



SAFETY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Information about our lives, including personal information, is increasingly ending up online. Many of us have concerns over the security and privacy of sharing our personal information on the Internet. Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking may have even greater safety risks and concerns when their personal information appears on the Internet. However, having no online presence is generally unrealistic and isolating, so there are some things you can do to try to control who sees your information. Having a support network is critical to anyone who has experienced physical or emotional trauma, and the internet provides great opportunities to find this kind of support, and have it available 24 hours a day. It's hard to call family, friends, counselors or supporters in the middle of the night when grief, panic, or anger strikes, but someone is probably online. There are forums and access to information. You just need to do it safely.

Basic Safety Measures on Social Media

Here is a list of some things you can do to try to stay safe:

- ✓ Create a new account with a strong password that no one can figure out. Keep it private. Set the account to private but know that your abuser will try to get in by using false accounts and want to be your friend. Carefully select your privacy settings to be sure you are not visible or searchable.
- ✓ Put no identifying information on the site, like birth date, address, full name, etc. (Also helps prevent identity theft). Only fill in required fields, if these fields can be seen or used to search, use fictional information about location, gender, etc. Do not put up a profile picture.
- ✓ Be careful about what you post! Consider the articles you post to your profile, the pictures you put in an online album, or any status updates that indicate where you are at the moment (such as "checking in" at a restaurant) where you are headed (vacation destination). These types of posts can reveal a lot about you: your interests, your whereabouts, and your future plans, which can lead to someone finding you.
- ✓ Always log out of the site by clicking "log out" after each session on your social media page. Do not simply close the browser, as it does not always log you out of your account, which would then be viewable by any other user of the computer.
- ✓ It is extremely difficult to stay safe on any social network. You need to restrict the number of friends you add to the account. Check to make sure each of your friends have set their privacy settings to "only friends". Warn them that your abuser may have fake names or names of friends to get them to add him. If they already have your abuser as a friend, **DO NOT ADD THEM.**

Twitter and blogging

You cannot make twitter and micro-blogging private. They are designed to be public. Even if you are careful, what you say about your location, activities, or emotions, added together they may provide too much information to a determined abuser. This is the major reason not to use them.

What others say can easily give away your information

Family and friends may post information about you in blogs, genealogy sites, and on photo-sharing sites. This is information your abuser will try to get friends and family to reveal about you. Photos and videos often share far more information than people realize. What an abuser sees may be far more than you do. They will look in the background for clues that you have moved, who is that with you, when you go out-where do you go. You and your friends need to make sure that photos online don't compromise your safety or cause your abuser to escalate his actions.

E-shopping

You should close all current e-shopping accounts and open a new one using your new email and secure passwords. You don't want the abuser to gain access to your new delivery details, credit card, delivery address, etc. "A victim's abuser knew her eBay account information. He waited until she ordered something. He called the seller saying the item did not arrive. He asked the seller to confirm the address, and then went to her location and beat her, leaving her blind in one eye."