Seeking Help:
National Resources &
Safety and Privacy Tips for Survivors

There are a lot of options when you reach out for resources and support, including phone, text, or chat hotlines, and virtual support groups. While some options can make it easier to access support, there are also some privacy and safety tips to consider. For a list of national helpline in the U.S. that include phone, text or chat options, see our National Hotline List.

What if it's not safe to talk out loud on the phone?

Many helplines also offer text messaging or online chat. Some people even use the chat feature in a game or other app (one the abusive person may not monitor or look through) to reach out to trusted friends. Likewise, there are personal safety apps that may allow you to quickly contact a trusted contact or 911, however the options they offer and how well they work can vary. Learn more about using personal safety apps.

Could someone see my text conversations?

Most text messages are saved on your phone. Consider deleting the texts once you are done to minimize the risk of someone else seeing them. Also, sometimes texts are sync'd with other devices like another phone, laptop, or tablet, or can be seen in your online account. Be sure to check those places also.

What if I use online chat? Could someone see my chat conversations?

If you're using a chat window through a website, the messages are typically not saved to your device and usually delete when you close the browser window. However, a record of what website you visited could be listed in your browser history. If it feels safe, you can delete the website from your history. Deleting the entire history may look suspicious if the person regularly checks what you do online.

What if someone checks what I do on my phone or other device?

If someone has physical access to your device or they know how to get into your online accounts, they may be able to see your messages or your call and internet history. If someone has installed stalkerware/spyware on your device, they would have access to everything including websites you visited, call logs, texts, photos, and other information. Learn more about Stalkerware.

If this is the case, it may be helpful to think of other ways to reach out. Consider using a code word with friends or family when you need help. Remember to let your friends or family know what this means ahead of time and what to do. Other options are cheap pay-as-you-go phones, donated phones, or borrowing someone else's phone or device.

For more information, see our Survivor Technology Safety & Privacy Toolkit.

We update our materials frequently. Please visit TechSafety.org for the latest version of this and other materials.