

Technology Safety

Be Aware. Be Safe.

Because power and control issues are part of domestic violence, technology is frequently used by abusers to monitor and control those they abuse. For example, if it seems like the abuser knows too much about your activity, they may be monitoring your computer, cell phone and your whereabouts through a variety of sources. So trust your gut. If you have a feeling that you are being monitored, you very well may be.

At 1736 Family Crisis Center we review the ways domestic violence clients can be technologically monitored/controlled and incorporate safe technology specifics into each client's individual safety plan. Review our six tips below to help stay safe when dealing with domestic violence and abuse.



Tip #1 Computer/Internet

Did you know that someone can monitor another person's computer use without the user knowing and that a "history" cannot be completely erased from a computer? As you surf the internet on your computer, the places you visit are stored on the computer you use. Bills you pay and purchases you make are tracked. Instant messages and emails can be retrieved. If you suspect that your abuser is monitoring your computer activities try using a safer computer, tablet, or device to prevent them from seeing what you're doing. Safe computers can be found at the local library, internet café, shelter, work or computer technology center. Always use safe computers when researching things such as travel plans, housing options, legal issues and safety plans. Change the usernames and passwords of your online accounts on the safe computer. Don't use the new username and password on the computer that is being likely monitored. Consider creating brand new accounts, such as a new email address. Also consider using a non-identifying username instead of your actual name and don't use the same password for your accounts.

Tip #2 Email

Did you know that e-mail is like a postcard and can be intercepted? Your abusive partner could have access to your email account. To be safe, open an email account your partner does not know about on a safe computer and use that account for safety planning and sensitive communications. It is a good idea to keep your monitored account active with non-critical emails in order to maintain appearances.

Tip #3 GPS Tracking

Did you know that a global positioning system (GPS) can be placed on your car, in your purse or in your cell phone to monitor where you go and where you are located at any time? If you suspect you're being followed, is it just when you're in your car or wherever you go? If the abuser knows where you are whenever you are in your car, you may consider having your car checked for hidden location devices. Ask a trusted mechanic or law enforcement to check the car thoroughly. Also think about what may happen if you remove a GPS device as this may escalate controlling and dangerous behavior.



One call to one of our 24-7 crisis hotlines can save a life:

(310) 379-3620, (310) 370-5902, (213) 745-6434, (213) 222-1237, (562) 388-7652

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Tip #4 Cell Phones

Did you know that cell phone use can be monitored, tracking your exact location in real time? Call and text history can also be retrieved by an abusive partner. If you suspect that your cell phone is being monitored, the safest thing is to get a new phone with an account that the abusive person doesn't have access to. Consider purchasing a pay as you go phone that you keep in a safe place to allow you to make calls. Go through your phone's settings to ensure that other devices aren't connected to the phone and that Bluetooth and location access is limited or turned off. If your phone allows apps to be downloaded, make sure you know what each of the apps do; if you don't use it or don't know what it is, delete the app. Pay attention to excessive battery or data usage as that may indicate that a program may be in use on your phone. Put a passcode on your phone and ensure that location settings and Bluetooth settings are turned off. Contact your cell phone provider for assistance with changing settings and turning off applications.



Tip #5 Hidden Cameras

If the abuser seems to know the details of what you are doing in your home, there may be hidden cameras. Figure out where cameras are hidden based on the information shared by the abuser (for example, they seem to know details of what you're doing when you're in the living room). Gifts to you or other members of your household may also be suspect. There are camera detectors that may be helpful in locating the cameras, but some detectors will only locate wireless cameras or wired cameras. Once you've found a camera, removing it may be dangerous. Instead, limit what you do in the room that is being monitored. If your computer/tablet has a built-in web camera, consider disabling the camera when you aren't using it. Or you can cover the camera with a piece of removable tape.

Tip #6 Social Media

Social media, especially Facebook, is one of the most common ways an abuser can track and monitor. Only post things on social media you want the public to see or know. Once it's online, it's no longer under your control. Be protective of your personal information. Your phone numbers and addresses enable people to contact you directly, and things like your birth date, the schools you attended, your employer and photos with landmarks may make it easier for someone to find where you live, hang out or go to school. Before you post on social media, turn off location notification settings so where you remains confidential. Tell your friends not to post personal information, negative comments or check-ins about you on social media. Ask them not to post or tag photos of you or your children. Keep your passwords private – there is no need to share passwords to social media accounts with anyone.



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