



HOLIDAY SAFETY PLAN CHECKLIST

For Trauma Survivors



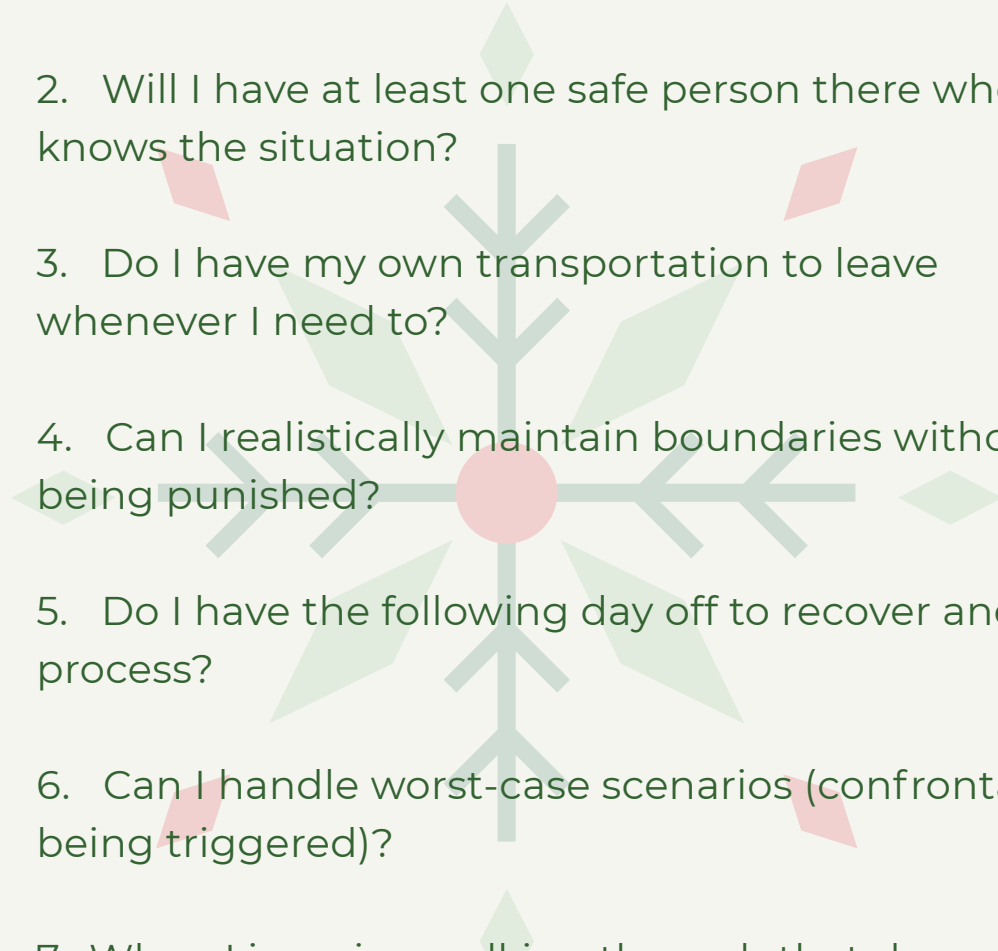
Your Complete Guide to Staying Safe When Your
Abuser will be at the Holiday Gathering

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

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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 THE EVENT

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



CODE WORDS & SIGNALS

PLAN THESE WITH YOUR SUPPORT PERSON BEFORE THE EVENT

Code words let you communicate your needs without alerting others.
Practice these so they feel natural.

MY SUPPORT PERSON:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

OUR CODE WORDS:

What I'll Say

What It Means

_____	I'm starting to feel triggered; stay close
_____	I need to leave within 30 minutes
_____	Get me out NOW—no questions

EXAMPLE CODE WORDS:

"I'm getting tired." = I'm triggered; stay close

"I have a headache" means I need to leave soon

"Did you feed the dog?" = Get me out NOW

"What time is it?" = I'm ready to go

"I need some water." = Meet me in the kitchen/away from others

NON-VERBAL SIGNALS:

Sometimes you can't speak. Plan backup signals.

- ☐ Tugging my earlobe = I need help
- ☐ Touching my necklace/watch = Come stand next to me
- ☐ Tapping my leg 3 times = We leave in 5 minutes
- ☐ Other: _____



CODE WORDS & SIGNALS

PLAN THESE WITH YOUR SUPPORT PERSON BEFORE THE EVENT

TEXT CODES:

If we get separated, these texts mean:

"👍" = I'm okay

"?" = Come find me

"911" = I need to leave immediately—come get me or meet me at the car

BEFORE THE EVENT:

- ☐ I've shared this plan with my support person
 - ☐ We've practiced saying the code words out loud
 - ☐ My support person knows to act immediately—no questions asked
 - ☐ We have a meeting spot if we get separated:
-

REMEMBER:

Your support person is your lifeline. Choose someone who:

- Knows your situation
- Will leave with you without hesitation
- Won't try to talk you into staying
- Can stay calm under pressure
- Puts YOUR safety above "keeping the peace"



PRACTICE THESE OUT LOUD BEFORE THE EVENT

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



GIFT BOUNDARIES

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM MANIPULATION



Gifts can be used as tools of control. You don't have to participate.

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO:

- ☐ Accept gifts from your abuser
- ☐ Give gifts to your abuser
- ☐ Open gifts in front of everyone
- ☐ Act grateful for gifts that feel manipulative
- ☐ Keep gifts that make you uncomfortable

WATCH FOR THESE RED FLAGS:

- ☐ Expensive gifts designed to create obligation
- ☐ Gifts given publicly to force a reaction
- ☐ "Peace offerings" that come without real change
- ☐ Gifts used to buy access to you or your children
- ☐ Lovebombing disguised as generosity

YOUR GIFT BOUNDARIES:

"Thank you, but I'm not exchanging gifts this year."

"I'll open this later." (You don't have to open it at all.)

"I appreciate the thought, but I can't accept this."

"We're keeping gifts simple this year."

REMEMBER:

A gift doesn't erase what happened

You don't owe gratitude for manipulation

Accepting a gift is not required to "keep the peace"

You can return, donate, or throw away any gift

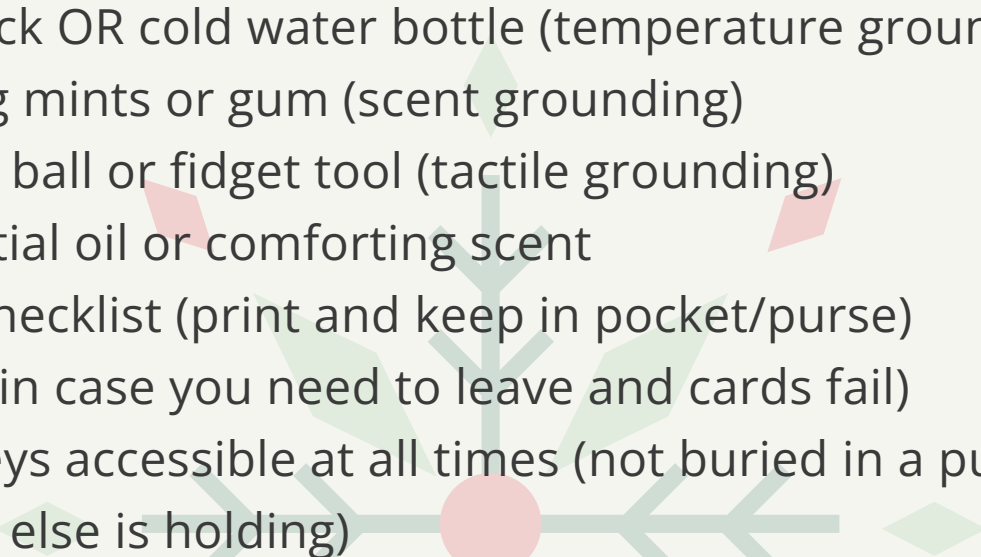
"No thank you" is a complete sentence



YOUR GROUNDING TOOLKIT

PACK THESE NOW - DON'T WAIT UNTIL THE GATHERING

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)
 - ☐ Cash (in case you need to leave and cards fail)
 - ☐ Car keys accessible at all times (not buried in a purse someone else is holding)

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 the event
- ☐ Use it the moment you feel triggered
- ☐ Repeat if needed

WHAT TO DO IF TRIGGERED DURING THE EVENT

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
- ☐ You're being pressured to drink alcohol
- ☐ 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

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:
"Christmas Survival Series" at Ask Agenna on CoachAgenna.com

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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