

# Preparing to Cut Off Ties with an Abuser

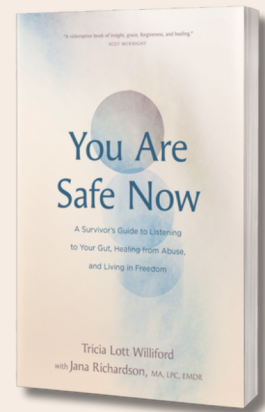
Tricia Lott Williford with Jana Richardson, MA, LPC, LMDR

When cutting off ties with an abuser in your life, there are actual steps to take to keep yourself safe.

## LEAVE

First, if you're living in the same physical location, it's important to prepare to exit.

Tricia was not living with Annie, so she didn't need to take some of these steps. But when I worked in a women's shelter, helping women flee abusive relationships, we asked important questions before we helped the women mobilize: Did you collect all the paperwork you would need for you and your children? Did you get money? Do you have clothes for you and your children?



## PROTECT YOURSELF

Next, even if you don't live with the abuser, you still need to have systems in place to protect yourself. Have a support system you can trust, people who will not reveal your location. Do you need to get into a shelter? Get out of state? Go to a friend who can protect your safety and anonymity? Know your safe place, and know your safe people.

## DETERMINE WHO IS SAFE - AND WHO IS NOT SAFE

Make a list of your friends. Make a map. How are people connected? Where do they cross over, including social-media connections? People who overlap may not be safe. If they have contact with that person, they are not safe for you. They may reveal things about you. You may need to put boundaries up with other people, those who cross over in the space between you and your abuser. If your social circle is enmeshed in theirs, you may need to sever connections with people who were connected to them. On social media, use the Block button as needed.

## GET READY FOR A SMALL WORLD (FOR A WHILE)

People may choose to protect you, and they may choose not to protect you. You need to be safe, emotionally and physically. You need to be safe always. Sadly, this means that your world may get very small for a while. Let go of anyone who will not keep you safe.

