G. I will check with \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to see who would be able to let me stay with them or lend me some money.
- H. I can leave extra clothes with \_\_\_\_\_
- I. I will sit down and review my safety plan every \_\_\_\_\_ in order to plan the safest way to leave the residence and make any changes necessary.
- J. I will rehearse my escape plan and, as appropriate, practice it with my children.

**Step 3: Safety in my own residence.** There are many things a battered partner can do to increase safety in his/her own residence. It may be impossible to do everything at once, but safety measures can be added step by step. Safety measures I can use include:

- A. I can change the locks on my doors and windows as soon as possible.
- B. I can replace wooden doors with steel/metal doors.
- C. I can install security systems including additional locks, window bars, poles to wedge against doors, and electronic system, etc.
- D. I can purchase rope ladders to be used for escape from second floor windows.
- E. I can install smoke detectors and purchase fire extinguishers for each floor in my house/apartment.
- F. I can install an outside lighting system that lights up when a person is coming close to my house.

- G. I will teach my children how to use the telephone to make a collect call to me and to \_\_\_\_\_ (friend/minister/other) in the event that my partner takes the children.
- H. I will tell the people who take care of my children which people have permission to pick up my children and that my partner is not permitted to do so. The people I will inform about pick-up permission include:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (school)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (daycare staff)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (babysitter)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (Sunday school teacher)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (teacher)
  - \_\_\_\_\_ (others)
- I. I can inform \_\_\_\_\_ (neighbor, pastor, or friend) my partner no longer resides with me and should call the police if he or she is observed near my residence.

**Step 4: Safety with a protection order.** Many batterers obey protection orders, but one can never be sure which violent partner will obey and which will violate protection orders. I recognize that I may need to ask the police and the courts to enforce my protection order. The following are some steps I can take to help the enforcement of my protection order:

- A. I will keep my protection order \_\_\_\_\_ (Always keep it on or near your person).
- B. There should be a county registry of protection orders that all police departments can call to confirm the existence and/or status of a protection order. I can check to make sure that my order is on the registry. The telephone number for the county registry of protection orders is: \_\_\_\_\_
- C. For further safety, if I often visit other counties in my state, I might file my protection order in those counties \_\_\_\_\_
- D. I can call the local domestic violence program if I am not sure about B, C, or D above or if I have some problem with my protection order.
- E. I will inform my employer, minister, and closest friend, I have an active protection order.
- F. If my partner violates the protection order, I can call the police and report a violation, contact my attorney, call my advocate, and/or advise the court of the violation.

**Step 5: Safety on the job and in public.** Each battered partner must decide if and when he/she will tell others that he/she has been battered and that he/she may be at continued risk. Friends, family, and co-workers can help to protect. Each battered partner should consider carefully who to invite to help secure his/her safety. I might do any or all of the following:

- A. I can inform my boss, the security supervisor, and \_\_\_\_\_ at work of my situation.
- B. I can ask \_\_\_\_\_ to help screen my telephone calls at work.
- C. When leaving work, I can \_\_\_\_\_
- D. When driving home, if problems occur I can \_\_\_\_\_
- E. If I use public transit, I can \_\_\_\_\_
- F. I can use different grocery stores and shopping malls to conduct my business and shop at hours that are different than those used when residing with my battering partner.
- G. I can use a different bank and take care of my banking at hours different from those I used when residing with my battering partner.

**Step 6: Safety and my emotional health.** The experience of being battered and verbally degraded by partners is usually exhausting and emotionally draining. The process of building a new life for myself takes much courage and incredible energy. To conserve my emotional energy and resources and to support my mental and emotional well-being, I can do some or all of the following:

- A. If I feel down and ready to return to a potentially abuse situation, I can \_\_\_\_\_
- B. When I have to communicate with my partner in person or by telephone, I can \_\_\_\_\_
- C. I can try to use "I can..." statements with myself and to be assertive with others.
- D. I can tell myself " \_\_\_\_\_ " whenever I feel others are trying to control or abuse me.

Telephone numbers I need to know:

Police departments: \_\_\_\_\_

Battered women's program: \_\_\_\_\_

County registry of protection orders: \_\_\_\_\_

Work number: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor's home number: \_\_\_\_\_

## As An Advocate

Eventually you will become comfortable with doing a risk/danger assessment without the physical form. You will not always have the time to complete these with every crisis call. It's okay. Often the victim just needs to talk and problem solve in order to make it through the current crisis. If the risk has been removed, further meetings with the victim can include these tools.

If you have any questions call the back staff advocate on the call schedule.

**What you are doing can make the difference in the life of the victim.**