LEDGE CULTURE

LEDGE
LEADERSHIP

6 FOUNDATIONAL RELATIONSHIP PRINCIPLES

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Our Vision

We Envision a World Where People Lead Relationally and Share Power

Our Mission

We Inspire Young Adults to Lead Themselves and Thrive in Teams

Our Message

Lead Yourself… Change the World

Our Values

1. **Inspire Young Leaders**
   We invest in young adults, recognizing this life stage is a critical time to form life-long leadership practices.
2. **Embrace Differences**
   We encourage courageous conversations that fostering a culture of compassion and accountability.
3. **Develop the Whole Person**
   We fuel growth in every part of who you are, building confidence and capacity for self-leadership and meaningful service.
4. **Cultivate Teams**
   We believe working together sparks fresh ideas, more creative solutions, and better results.
5. **Embody Shared Leadership**
   We engage in a journey of leading together that values unique strengths, breaks down hierarchy, and prevents the misuse of power.
6. **Build Collaborative Partnerships**
   We team up with individuals, groups, and organizations to create valuable impact for all.

LEDGE LEADERSHIP

The Need for Safe Relationships

All team members (including paid and unpaid staff, volunteers, and board) of Ledge Leadership are required to follow our 6 Foundational Relationship Principles outlined in this document

Our Philosophy

At Ledge, we believe leadership begins with relationships—with ourselves, others, and the world around and beyond us. As we grow as whole people—physically, emotionally, socially, mentally, and spiritually—we strengthen these relationships and deepen our ability to lead with authenticity and impact.

Because leadership is lived out in relationship, it always involves power. Power exists within communities, organizations, and everyday interactions. When power is shared rather than held tightly, it creates environments where differences are valued, inequities are reduced, and accountability is strengthened.

This understanding shapes our view of leadership as an ongoing practice. It is not about a title or position, but about continuously leading ourselves with awareness and working with others in ways that foster connection, collaboration, and shared responsibility.

Our Relationship Principles:

1. We relate as equals and actively pursue equity.
2. We function as a team.
3. We nurture our relationships.
4. We talk through our differences, problems, or concerns.
5. We avoid misusing/abusing our power and control.
6. We are accountable to take personal ownership for the Foundational Relationship Principles.

Our Practices

We choose to practice these 6 Foundational Relationship Principles to foster open communication, and safe, nurturing, accountable, and equal relationships. These principles are easily forgotten when we are stressed and/or have experienced personal or collective trauma. Conscious effort is necessary to implement and put them into practice.**Our**

Commitment

Ledge Leadership has a commitment, as well as a legal obligation, to provide a relationally safe, caring, and secure space for all participating (including children, youth and vulnerable adults) in our organization and in our experiences. With a lack of clear boundaries, nurture, equality, communication, absence of accountability, and/or a misuse or abuse of power and control, there is an increased probability of unsafe, mistrustful, conflicted, and unhealthy relationships for individuals and teams.

Ledge is committed to providing a safe environment by preventing harm to all in our care, protecting all of our volunteers and paid staff from false allegations, and we have zero tolerance for abuse or neglect.

It is our commitment to live according to the 6 Foundational Relationship Principles as outlined in this document. We believe this will create a community of safe and empowering relationships for all team and board members representing Ledge Leadership. Everyone involved in Ledge shares a responsibility for creating and maintaining an environment of safety and trust based on these Relationship Principles..

We developed these principles for how Ledge Leadership team members, board, and participants live in relationship and grow communities of trust and care. When participants, clients, and guests enter our programs or experiences, there is an expectation and trust that we live in accordance with our principles.

Our actions are far reaching and affect not only an individual's emotional, physical, social, mental, and spiritual development, these actions also impact the whole person development of family and friends, communities, organizations, and the reputation and influence of Ledge Leadership.

Having policies and procedures about how we relate will increase the possibility that misuse or abuse of power and control will be prevented from happening in the first place or, at the very least, will be recognized and dealt with appropriately.

Foundational Relationship Principle 1

We Relate as Equals and Actively Pursue Equality

We are all born with worth, lovability, beauty, courage, creativity, the power to choose, and the ability to connect with compassion. Our human birthright is equal and the same for each of us. At the same time, there are individual and cultural differences and priviledges, some we are born with and some we choose, that create rich diversity in our families, communities, and society at large. These differences include, but are not limited to:

Ethnicity, Colour, Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Culture, Citizenship Status, Socioeconomic Status, Educational Achievements, Occupation, Family Composition, Age, Marital and Relationship Status, Religious, Non-Religious, Politics, Physical Conditions, Mental Health, Personality, Natural Abilities, Skills

When we interact with differences in people or groups of people, we may consciously or subconsciously treat them as 'other' or, in some cases, 'less than' or 'better than' ourselves. Many of us have been on the receiving end of unequal treatment, and have internalized false beliefs that someone else is better than or less than we are.

We have learned tendencies to judge people by these differences (prejudice) and view and treat them as if they are not our equals (discrimination). These tendencies are reinforced by historic, systemic, and structurally engrained inequities and privileges that cause people to experience the world very differently (oppression). The inequities cause an unequal distribution of power and resources, in which some individuals and groups disproportionately receive benefits or face barriers.
We recognize that we each have individual and shared responsibilities to:

1. Acknowledge, challenge, and work to undo the prejudices we personally or collectively hold.
2. Apologize for and seek reconciliation to undo harms caused by acts of discrimination.
3. Actively dismantle the systems of oppression that prevent us from relating as equals at an individual and societal level, such as inherent privilege, white supremacy, colonialism, misogyny, ableism, and heteronormativity.

On our team, even though we are different and have varying experiences, roles, functions, and responsibilities, we strive to live out our values with an attitude of equality in how we interact and respond to each other every day. This requires that we work together to recognize possible barriers to participating as equals and take reasonable efforts to minimize or remove the barriers which are within our sphere of influence, so all people feel safe and able to engage and contribute to the best of their ability.

Ledge strives at all times to provide integrated programs, services, and facilities in a way that respects the dignity, independence, and equal opportunity of all people who experience systemic oppression. When we create our programs and spaces to be accessible to all who are most oppressed and to all with disabilities, they are safe and accessible for all. We are committed to giving everyone the same opportunity to access and benefit from our programs, services, and facilities.

At Ledge Leadership, we have positions of power in our organization that make it possible for us to set direction and create an equal and inclusive environment for all. We hold interpersonal and systemic positions of power in this organization. Our lived experiences are most often reflected in the policies and practices of Ledge.

We must examine on a regular basis how power is held structurally in Ledge and how classism, racism, sexism, ageism, ableism, and other forms of oppression are inherent in our policies.

A Policy Review Team will be formed every 2 years to do a comprehensive review of all our policies to make sure they reflect knowledge about differences, diversity and oppression, and are equitable for all team and board members as well as our participants, clients, and donors.

Foundational Relationship Principle 2

We Function as a Team

We are always in relationship, whether we know it or not. It is not a choice. You cannot separate relationship from the activity you are involved in and this extends to how we relate together as a team.

Working with one another is collaborative. It is about sharing, supporting, and encouraging each other as we grow and develop. Ledge Teams operate as Shared Leadership Teams with both paid and unpaid staff offering their abilities and insight to the regular activities of Ledge. The Board provides governance and overall direction.

Relationships take time to develop and do not follow a logical or easy path. They do not always fit neatly into categories or mesh with preconceived schedules, ideas or programs.

Taking the time to build and nurture relationships will accomplish goals, enhance activities, build community, and promote whole human beings. When leaders do not do the 'work' of relationship, inevitably this will lead to destructive relationships and organizations. In order to keep our teams healthy and functional, we engage in three core principles:

1. **Connect to Team Members**
   Build a sense of trust and openness in our team relationships.
2. **Clarify Team Action**
   Ensure our team strives for quality and reaches goals.
3. **Commit to Team Action**
   Move in a unified direction to accomplish our goals.

These 3 principles form the Ledge Meeting Method we use to guide all of our team meetings.

Foundational Relationship Principle 3

We Nurture our Relationships

Positive, trustful, equal working relationships are built when we regularly practice **C.A.R.E.**ing Connection actions:

- **C**are with Consideration and Respect
- **A**ppreciate Others and My World
- **R**eflect and Restore My Nervous System
- **E**ngage Emotionally

When we do these things we build trust, goodwill, and a community of love and care for each other, our clients, guests, donors, and potential donors. When we are confident and secure in this knowledge, we will feel safe to speak up about what is not going well or where there is a difference of opinion or action.

Privacy

Ledge is committed to the protection of participant, client, donor, team, and board member personal information. We limit the use and disclosure of such information to authorized persons, processes, and transactions. *Ledge policy complies with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) in understanding how we collect, use, and safeguard the personal information team and board members, participants, clients, and guests provide to us. This policy will be continuously assessed against new technologies, business practices, and our participants' needs.*

All personal information collected by Ledge will remain confidential. It is not shared with, or transferred to any other corporation, body or individuals unless required by the statute of legal proceedings, authorized by the service user, staff, or volunteers, for the purposes necessary to fulfill our contractual obligation to participants, clients, Ledge team or board members. This includes transfer of information to a service provider or another organization performing services or providing data processing.

Finances

Ledge Leadership will conduct its financial activities, fundraising, and relationships with donors in a responsible manner, consistent with the ethical obligations of stewardship and the legal requirements of the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario. No more will be spent on administration and fundraising than is required to ensure effective management and resource development and spending will meet, or exceed, Revenue Canada's requirement for expenditures on charitable activities.

The Board will:

- Annually review the practices and effectiveness of all Ledge Leadership's financial activities which includes a formal financial review or audit.
- Be informed, at least annually, of the number, type, and disposition of complaints received from donors or prospective donors.

Safe Relationships Team

A point person will be appointed to the Safe Relationships Team from the existing Operational Team. The Safe Relationships Team Point Person is the Privacy Officer responsible for compliance related to team, board member, participant, client, guest, and donor sensitive information.

In addition, 1 or 2 persons shall also be appointed to the team who are involved in Ledge. This team will train all Ledge leaders in our Safe Relationships Policies and Procedures in compliance with legislation, complete a Safe Relationships Policies and Procedures risk assessment, ensure files are complete, hear complaints, and implement the complaints and investigation procedure and organizational healing structure as needed. If this team cannot fulfill their responsibilities due to a conflict of interest or is not available for any reason, the board will appoint one or two other individuals.

Training

We take seriously our Safe Relationships Policies and Procedures and will screen, inform, and train all Ledge Team and Board Members in the practice of our Safe Relationships Policy and Procedures. In particular, we prioritize an understanding of the

nature of misuse or abuse of power and control as it relates to children and adults. This includes our clearly defined reporting procedures for suspected incidents. Each person will sign a form after they have been trained.

Working with Other Organizations

If we are working with or for another organization at their location, we will respect their organization's policy and procedures while also being mindful of the Ledge Safe Relationships Policies and Procedures. It is their responsibility to inform us of their policies and procedures. If there is a question about any differences, we will consult with the Ledge Safe Relationships Team. If they do not have policies and procedures, we will follow our policies and procedures. If anyone from another organization works at a co-operative event with Ledge, that organization must have a similar screening policy in place that includes a Vulnerable Sector Check and individuals must have been successfully screened and trained by their organization.

Health and Safety:
Risk Assessment

All workplaces must be assessed and reviewed or revised, at a minimum annually, for risk factors pertaining to all Safe Relationships Policies and Procedures. Certain types of work or conditions can put team and board members at higher risk than strangers, participants, clients, or customers. Risk assessment may determine the need to develop specific skills and knowledge. All Ledge team and board members will be required to take training, based on the results of the Risk Assessment for their role. Depending on the type and level of risk, training can range from reviewing particular Safe Relationships Policies and Procedures, scheduling training, or arranging for specialized training. In some cases, a written prevention procedure may need to be developed or the workplace's physical design may need to be reviewed or assessed in regard to the specific risks for the task.

Mental Health & Safety

Ledge Leadership provides resources and training that are evidence based and our content aligns with positive mental health, reduces stigma, and builds resiliency.

We consult with our partners about presentations and discuss topics in ways that are inclusive and culturally sensitive; we are mindful of the diverse perspectives of individuals with lived experience of mental health concerns.

Ledge avoids violent and disturbing content in all our presentations because fear and shame based content is traumatic and does not lead to long term change.

Cultural Health and Safety

Ledge Leadership will provide resources and training that acknowledges and embraces cultural and ethnic differences. Our commitment to cultural health and safety requires us to be aware of, examine, and shift any internalized 'colonial mindset' that sees our own cultural or ethnic values as somehow inherently superior (biases, attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices) which contribute to unsafe relationships.

Physical Health and Safety

A. People

- To keep participants, team, and board members physically safe, Ledge will have:
  - Emergency Plan (available on site) reviewed annually
  - Clearly Marked Exits in Offices
  - Sanitization Procedures
- No Smoking Policy - No smoking inside the office - this includes tobacco, marijuana, and e-cigarettes.
- Pets Policy - No pets except support animals.
- First Aid:
  - A first-aid box and defibrillator are onsite and all workers are to view the location and contents regularly.
  - At least on staff involved in a program will have a first-aid and CPR certificate.
- Information is available on site for:
  - Hand-washing procedures
  - Location of hospitals and walk in clinics

B. Transportation

When transportation is arranged as part of the experience/program, all drivers must have a valid full G license. A vehicle provided by Ledge Leadership will be fully insured. When using their personal vehicle, a driver

will have auto insurance including $2 million liability. The number of passengers is limited to the number of seat belts.

C. Ledge Office and Meeting Space

When Ledge uses office and meeting spaces, the following items are to be kept in mind:

- Large interior windows that allow for easy viewing by others
- Office and Meeting Rooms will have doors with windows
- Adequate interior and exterior lighting
- Accessibility
- Gender neutral public washrooms
- Individual washrooms for overnight accommodations

Foundational Relationship Principle 4

We Talk Through our Differences, Problems or Concerns

Each one of us is uniquely different and we experience those differences when we are in relationship with each other. The challenge is we are much more comfortable when we feel and think we are the same as others. In fact, it can be easier to focus on how we are the same rather than how we are different.

Although it is important to recognize and not forget our commonalities, sometimes we become hesitant to express our differences. The difficulty with not speaking up is that it can create a false sense of peace and love in relationships. For example, we do not want to be the cause of anyone being upset or angry with us.

When we do decide to speak up because the problem has become impossible to ignore any longer, it is complicated by previous concerns and difficulties not addressed. Our speaking up becomes confrontation with blame, frustration, and urgency.

Also, hiding our hurts and misunderstandings leads to more misunderstandings and potentially believing that someone is acting with negative intent. The other person can be surprised and may have little or no idea that there is a problem. They may be hurt and overwhelmed by our confrontation. Our fear of creating conflict has created more conflict.

Conflict is the end result of not talking about our differences when we notice them. In order to bring love and peace to our relationships, we need to talk and be honest and transparent with each other, and not spread gossip to others. Talking directly with another person about our differences, misunderstandings, or questions as they arise, means we do not accumulate any hurt, resentments, or misunderstandings that get in the way of positively relating to one another.

However, in instances of misuse/abuse of power and control, there may be situations when the first step of talking to the person directly may be perceived as unsafe or is, in fact, unsafe. In this case, the first step will be to contact a trusted person for advice about whether or not to proceed with using the Ledge Method for Dealing with Differences structure or initiating a complaint/ investigation and/or reporting to local Children's Aid Society.

Foundational Relationship Principle 5

We Avoid Misusing/Abusing our Power and Control

Misuse of power and control in leadership refers to demeaning, disrespectful, or unwelcome behaviour where an individual, group, or organization feels objectified, dominated, or threatened. It can be one or more specific incidents or a pattern of behaviour. Individuals, groups or organizations can be involved in misuse of power. It is usually, but not necessarily, based on gender, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, religion, place of origin, ancestry, age, disability, or some other personal characteristic, issue, belief, or position.

Ledge is committed to the prevention of misusing or abusing power and control and to providing a safe environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. We are committed to providing a safe work environment and maintaining a workplace that is free of workplace violence and harassment as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Domestic violence may also be considered workplace violence when a person who has a personal relationship with a staff member/ volunteer – such as a spouse, or former spouse, current or former intimate partner, or family member – may physically harm, or attempt or threaten to physically harm that staff member/ volunteer at work.

The Act requires Ledge Leadership to take every precaution reasonable in these circumstances to protect team and board members from domestic violence that may occur in the workplace and expose co-workers/ volunteers to a risk of physical injury.

Depending on the type of misuse of power and control, there are criminal and legal considerations that may include a report to the local Children's Aid Society or to the police. Any misuse of power and control, especially when it involves children, has short and long term traumatic effects (emotional, physical, social, mental, and spiritual).

Misuse or abuse of power and control can take many forms including:

1. Financial Power and Control:
Financial power and control can be exerted in subtle and non-verbal ways. Those receiving money may go along with those who have the money because of fear of losing their income or funding if they do not agree.

2. Emotional Power and Control:
Emotional power and control involves using persistent and intentional verbal, non-verbal, or physically aggressive or offensive acts, such as:

- **Isolation** – asking a person not to tell or say anything, telling one person something about another that is untrue or partially true, excluding or ignoring people, etc.

- **Minimize, Deny, and Blame** – making light of things, saying something did not happen when it did, shifting responsibility, lying, etc.

- **Put Downs and Name Calling** – persistently and intentionally calling someone stupid, being dismissive, using derisive language, shaming or demeaning actions towards an individual, group or organization, etc.

- **Mind Games** – withholding or distorting information, lying or deceit, underhanded actions, etc.

- **Intimidation** – smashing things, throwing an object at someone, weapons displayed or wielded, fear through looks, gestures such as shaking a fist in a person's face, written or verbal communication such as phone calls or text messages, etc.

- **Coercion and Threats** – persistent and intentional threats to commit suicide, forcing others to do illegal things, making threats to

attack or leave, displaying weapons, verbal, non-verbal, or physically aggressive actions. This includes threatening, intimidating, yelling, screaming, leaving threatening notes, etc.

- **Privilege** – saying "I'm in charge", promoting own self-interest rather than the group/team, acting like the King or Queen, defining male/female roles, etc.

- **Using Others** – using others to relay information, being made to feel guilty for having a relationship with someone or even liking them, etc.

3. Sexual Power and Control:

- Sexual power and control behaviour is any unwelcome sexually oriented actions, language, innuendo, gestures, flirtation, other communication, etc.

- This includes touching, patting, suggestive or sexual remarks or jokes, leering, staring, sexual gestures, unwanted sexual invitations, physical assault, distribution or display of sexually explicit or sexually violent material. Other examples include receiving, being promised, or implying a reward in return for a sexual favour; receiving, being promised or implying a punishment or denial of something if refused a sexual favour; physical contact of any kind that is done for the pleasure or satisfaction of another, etc.

4. Racial/Ethnic/Cultural Power and Control:

- Racial/ethnic/cultural power and control involves any unwelcome racially, ethnically, or culturally oriented actions, language, innuendo, gestures, and other communication used to reach desired results and goals.

- This may be varied based on our norms/mores/cultural upbringing.

5. Spiritual Power and Control:

- Spiritual power and control occurs when leaders of a church or religious organization use their power and position to manipulate, control and/or coerce their congregation/followers/members, whether on purpose or with good intentions.

- This includes, but is not limited to, coercion, manipulation, deception, legalism, authoritarianism, guilt trips, judgments, holier-than-thou attitude, and a "we are right and everyone else is wrong" or "God told me so" attitude. Spiritual power and control can be very subtle and similar to emotional power and control. People are particularly vulnerable because they often rely on and trust leaders to provide guidance in the development of their faith, as well as provide support and encouragement through life transitions and vulnerable times in their lives.

6. Physical Power and Control:

- Physical power and control involves any physical force or touch used to express power or control, such as hitting, pinching, spitting, slapping, pushing, punching, kicking, burning, stabbing, strangulation, suffocating, shooting, etc. It may also include threats to cause harm.

- It also includes the physical neglect of children such as not providing food, proper clothing, or housing, lack of supervision, etc.

- Included in this is the concept of safe touch. Even though safe touch is an essential responsibility in nurturing lives, there are differences in our perceptions of safe touch depending on sexual development, cultural differences, family backgrounds, trauma, individual personalities, and special needs. Physical contact with students should be age, developmentally, and culturally appropriate.

Complaints, Investigation, and Appeals

- A complaints and investigation procedure will be used when an individual or group of individuals believe the Ledge Method for Dealing with Differences has not been able to resolve the issue, problem, or concern, or it is perceived to be emotionally or physically unsafe to begin or continue using the Ledge Method.

- All team and board members have the obligation under the Workplace Violence and Harassment Act to report to a member of the Safe Relationships Team any incidents of Misuse or Abuse of Power and Control they experience or witness. These include domestic violence that may result in physical injury in the workplace.

- Ledge recognizes that a staff/volunteer experiencing domestic abuse may be reluctant, for safety and other reasons, to disclose the problem. Ledge encourages disclosure in order to ensure team and board safety. Disclosure also enables Ledge to support the team member and provide links to appropriate community resources.

- Although Ledge respects a team or board member's need for confidentiality and self-determination, they are responsible for disclosing any situation which threatens the safety of the workplace. This includes threats an intimate partner or ex-partner has made toward them.

- A Ledge Safe Relationships Team member must be informed if an individual has applied for, or obtained, a restraining order that lists the Ledge location as a protected area, or that requires a person to remain a certain distance away from the team member at all times, including during the work day.

- The individual or group of individuals will bring their complaint to a Safe Relationships Team member. If it involves a member of the Safe Relationships Team, they will report to the Board Chair.

- When a formal complaint is made about a Ledge Leadership approved person or board member, this will immediately engage the Responding the Misuse or Abuse of Power and Control Procedure. This may or may not involve the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) or the Police.

- If there is a legal requirement to report to CAS or the Police, two or three separate processes will occur. A CAS and a Police investigation, and a Ledge Leadership investigation will occur; however, the Ledge Leadership investigation will not begin until after the CAS and Police investigations are complete.
- If an individual hears an allegation or has concerns regarding minors (children under age 18), they are required to make a report to CAS. They are encouraged to seek support from the Safe Relationships Team. The individual will also make a written record that they sign and seal and keep in a locked file.

Disclosure of Persons with a Violent History

- The Safe Relationships Team is required to provide information, including personal information, to a team or board member about a person with "a history of violent behaviour" if the team or board member could be expected to encounter the person in the course of his/her work and there is a risk of a misuse or abuse of power and control that may expose people to physical injury.

- Personal information shall only be disclosed as is reasonably necessary to protect the team or board member from physical injury.

Organizational and Team Healing

- When Ledge is dealing with a misuse or abuse of power and control, it will create hurt, pain and confusion for all involved and has a far reaching impact beyond Ledge. It is of vital importance to find a way to help all involved in Ledge to process their thoughts, feelings, and concerns, as well as create a vision for Ledge and for their relationships moving forward.

- Organizations tend to look for a quick fix which may involve a superficial reconciliation and/or may not acknowledge the event as having any impact and/or may focus only on moving forward. When this happens, the hurt, pain, and confusion lead to ongoing organizational chaos or rigidity. The unexpressed and unacknowledged feelings such as shame, anger, fear, blame, guilt, resentment, etc continue.

- These unacknowledged or unexpressed feelings may create conflict with increasing mistrust, people taking sides, and breakdowns in relationships within Ledge as well as with alumni, our Ledge partners, and the larger community. Over time, this will undermine the mission and vision of Ledge.
- With this in mind, the Ledge Board will appoint an outside consultant/team who are knowledgeable in Organizational Healing Processes to guide Ledge as we move through all stages of organizational healing from discovery to transformation.

Foundational Relationship Principle 6

We hold each other accountable to take personal ownership for the Foundational Relationship Principles

We enter this pursuit for safe relationships with an openness to compassionately listen to all about how we are practicing these principles and together find creative solutions for change. We humbly admit we have and will fall short of our vision for safe relationships. We recognize our need to function in teams in order to make this policy a reality in our organization and in our lives.

We hold each other accountable to the following, including but not limited to…

- Engage with the Ledge Vision, Mission, and Values
- Follow our Foundational Relationship Principles and Procedures
- Practice vulnerability in relationships
- Utilize our individual skills, abilities, and passions
- Follow through on the commitments we make during our team/board meetings

When a team member is not following the principles, we use the Ledge Method for Dealing with Differences. This method honours the person we need to talk to and ourselves.

In instances of a misuse or abuse of power and control, talking to the person directly may be perceived as unsafe or could be unsafe. In this case, the first step will be to contact a trusted person for advice about how to proceed.