



Keeping Us Safe

*Centering autonomy & care in
planning our safety*



A Note from Our Executive Director

Dear friends of DVRP,

Since 1996, the Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP) has provided services to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault in Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia. The needs for our services has increased exponentially during the COVID 19 pandemic, and in light of the continued hate violence against A/PI women across the country has led to the development of new resources including this toolkit, **“Keeping Us Safe: Centering Autonomy and Care in Planning our Safety”**.

One of the ways in which DVRP is responding to the increased violence in our communities is through developing resources and creating safe spaces for community members to heal. The “Keeping Us Safe” toolkit can be used by service providers, educators, survivors and community members for information on individual and collective healing.

DVRP recognizes the multiple ways in which violence manifests itself; through intimate partner relationships, systemic violence including gendered racism and xenophobia. We also recognize that the violence we are responding to is as a result of White supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, settler colonialism, imperialism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, capitalism, homophobia, transphobia and the many intersecting systems of oppression that continue to exploit and harm our communities. This toolkit examines our responses to these multiple layers of violence that we experience and engage in and suggest community centered responses.

We want to thank the Mayor’s Office on Asian & Pacific Islander Affairs for their generous funding to develop this toolkit.

DVRP staff are also available to facilitate workshops using this toolkit. You can reach us at info@dvrp.org to schedule a workshop or for more information on the toolkit.

In Solidarity,



Krittika Ghosh

Executive Director

Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project



Contents

Our intentions	4
<i>Before we begin</i>	5
Defining Safety	6
Unpacking Safety, Consent, and Safety Planning	7
Building Safe Cocoons <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating Pods for Safety• Pod Mapping• Pod Considerations	8
Understanding Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical Safety• Transportation• Safe Communication• Digital Safety	12
Safety in Community <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Navigating Anti-Asian Violence• Bystander Intervention	17
Additional Resources	19
Acknowledgement	21

Our Intentions



Safety is deeply personal. Safety also garners strength from communities. This resource is for survivors and members of our community to reclaim autonomy in our ability to feel and be safe.

Traditionally, safety planning has been specific to creating a plan which consists of a set of steps to reduce the risk of harm in unsafe situations with an abuser. While this aspect of safety planning is expanded upon, this resource envisions to understand and plan for safety beyond individual physical safety.

This tool hopes to provide non-carceral approaches and resources in navigating unsafe and potentially violent situations.

After working through this, the hope is for you to understand:

- ***Individually:***
 - What safety means to you
 - Who you can call for in times of need
 - What are some resources available to you in unsafe situations
 - What plan you can create and execute in times of need
 - ***Communally:***
 - How you can support one another in being safe
 - What non-carceral approaches exist in addressing unsafe situations in the community
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Before We Begin...

Planning for safety might trigger uncomfortable memories and responses. Let us take a moment to ground ourselves:

Sit down on a comfortable chair, one where your feet reach the floor. Let the chair hold you. Invite your body to relax. Relax the jaw, eyes, neck, shoulders, belly, pelvis and legs to whatever extent possible for your body, feeling gravity support you. Breathe in slowly for the count of three, then out slowly. Bring your mind's focus to your body. Notice the feelings of being held by the chair in your body. Find your feet, focus on your feet's connection to the ground. Notice how this connection to the ground makes you feel in your body. Feel any heaviness go down your legs, through your feet and down into the ground. Remember that the Earth supports you and the Universe holds you.

You are supported in this process





Let's Start With You

Defining Safety

Safety can mean many things and can be different for each of us. Understanding what safety means for you individually, can help in creating a community response in unsafe situations. Here are some reflection questions to help you get started in understanding what safety means for you:

What does safety mean to you?

What can help you be safe?

How do you feel when you feel safe?

What sensations do you feel?

How does this show up in your body?

How does safety feel emotionally?

How does safety feel physically?

Are there people you feel safe around?

Who are they?

What feelings arise for you when you are around them?

What are some things that you need to feel safe?

Suggested Activity

Safe Spaces Visualization Meditation

If you are having difficulty in articulating what safety might look like or how you would feel when safe, start with this short guided meditation.

This Safe Spaces Visualization Meditation is from the DBT Therapy Skills Book.

Notice the feelings that arise as you go through this meditation and use that to answer the questions.





Unpacking Consent, Safety, and Safety Planning

Consent is an unambiguous, affirmative, and conscious decision by each person to engage in mutually agreed process or activity.

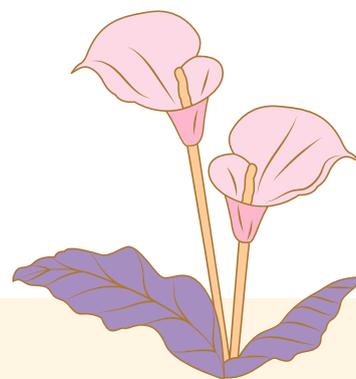
At its core, ***the presence of consent creates safety***. We invite you to operate on the understanding that in abusive relationships there is an inherent absence of consent and ***an absence of consent is violent***.

The need for safety planning stems from abusive, violent, and unsafe situations that arise from this very absence of consent.

Additionally, planning our safety within interpersonal and communal realms means interacting with individuals and community members; thus understanding, asking, and honoring consent is central to the safety planning process.

We invite you to engage with the following questions to get a clearer sense of what your relationship with consent is:

- ***What were you taught about consent implicitly/explicitly through your relationships and cultures?***
- ***When did you first learn about consent?***
- ***What does it feel like to give consent?***
- ***Where is that feeling located for you?***



Building Safe Cocoons



Creating Pods for Safety

Adapted with gratitude from the
[Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective](#)

What is a Pod?

A “pod” is a microcosm of a community. Originally developed by Mia Mingus for the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective, pod mapping is a tool used specifically for accountability and dealing with harm in communities. However, it can also be adapted to help you assess who you can rely on: the supports you’d turn to and who would turn to you. Pods come in many different forms and can serve different purposes in our lives. Some examples are affinity groups and accountability pods.

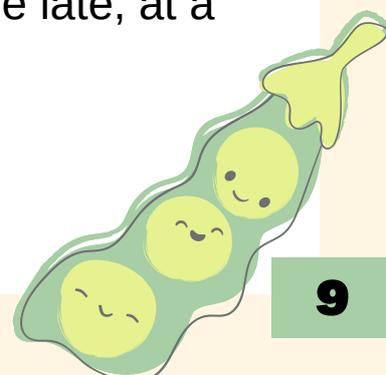
What is Pod Mapping?

The exercise of identifying who in your life and community you would like to have within your microcosm and understanding their roles within the microcosm, is called Pod Mapping. Pod Mapping provides a visual representation of the individuals you can turn to in times of need.

What is a Pod for Safety ?

People in a pod for safety can be in-person or virtual and:

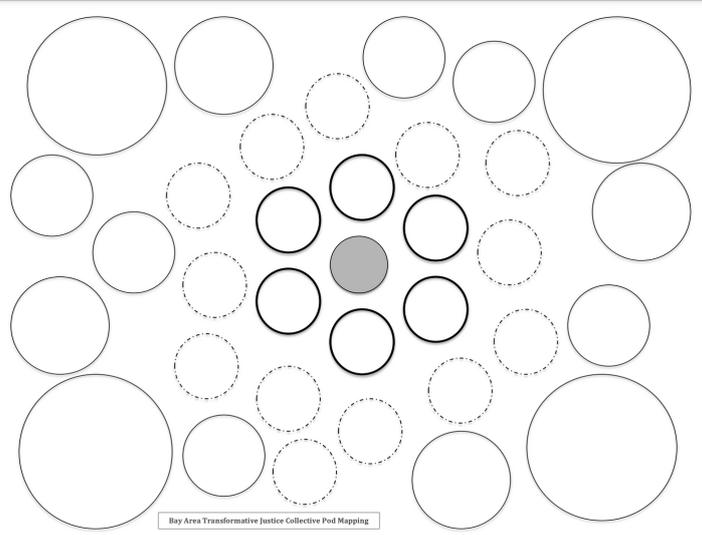
- Provide immediate support in unsafe situations, like providing housing, food, transportation, etc.;
- Support each other through personal crisis, political, and social unrest;
- Be buddies in public spaces - walking back home late, at a protest, etc.



Pod Mapping

Materials Required:

- [Pod Mapping Worksheet](#)
- Something to write with

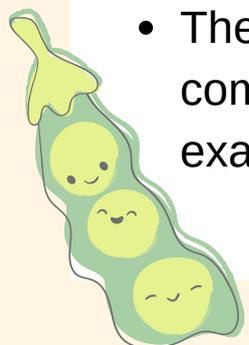


Before Mapping, Reflect on:

- *How do you feel about asking for help?*
- *In what ways do you like being supported?*
- *What kind of support is the most helpful for you in crisis?*
- *What are small actions that affirm your connections with others?*
- *What helps you build trust with others?*
- *How do you feel about giving consent while receiving help in unsafe situations?*
- *Who are some people in my life who have helped you?*

The Exercise:

- In the center circle, write your name.
- The surrounding bold-outlined circles are your pod.
 - It's important to write specific names, as well as what support they can provide.
 - Write down their contact information and best ways to contact them.
- The dotted lines surrounding your pod are people who are "movable." They are people that could be moved into your pod, but need a little more work. For example, you might need to build more relationships or trust with them.
- The larger circles at the edge of the page are for networks, communities or groups that could be resources for you. For example, A/PI DVRP can be a part of this.





Pod Considerations

Cultivating a pod is an intentional community-oriented process. Please communicate with members in your pod and collaboratively cultivate a culture of care; this takes time. Have a plan of coming together to decide how you would like to support each other.

Some areas to consider while building with your pod members:

Communication

- How would you like to be communicated with?
- How can you safely communicate in unsafe situations?
- What are some code-words you can come up with to flag that someone is in crisis?

See the “Safe Communication” section below for some suggestions

Capacity

- How often can your pod members provide support?
- Who can provide support in urgent situations?

Type of Support and Resources

- What kind of support can pod members give?
- Can someone drive?
- Can someone open up their house?
- Can someone translate?

Remember

- Growing one’s pod is not easy and may take time. ***This is intended to be a long-term sustainable process.***
- Your pod may shift over time, as your needs or relationships shift or as people’s geographic location shifts.

Understanding Safety





Safety Considerations



This section invites you to think of safety in terms of physical and emotional safety. It expands on aspects of safety planning like safe communication and transportation. Please note that this is not an expansive list.

Remember: You have the power to define what safety looks like for you and what actions can be taken to help you feel and be safe. A safety plan is highly personalized. You are the expert of your life and your situation.

Physical Safety

Within the Household:

- Create a “safe room” in the house where you can be when there are heightened conversations in the house.
- Ensure that this room has no weapons and you can exit your house easily from here.

To-Go Bags:

- Create and keep a readily available to-go bag. Some things to have in your bag can include, but are not limited to:
 - Cash
 - Copies of essential documents: ID, passport, visas etc.
 - Non- perishable food like granola bars
 - Essential medication
- Ensure that the to-go bag is in a location that is accessible to you in case of an emergency

Transportation

Some questions to consider while planning and executing safe transportation:

- What are the means of transportation most readily available?

Personal Vehicles:

- Who will be responsible for driving?
- Does the car have enough gas?

Uber/Lyft/ Ride Sharing:

- Where is a safe place to order an Uber/Lyft?
- Should the ride information be shared with anyone else? If so, who?

Public transportation:

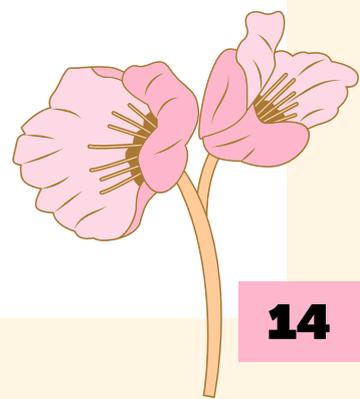
- Where are the closest bus stops and metro stations?
- Do metrocards have enough money?

Safe Communication

Supporting Safe Communication:

Here are some questions to consider when planning how to communicate with your pod or supports in a safe manner when needing help:

- What are safe ways to contact each other?
- Consider confidentiality:
 - Is it okay to text?
 - Is it okay to call?
 - Is it okay to leave a voicemail?
- What signs or signals can be used to signify that things are okay or not okay?
- What code words can be used?
- Will there be follow-up communication? If so, how?



Reaching Out for Support:

Adapted with gratitude from the National Domestic Violence Hotline

Reaching out for support in crises and when unsafe situations arise is difficult, especially if there are barriers to access safe means of communication. Here are some options to consider if you are in that situation:

Semi-Safe Phone

- Utilize a phone that you have but delete the texts and calls.
- While texting or calling, use code-words that you have agreed to with your pod

Internet

- Use Google Voice (only available in the U.S.), Skype, or Dialpad, that allow you to call someone via the internet.
- Apps such as Whatsapp and Signal allow you to text and call using wifi.
- Facebook and Instagram also allows you to call other users you are friends with using wifi.

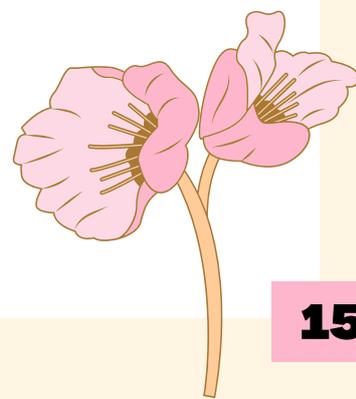
Community Phones

- Local community centers and libraries may have pay phones or public phones you can use.
- If you live in an apartment with a reception or business center, you may find a safe way to reach out.
- Look into payphones in your area as well.

Digital Safety

Digital safety, internet safety, cyber safety at its core consists of making your online presence safer and to ensure higher privacy.

See under "Resources for Digital Safety" for more information



Emotional Safety

Emotional safety comes from knowing and feeling secure within our relationships with those around us and with ourselves.

Emotional safety is complex. It asks us to look deep into ourselves and explore what keeps us grounded and whole.

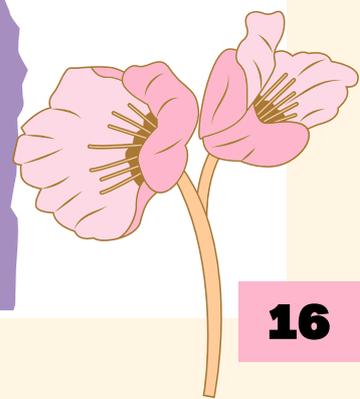
Some questions to consider to understand what emotional safety looks like for you:

- ***What helps you express your authenticity?***
- ***What helps you live your whole truth?***
- ***How do you self soothe?***
- ***Draw in on your ancestors, cultural wealth, and resilience:***
 - ***How did people in your lineage keep themselves safe?***
 - ***What are some stories of courage that you have heard about your ancestors?***
 - ***What can you learn from those in our families, chosen and given?***

Suggested Activity

Diving into emotional safety can be difficult. We suggest taking your time understanding and answering these questions. We invite you to ground yourself before, during, or after reflecting by using your breath. The breath is an autonomic action that can be intentionally changed to self soothe and regulate ourselves. We invite you to take a moment to follow your breath:

- ***Count your breaths: Begin with short sets - between 3-10 exhalations.***
- ***Find the places your breath is moving in your body. Where do you feel your breath? Is it in your throat? Heart? Abdomen?***
- ***As you exhale, create a mantra. Find words or phrases or known chants to repeat as your exhale.***



Safety in Community



Navigating Anti-Asian Violence

The violence faced by our communities are not just isolated violent acts, but rather are systemic through policy and a legacy of dehumanization. *Carceral solutions have never kept us safe. Increased policing and prisons won't protect us.* We need to work on creating safer communities and networks to care for each other. In cases of immediate harm, bystander interventions put the power of intervening harm on the community.

Do's and Don'ts of Bystander Intervention

Adapted with gratitude from American Friends Service Committee

Do *make your presence as a witness known*

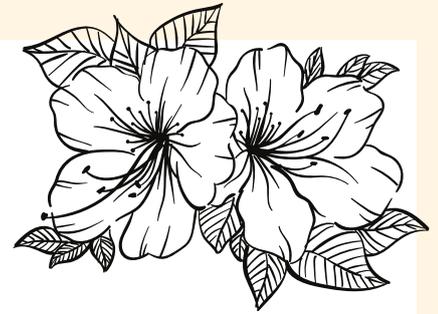
Do *take cues from the individual who is being harrassed*

Do *keep both of you safe*

Don't *call the police*

Don't *escalate the situation*

Additional Resources



Resources on Consent

- **Planned Parenthood FRIES:**
<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-pacific-southwest/blog/say-yes-to-our-consent-partnership>

Resources on Pod Mapping

- **Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective:**
<https://batjc.wordpress.com/pods-and-pod-mapping-worksheet/>
- **Planning for Disaster: A Writing Exercise:**
<https://truthout.org/audio/planning-for-disaster-a-writing-exercise/>

Resources on Digital Safety

- **Digital Safety Guide by HeartMob:**
<https://iheartmob.org/resources/tech>
- **Take Back Tech: Take Control of Technology to End Gender-Based Violence:**
<https://www.takebackthetech.net/>
- **National Network to End Domestic Violence Technology Safety & Privacy Toolkit for Survivors:**
<https://www.techsafety.org/resources-survivors>

Resources on Bystander Intervention

- **Sign Up for a Bystander Intervention Training by Asian Americans Advancing Justice:**

<https://advancingjustice-aaajc.org/press-release/advancing-justice-aaajc-and-hollaback-provide-training-amid-covid-19-racist-attacks>

- **Show Up: Your Guide to Bystander Intervention by Hollaback!**

https://www.ihollaback.org/app/uploads/2016/11/Show-Up_CUPxHollaback.pdf

- **Don't Be a Bystander: 6 Tips For Responding to Racist Attacks**

This video by Project NIA offers an abolitionist approach to bystander intervention that does not rely on the police.

<https://vimeo.com/199947156>

Some A/PI centered and led organizations who are committed to building safety for our communities outside the carceral system:

- Red Canary Song
- National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)
- Stop Asian American Pacific Islander Hate
- APIENC
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)
- APALRC





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