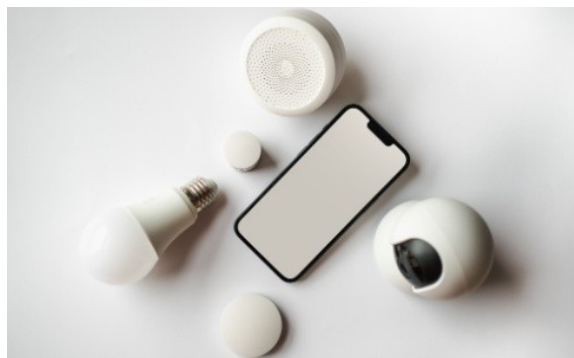


Smart Home Devices and Domestic Abuse

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Modern homes are increasingly powered by internet-connected devices, from speakers to televisions, from thermostats to door locks, from security cameras to baby monitors. For some, this so-called “smart” technology can make life a little more convenient. For survivors of domestic violence or abuse, however, it’s fast becoming a vector for physical and psychological torment.

The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) recently published an article about the myriad ways abusers are weaponizing smart home devices. AAML notes that such devices “are set up by one spouse/partner but used by both spouses/partners.” It’s a situation that can create an uneven—and, at times, terrifying—power dynamic when the couple splits up and the person who has moved out of the house “wishes to destroy the emotional or mental calm of the other spouse.”

In one example, an ex changed their partner’s alarm time on an Echo device from 7 am to 2 am. In another, a man spoiled his ex-wife’s food by switching off the refrigerator. Other reported incidents involve people surveilling their exes through speakers and TVs and turning up the heat remotely during summer months.

In some cases, abusers seek to damage not only the psyches of their victims but survivors’ credibility as well. [An article in domesticshelters.org](https://www.domesticshelters.org) offers a horrific pair of anecdotes:

“Another abuser would repeatedly unlock a survivor’s home and car doors remotely. When the survivor tried to report it, the abuser petitioned the judge in their children’s custody case that this was a security issue he was worried about, making the survivor appear as an unfit mother.

Another abuser would unlock a survivor’s electronic front door, go inside and take just one item from her home at a time, like a bracelet or a pair of shoes. The survivor kept thinking she was losing things and, in some respect, her mind along with them. She knew reporting these missing items to the police without any proof of a break-in would sound outrageous.”

What can you do to protect yourself? First, make a list of all smart devices in your home and make sure you’re able to access and control each one. Change the passwords for every device as soon as a partner or spouse moves out and periodically thereafter.

If you suspect that someone is spying on you, harassing you, or tampering with your home, speak to your lawyer immediately. The attorneys of [Offit Kurman’s Family Law Practice Group](https://www.offitkurman.com) can help you protect your home and family and obtain logging information for later use in court.

