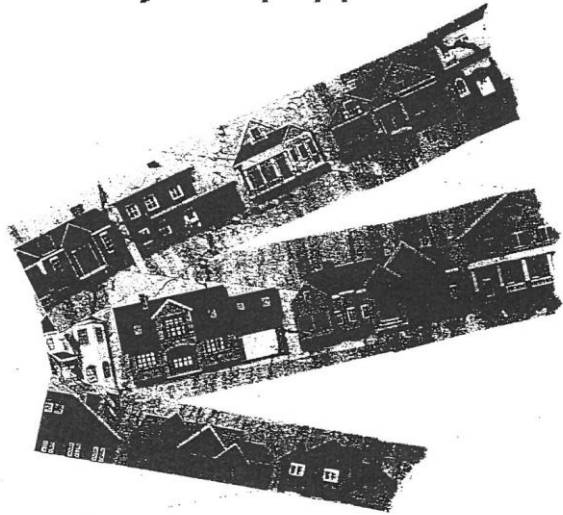


Get Lost!

A guide to running away for
adults

by Jacq Applebee



*Home - it isn't always where
the heart is.*

Disclaimer:

This zine is NOT intended for people under 18 who are thinking of running away. There are laws and systems in place in the UK that will make most of this zine irrelevant to you. However, if you are under 18, and thinking of running, there are organisations that may be able to help you:

Childline: 0800 1111

<https://www.childline.org.uk>

NSPCC: <http://www.nspcc.org.uk>

Other organisations aimed at adults may have a legal duty to report your contact to the Police and/or Social Services, whether you want them to or not, so stick with the ones above, who will also have specialist knowledge.

If you plan to run away with your own children, seek legal advice first if you are able. You may be charged with kidnapping if you run with your children in tow without checking out the ramifications first.

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Why a zine on running away?

Most of us feel like running at sometime in our lives. It isn't always the right thing to do, but sometimes it is. Running away is not a cowardly thing; sometimes our lives depend getting away. If you look at most kinds of media, Runaways are usually portrayed as white, able-bodied teenagers. But anyone can run away from their home; age, ethnicity, disability or sexuality won't stop you if you really have to leave. This zine can help you to run away in a safer manner.

Running away doesn't have to be forever. You may want to lay low for a while, and give yourself a breather. You may be feeling trapped, and have tried other ways to deal with it that didn't work. Whatever your reason, running away is a valid choice; it's not a thing that many folks will do on the spur of the moment, and if you think it is, you may well have missed all the signs leading up to the moment they ran.

People run away for a variety of reasons. This zine is for those who want to run because their present situation isn't safe for them.

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A Tottenham state of mind

Writing this zine has stirred up some strong emotions for me. I didn't have too much time or energy to think when I ran away from home. But I clearly remember when I made the decision to run: I'm a survivor of physical, sexual abuse and incest. It went on for 19 years. When I met my first boyfriend at 22, I could see that the behaviour of my family and their friends was not okay - I didn't deserve it all. I hesitated about running though, because my nieces and nephews were the only good thing about Tottenham. I didn't want to leave them, but I also didn't want them to grow up and see that the way I was treated was normal. So I put my stuff in an empty bin liner and I left. That was in 1993.

Being homeless and on the run was awful. There was no internet or social media accessible in the UK then. My experience with a homeless hostel was terrifying. I was one of very few women there; I felt like there was a bullseye on my back when the other men would catch sight of me. I would always put a chair under the door handle, and I stayed in my room as much as possible.

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How to answer those awkward questions

What happens when you're asked about your background, and you don't want to disclose the fact that you ran away? The basic answer to this question and all of those below is: Get your cover story straight!

Typical questions may include:

- Where are you from?
- Where did you go to school?
- I suppose you'll be spending Christmas/Eid/Diwali with your family?
- Don't I recognise you from (old place)?

Questions about your birth family can feel super awkward.

Saying you're an orphan may seem cruel, but when it comes to your safety, this is an option you might want to use. I have used this before, with good results in shutting down the conversation. Keep your story simple though: a plain, "I'd rather not talk about it," can work wonders.

Different cultures are more interested than others in what your parents may have done/or come from. Some people use these

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questions to be polite. Some are just plain nosey. Remember:
you don't have to take part in any conversation you don't want to.



(6)

Wherever I lay my hat
that's my home
(Martin Guse)



Home - it's where I wanna be
but I think I'm already there.
(7) (talking heads)

How to get lost

Before you run

1. Be flexible – you may have a plan in your head about getting away, but sometimes things change that can turn things upside down.
2. Have basic things in a bag that you carry at all times. Basic things may include medication, emergency cash, a change of underwear, sanitary protection, some energy bars, a bottle of water etc. If you can afford a disposable/new phone, that would be handy. If you take regular prescription meds, you can tell your GP/Pharmacist that you're going on holiday for X amount of weeks - you may be able to get a supply of your meds to keep you going for a while.
4. Try not to write anything down, or put your ideas on your phone/computer. If you're running due to any kind of violence, your abuser may go through your things.
5. Ask yourself why you want to run away. There are some things that may not change, wherever you end up. If you're running due to abuse or violence, there may be

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help you can access that will support you. (If you're undocumented, this may unfortunately end in even more trouble for you)

Broken Rainbow, for LGBT+ domestic violence:
<http://www.brokenrainbow.org.uk/help/helpline>

Resources for those affected by rape or sexual assault in the UK: <https://www.survivorsuk.org/resources/helpful-organisations/>

If you or someone you know has or is experiencing violence, you can call the National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247 (24hr)

Being clear about why you are running, will help you decide if its the right decision for you, or if there are other options to try. It will also keep you from going back when you're fed up.

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Running

1. There is no perfect time for you to run. If you have made up your mind to go, and you see an opportunity, do it. Know that you may have to leave with the clothes on your back in an emergency.
2. Adrenaline may keep you going for a while, but you need to eat, keep warm and safe. Don't wait until you're hungry and cold before trying to find something.
3. Hospital Accident & Emergency waiting rooms are good places to stay at night or when it is cold. Some hospitals may have security guards present that can cause problems, but it's worth thinking about all the same.
4. If you're a gay or bi man, some Saunas may be good for overnight stays, but I've heard there is an increasing amount that have 'No Sleeping' rules at saunas.
5. If you're anyone other than a straight white man, you may find some people really want to 'help' you. They may use offers of money, food or protection to hook you. Trust your instincts. There are some genuine people out there,

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but there are also a lot of abusive jerks who prey on the needy. Some of these may want sex in exchange for help (and if you're okay with that, then fine), but there are others who may be violent. If someone sounds too good to be true, they probably aren't. You didn't run away just to end up in another abusive situation. This advice goes double for Women, (Visibly) Disabled, LGBT+ and Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic people.

6. Begging may on the one-hand be a decent way of making some money, but it is worth remembering a few things: You could be picked up by the Police. You may make yourself more visible than you think, and that's not always a good thing; some cities have 'tax men' or protection racketeers, who will notice you and want a 'cut' in either money or some other form. If you're a woman, you WILL get unasked for offers of sex while begging.
7. Doing sex work whilst on the run as a way of generating money is a valid option, but remember it is YOUR CHOICE, and you can stay in control of things as much as possible. The Police are an obvious hazard, but so are violent clients who count on you not reporting them. There are some Sex Worker-run organisations that may

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be able to help you work more safely: Ugly Mugs, being one I'd recommend. <https://uknswp.org/um/>

8. Eating: Hang around food markets as they're closing - you may be able to find produce that's abandoned on empty stalls. Dumpster diving or Skipping can be a way of getting food, but be aware, some big shops and supermarkets have counter measures in place: security cameras and guards; some shops pour disinfectant over the contents of their bins to deter skipping. Always inspect any food before eating, and never eat meat/fish/poultry from skips, as the risk of getting a stomach bug increases.

When you've settled

1. Get a doctor if you're able, as quickly as you can. And if you feel confident enough in doing so, let them know what's happened/happening. A referral from a doctor to housing, counselling or other support agencies can be vital for your ongoing physical and mental health.
2. If there are (non-abusive) people back home who you trust, you may want to send a postcard or letter (without any sender address on it) to let them know you're okay. If

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you choose to do this, post the letter/postcard from a postbox in a different area from where you are currently. This is purely optional, and if you don't want to send anything, you can always write a letter and put it aside, as a way of getting some feelings off your chest for a while.

3. Changing your name is one of the best things you can do to stay gone. I waited until I got a job before I used my first wages to get my name officially changed at a Solicitors. There are cheaper ways to do this, which I only found out afterwards
 - a. By Government Deed poll (different rules for Scotland) <https://www.gov.uk/change-name-deed-poll/overview>
 - b. By Private deed poll <http://www.deedpoll.org.uk/>

According to the Citizens advice bureau,

**If you wish to be known by a different name you can change your name at any time, provided you do not intend to deceive or defraud another person. There is no legal procedure to follow in order to change a name. You simply start using the new*

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*name. You can change your forename or surname,
add names or rearrange your existing names.**

I recommend doing something official whenever you can, as it will make it a lot easier to open a new bank account, get a new passport or find a doctor etc. However, you may need to present a birth certificate/passport/driver's licence as proof of ID to start off the process.

Resources for homelessness

<http://www.homelessuk.org/> Lots of links to places that help homeless people survive

Shelter: England <http://england.shelter.org.uk>

Shelter: Scotland <http://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>

Crisis: for single homeless people <http://www.crisis.org.uk>

What if I'm found?

If someone tracks you down, it doesn't have to be the end of the world, though it may feel like it at first. Try to figure out how this person/people found you, so you can avoid it happening again. I was once spotted at work by someone from the church I used to attend. The next day an abusive family member phoned up demanding to speak to me. I was very clear that I didn't want any contact with them. After that I rehearsed what I would say and do if anyone else from my family found me.

You don't have to talk to anyone you don't want to. In the UK, only the Police can enter your home without permission. Even if my abusive family turned up with the police in tow, I would still be legally obliged to only let the police inside. You also don't have to answer any police questions without an advocate either - remember "no comment," and silence are both valid responses to questions in the UK.

The Salvation Army help a lot of homeless people, BUT they also have a service that helps to track down missing persons in the UK. If you end up using one of their hostels or kitchens, use a false name if you are asked.

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Know that you are not powerless - you are in control. The ones left behind may use different tactics to get to you, but you don't have to go along with it:

- Guilt - saying that they're worried
- Threats - saying they'll injure/kill themselves if you don't come back
- Promises - saying they're in therapy, or they'll never treat you bad again.

Regardless of what they say, you don't have to make a decision there and then. See how they react when you say you want to think about. Do they get angry? Do they respect your decision? Use that to inform you.

Some people really do change (but rarely ones who have been physically or sexually abusive to you) You still don't have to do anything you don't want to.

It can be sad knowing that the places and people that you knew are gone, even if things were bad, but it is possible to have a happier life; it's not easy, but it's not a hopeless dream either.

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Lyrics to Driving away from home
by It's Immaterial

Hey,
Now just get in
And close the door
And put your foot down

You know, I like this suburb we're going through
And I've been around here many times before
When I was young we were gonna move out this way
For the clean air, healthy, you know
Away from the factories and the smoke
I like that shop, too
You can get anything there

So just get in
And we'll go for a ride

'Cos we'll go driving away from home
Thirty miles or more
And we'll go moving away from home
Without a care

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I'll tell you what
Why don't we cross the city limit
And head on down the M62
It's only thirty nine miles
And forty five minutes to Manchester
And that's my birth-place, you know

I loved this tune the first time I heard it; I dreamed of someone taking me away from all the shite I was living with, and taking me off to the North of England. I thought about hitch-hiking a few times, but I doubted that would have been a great idea for a teenage black girl on her own. What I especially loved about this tune was the spontaneity of it all - what starts off as a regular drive through the suburbs turns into a massive trek across the country. The thought of driving away from home without a care, was very appealing to me.

The melody of the song was lovely too; I listened to it on repeat, which resulted in me being shouted at. The song was all about freedom, and that was something I longed for, but never thought I'd get.

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Good luck on your journey,
no matter where it takes you.

By the time
you read this
I'll be gone

x

TW