



THANKSGIVING SAFETY PLAN CHECKLIST

For Trauma Survivors



Your Complete Guide to Staying Safe When Your
Abuser will be at the Family Gathering

- ☐ Assessment Questions
- ☐ Safety Plan Essentials
- ☐ Boundary Phrases
- ☐ Grounding Techniques
- ☐ Emergency Exit Strategy
- ☐ Self-Care Guide

Agenna Mathley
Certified Life & Mindset Coach
CoachAgenna.com

BEFORE YOU COMMIT: ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

ANSWER THESE HONESTLY. YOUR SAFETY DEPENDS ON IT.

- Y N** 1. Am I in any physical danger from this person?
(If YES, do not attend.)
- Y N** 2. Will I have at least one safe person there who knows the situation?
- Y N** 3. Do I have my own transportation to leave whenever I need to?
- Y N** 4. Can I realistically maintain boundaries without being punished?
- Y N** 5. Do I have the following day off to recover and process?
- Y N** 6. Can I handle worst-case scenarios (confrontation, being triggered)?
- Y N** 7. When I imagine walking through that door, what does my body tell me?



Your RED FLAGS - Consider not attending if:

- You answered NO to questions 2, 3, 4, or 5
- Question 7 makes you feel physically sick
- You're feeling pressured to go against your gut
- You don't have recovery time planned
- You can't follow the safety plan on the next pages

REMEMBER: Changing your mind after saying yes is WISDOM, not failure.

SAFETY PLAN ESSENTIALS

COMPLETE THIS BEFORE THANKSGIVING

MY SUPPORT PERSON:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Our code word/phrase: _____

This person knows:

- ☐ About my situation
- ☐ They are my lifeline for the day
- ☐ They'll stay physically close to me
- ☐ They'll help me exit without questions
- ☐ Our code word means "I need to leave NOW"

MY TRANSPORTATION:

- ☐ I'm driving myself
- ☐ I have Uber/Lyft app ready with payment
- ☐ I have a friend on standby to pick me up
- ☐ My keys will be accessible at all times
- ☐ I will NOT carpool unless my support person drives

MY TIME BOUNDARIES:

Arrive at: _____ AM/PM

Leave at: _____ AM/PM

Maximum stay: _____ hours

- ☐ Alarm set on phone for departure time
- ☐ I will honor this boundary even if dinner isn't served
- ☐ I have permission to leave early

MY ALCOHOL BOUNDARY:

- ☐ No alcohol (recommended)
- ☐ Maximum 1 drink
- ☐ I will not let anyone pressure me to drink more

MY PHYSICAL POSITIONING:

- ☐ I've identified exits in the home
- ☐ I will sit near an exit
- ☐ I will NOT sit next to or across from my abuser
- ☐ I will stay near my support person
- ☐ I will avoid isolated spaces

PRACTICE THESE OUT LOUD BEFORE THURSDAY

SAY THEM UNTIL THEY FEEL NATURAL

IF YOUR ABUSER TRIES TO TALK TO YOU:

- ☐ "I'd rather not."
- ☐ "I'm not interested in talking."
- ☐ "Excuse me." [Walk away—no permission needed]
- ☐ "I've said no. Please respect that."
- ☐ "This conversation is over."

IF SOMEONE PUSHES YOU TO INTERACT:

- ☐ "I'm good where I am."
- ☐ "I am being nice—to myself."
- ☐ "I'm setting a boundary. That's different."
- ☐ "I'm more concerned with my wellbeing than appearances."
- ☐ "And I'm taking care of myself."

IF SOMEONE TRIES TO SEAT YOU NEAR YOUR ABUSER:

- ☐ "I'm sitting here, thanks." [No explanation needed]

IF SOMEONE PRESSURES YOU TO DRINK MORE:

- ☐ "I'm good, thanks." [Repeat as needed]

YOUR EMERGENCY PHRASES:

To your support person:

- ☐ "I need to leave now."
- ☐ "Can you come with me?"
- ☐ [Your code word]: _____

To the group (as you leave):

- ☐ "I need to go. Thanks for having me."
- ☐ "I'm not feeling well. See you later."
- ☐ "Something came up. I'll talk to you soon."

REMEMBER:

- You don't need to explain
- You don't need permission
- Walking away is a valid response
- Silence is a complete sentence

YOUR GROUNDING TOOLKIT

PACK THESE NOW - DON'T WAIT UNTIL THURSDAY

PHYSICAL ITEMS TO BRING:

- ☐ Ice pack OR cold water bottle (temperature grounding)
- ☐ Strong mints or gum (scent grounding)
- ☐ Stress ball or fidget tool (tactile grounding)
- ☐ Essential oil or comforting scent
- ☐ This checklist (print and keep in pocket/purse)

ON YOUR PHONE:

- ☐ Calming playlist downloaded
- ☐ Grounding app (Calm, Headspace, Insight Timer)
- ☐ Photos that make you feel safe
- ☐ Voice memo to yourself with encouragement
- ☐ Support person on speed dial
- ☐ Crisis hotlines saved:
 - RAINN: 1-800-656-4673
 - Crisis Text: Text HELLO to 741741

5-4-3-2-1 GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

USE THIS WHEN YOU FEEL TRIGGERED

This pulls you out of triggered brain and into present moment.

FIND:

5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

4 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH (and touch them)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

1. _____
2. _____

1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

1. _____

- ☐ Practice this NOW before Thursday
- ☐ Use it the moment you feel triggered
- ☐ Repeat if needed

WHAT TO DO IF TRIGGERED DURING DINNER

SIGNS YOU'RE TRIGGERED:

- ☐ Heart racing or pounding
- ☐ Feeling frozen or unable to move
- ☐ Sudden overwhelming emotion
- ☐ Disconnecting from your body
- ☐ Mind going blank
- ☐ Urge to run or hide

YOUR IMMEDIATE RESPONSE OPTIONS:

OPTION 1: BATHROOM BREAK

- ☐ Say "Excuse me" and go (no permission needed)
- ☐ Lock the door
- ☐ Splash cold water on face
- ☐ Do 5-4-3-2-1 technique
- ☐ Text your support person
- ☐ Take as long as you need
- ☐ If someone knocks: "I'll be out in a minute"

OPTION 2: "I NEED AIR"

- ☐ Say "I'm stepping outside for a minute"
- ☐ Walk around outside
- ☐ Feel your feet on the ground
- ☐ Notice the temperature
- ☐ Breathe: In for 4, out for 6
- ☐ Call your support person
- ☐ Decide: Return or leave?

OPTION 3: EARLY EXIT

- ☐ Grab your stuff (keys, phone, coat)
- ☐ Find support person OR text them
- ☐ Say: "I'm not feeling well. I need to go. Thanks."
- ☐ LEAVE immediately
- ☐ No detailed explanation needed

SITUATIONS WHERE YOU LEAVE

IMMEDIATELY:

- ☐ Your abuser approaches you directly
- ☐ Someone pressures you to hug/touch your abuser
- ☐ You feel physically unsafe
- ☐ You're dissociating badly
- ☐ Panic attack that won't subside
- ☐ Your boundary is repeatedly violated
- ☐ Your gut screams "LEAVE NOW"

EMERGENCY EXIT STRATEGY

HOW TO LEAVE (WITH OR WITHOUT EXPLANATION)

STEP 1: GRAB YOUR ESSENTIALS

- ☐ Keys (you kept them accessible, right?)
- ☐ Phone
- ☐ Coat
- ☐ Purse/wallet

STEP 2: NOTIFY YOUR SUPPORT PERSON

- ☐ Find them in person, OR
- ☐ Text them: "I'm leaving now"
- ☐ Do NOT wait for their response

STEP 3: SAY ONE SENTENCE

- ☐ "I need to go. Thanks for having me."
- ☐ "I'm not feeling well. See you later."
- ☐ "Something came up. I'll call you tomorrow."

STEP 4: LEAVE

- ☐ Walk to your car
- ☐ Drive away
- ☐ Call Uber/Lyft
- ☐ Call your standby friend

STEP 5: GET TO SAFETY

- ☐ Go home
- ☐ Go to friend's house
- ☐ Go somewhere you feel safe
- ☐ Do NOT stay in parking lot

STEP 6: TEXT SOMEONE SAFE

- ☐ "I left. I'm okay. I'll call tomorrow."

WHAT NOT TO DO:

- ✗ Give detailed medical explanation
- ✗ Wait for "right" moment
- ✗ Ask permission to leave
- ✗ Let anyone talk you into staying
- ✗ Apologize excessively

REMEMBER:

You can leave at **ANY** point

- Before you arrive (turn around)
- When you first walk in
- During dinner
- After dessert
- **WHENEVER** you need to

BEFORE/DURING/AFTER SELF-CARE

BEFORE (Day Before & Morning Of)

- ☐ Get good sleep the night before
- ☐ Eat a solid breakfast
- ☐ Move your body (walk, yoga, stretch)
- ☐ Do a grounding exercise
- ☐ Review this safety plan
- ☐ Text your support person to confirm
- ☐ Pack your grounding toolkit
- ☐ Set your time boundary alarm
- ☐ Remind yourself: "I can leave anytime"

SELF-TALK FOR THE MORNING:

- ☐ "I have a plan"
- ☐ "I have support"
- ☐ "I can leave whenever I need to"
- ☐ "My safety is the priority"
- ☐ "I'm doing this on MY terms"

DURING

- ☐ Take bathroom breaks as needed
- ☐ Step outside when overwhelmed
- ☐ Check in with body every 30 minutes
- ☐ Use grounding techniques preemptively
- ☐ Stay near your support person
- ☐ Eat (low blood sugar makes triggers worse)
- ☐ Drink water (dehydration increases anxiety)
- ☐ Watch the clock—honor your time boundary

PERMISSION STATEMENTS:

- ☐ "I can leave"
- ☐ "I don't have to explain"
- ☐ "My comfort matters"
- ☐ "This is temporary"

AFTER (That Evening & Next Day)

IMMEDIATE (Within 1 hour of leaving):

- ☐ Change into comfortable clothes
- ☐ Do something physical (cry, shake, etc.)
- ☐ Eat comfort food
- ☐ Journal about what happened
- ☐ Text support person or therapist
- ☐ Weighted blanket or hot shower
- ☐ Watch comfort show or read comfort book

NEXT DAY RECOVERY:

- ☐ Sleep in if possible
- ☐ Gentle movement (walk, stretch)
- ☐ Process with safe person or therapist
- ☐ Celebrate that you survived
- ☐ Notice what worked and what didn't
- ☐ Give yourself space from family contact

DO NOT

- ✗ Numb out with alcohol/substances
- ✗ Analyze your "performance"
- ✗ Beat yourself up
- ✗ Make big decisions tonight

FINAL REMINDERS

YOU'VE GOT THIS

Look at everything you have:

- ✓ Assessment questions answered
- ✓ Support person identified
- ✓ Transportation secured
- ✓ Boundary phrases practiced
- ✓ Grounding toolkit packed
- ✓ 5-4-3-2-1 technique ready
- ✓ Time limits set
- ✓ Emergency exit strategy prepared
- ✓ Self-care plan before/during/after
- ✓ Permission to leave ANYTIME

You are not:

- Trapped
- Helpless
- That scared kid anymore
- Alone

You are:

- Prepared
- Supported
- An adult with agency
- Capable of protecting yourself

REMEMBER

Success isn't enduring abuse for a holiday.

Success is protecting yourself on YOUR terms.

If you can't follow this safety plan, don't go.

You can change your mind—even at the door.

You can leave—even after you arrive.

Your healing matters more than tradition.

"Boundaries aren't walls that keep everyone out—they're knowing what feels okay and what doesn't."

The door to your peace? You hold the key.

RESOURCES

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-4673 | rainn.org

Crisis Text Line
Text HELLO to 741741

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
988

FOR MORE SUPPORT:

Read the complete blog series:
"Surviving Thanksgiving as a Trauma Survivor"

Part 1: You Don't Have to Go
Part 2: Your Safety Plan (this checklist)
Part 3: After the Holiday

Visit: CoachAgenna.com/blog

Book: "Healing What Hides in the Shadows:
A Private Journey Through Sexual Trauma Recovery"

Available at CoachAgenna.com

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