



## Important Note:

Contacting people in your support network is about owning your own behavior and feelings, and seeking help that will support you and your family to be as safe and healthy as possible.

Pick people who will join you in wanting the best for you, your partner and your children. While people known to both you and your partner can be considered, remember the focus is your behavior, not your partner's.

Keep your conversations focused on yourself and what you have control over. Do not use your contact to blame, criticize, shame or frighten your partner or loved ones.

Ideally, contact should be made outside the presence of your partner or your children. This gives you privacy to talk about difficult subjects and protects them from getting worried when the main aim is to make them feel safer.

If you leave home, you still have responsibility for ensuring your children are safe and well.

These four steps do not aim to keep the family together or obligate your partner to do or feel anything. Those you care about are not required to forgive you, feel safer, less trapped, traumatized or controlled just because you are undertaking these steps.

**Remember that regardless of whether or not you can reach anyone in your network, you can still choose not to be abusive and are still responsible for any choices you make.**



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## CHOOSE TO CHANGE: Your behavior, Your choice

There are times when the world feels uncertain, scary and beyond anyone's control. Feeling afraid, worried and depressed are common responses to difficult situations. Worries about health, security and our children's future are normal.

It's okay to feel like this sometimes.

Being worried and feeling uncertain can even be harder when you've been told that, as a man, you need to be strong, not afraid, to be in control of the situation, to be responsible for the family.



What is not okay is lashing out or controlling your loved ones, abusing substances or hurting yourself. Being a man, being strong, caring for the safety and well-being of your loved ones does not justify violence. You can choose how to behave in response to difficult feelings.

Families stay healthier without violence and abuse.



If you are worried about your behavior toward the people you care about, you can decide to stop. You can get help by calling a local helpline.



You might choose to call people you trust to be supportive. Follow the steps below to create a network of people who can help you when you are worried about your behavior toward the people you care about.

They are your 'Choose to Change Network'

# Four steps to create your strong and safe network

## 1 Step One: Identify people who want you to succeed or do well

Who in your life (not including your partner) wants you to succeed or do well, now or in the past? Think widely about what success means - who wants you to succeed in a relationship? As a father? In your sobriety and recovery? In your career? Try and identify as many people as you can - they may be friends, family, mates, work buddies, teachers, a professional you trust, community or religious leaders. What have they said or done that made you believe they wanted you to do well? Be specific - what about them personally or what did they say or do that made you believe they wanted the best for you?

Pick up to five people who would drop what they are doing to be there for you, by phone or in-person when you:


- Are worried about your state of mind
- Are worried you will be abusive or might hurt someone else
- Might hurt yourself
- Might drink or use substances in a destructive or dangerous way


Even having one person you can call when you are in need is a big step and may help you.

## 2 Step Two: Create your 'Choose to Change Network'

We will all find ourselves in different situations. Some may challenge us more than others. We can have various states of mind or changeable feelings. Our behavior can change too. You may need different kinds of support from the people your Choose to Change network at different times.

 When you are doing well, you need a **Check-in Contact** - you are in a good space and want to stay in touch and check-in with your network. A check-in contact might be a quick chat on the telephone or a text.

 When you are on alert, you need a **Worry Contact** - you are worried about your mood and thinking, are concerned it may escalate into negative behavior when you or someone else is worried you may be abusive. A worry contact could be a long phone call or arranging to meet face-to-face.

 When you are being abusive, you need a **Crisis Contact** - you are being abusive or controlling, other people are scared of you. A crisis contact could mean you need the person to speak to you or see you straight away.

## 3 Step Three: Prepare to contact your 'Choose to Change' Network

Think about what you will do to reach out to each person:

- How will you arrange a time to speak to them?
- If it is someone in the past, how do you re-establish contact with them?
- What are you willing to tell them?

Write a script to reintroduce contact or initiate a conversation with each person on your list. For

example:

*"I know we haven't spoken for a while, but I have always valued our relationship and felt like you wanted the best for me. I'm phoning to ask if you would be willing to help me. I'm having trouble with how I behave toward my partner and the kids and it's causing us a lot of pain. I think speaking to you would really help me stop hurting the people I care about."*

What you are going to ask each person on your list to do to help you? Be specific. For example:

*"I'd like you to remind me that:*

- *I have control over my behavior*
- *Lashing out will hurt me, my relationship, my partner and my kids*
- *This is not the kind of parent/partner I want to be*
- *Hurting my partner also hurts my kids*
- *I don't have the right to control my partner*
- *Drinking or taking drugs hurts my family."*

*"You can offer to help by:*

- *Talking to me on the phone*
- *Answering my texts when I text you*
- *Meeting me for coffee*
- *Checking in with me every day or once a week to see how I'm doing."*

*"When I'm in crisis, can you:*

- *Let me stay with you for a period of time until I cool down*
- *Come and pick up my partner and kids*
- *Come and meet me*
- *Call the police if I won't choose to get my own behavior under control."*

## 4 Step Four: Reach out to your 'Choose to Change' Network

Contact the person you have identified for a check-in contact, support contact and crisis contact when you recognize the situation, state of mind or behavior.

*Important: If the first contact is not immediately available, work through all the people in your network until you reach someone who is able to help.*

As a last resort, if you can't reach anyone, what else can you do to get help? Here are some ideas:

- Contact a local helpline
- Contact one of your partner's friends or family and ask them to help her
- Contact a social worker or other professional
- Phone the police