



# Stalking

## A Handbook for Victims

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## Introduction

If you're reading this, chances are a stalker has begun to rob you of your sense of control over your life. You may be overwhelmed and unsure of where to turn next. If so, this book is for you. It is written under the guiding belief that *knowledge is power*. By arming you with resources, choices, safety tips and stalker information; I hope you will be able to turn the tide against the stalker and regain some power and control over your life.

*The choices are yours . . .*

I want to first emphasize the purpose of this book is to present you with *options* not *directions*. It is a *handbook* not an *instruction manual*. There is no "one size fits all" approach to stalking intervention. As you gather information, please know that you must make the choices that work best for you. Trust your gut feelings. If I have discussed an option that you believe won't work for you—*by all means disregard it!* Police officers, counselors, victim advocates, prosecutors, friends, co-workers and family are all part of a team intended to help you — *but you are the team leader*.

Stalking laws across the country are less than a decade old. Most experts recognize that our knowledge of this crime is in its infancy. Our communities and criminal justice systems are still in the process of learning how to effectively respond. As a victim of this crime, you may have already discovered that most communities are not prepared to deal with the ongoing and unpredictable nature of stalking. It is for this reason that it is critical for you to know the full range of your rights and options. Since our knowledge of stalking is growing so rapidly, you may wish to use this book as a supplement to a broader search for information. Explore your own local policies and state laws to discover the extent of protection available to you. If you don't know where to begin, you may find it helpful to start with the toll-free national numbers listed in Appendix E.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to acknowledge the countless survivors of stalking who have shared their pain, trauma, triumphs, tragedies, and successes with me. I can think of no other group more courageous or resilient than these women and men. For those individuals who were specifically interviewed for this book, I wish to specially thank them for their kindness and willingness to help others. By their request, no names have been used to protect their privacy, however, I sure hope they realize the important contributions they have made to this effort.

I also wish to show appreciation for my family, Isabelle Owen Spence, Charles Spence, Brad Spence, Jeff Spence, and Elizabeth Owen, my wonderful husband Greg, and my mentor, Dr. Patricia Telles-Irvin.

# 1

## Know Thy Enemy

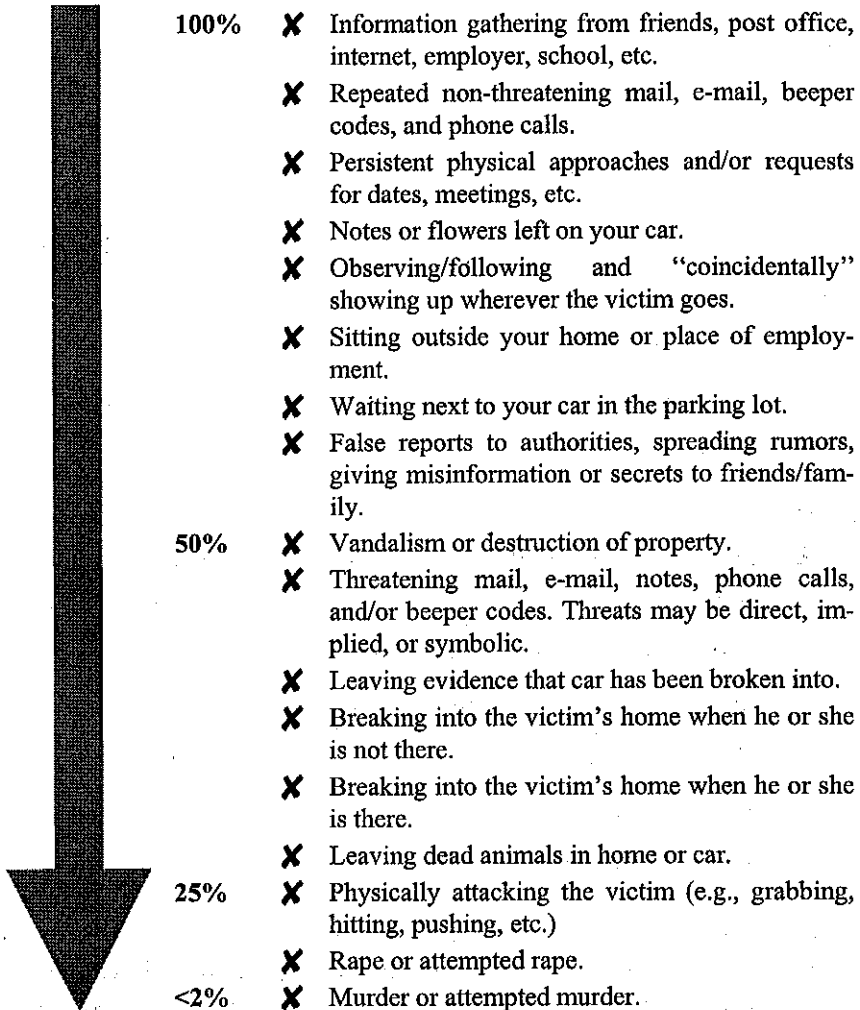
This chapter explores the elements of stalking and describes the character traits and tactics used by stalkers. It is entitled “Know Thy Enemy” because it is believed that in order to effectively respond to stalking, one must understand certain characteristics of stalking and its perpetrators. We often initially react to stalkers with the presumption they are “reasonable” individuals. Yet, nothing could be farther from the truth. When you try to reason with a stalker, he or she manipulates that interaction and gains feelings of control through your willingness to negotiate. Once you are able to look through the lens of a stalker (i.e., knowing thy enemy), it is easier to develop your own tactical responses.

*The more I gave in to his pleas to meet or talk with him, the more power he had over me, even though he made me believe I was the one in control.*      **Stalking Survivor**

### **What is Stalking?**

In the most basic terms, stalking is unwanted pursuit, following, or harassment. Legally, many states define stalking as the willful, malicious and repeated following or harassment of another person. To harass means to “engage in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such person and serves no legitimate purpose” (Florida Statute 784.048). The legal language was developed to be flexible enough

## Figure 1. Frequency and Escalation of Stalking Behaviors



Frequency data based on research by Meloy 1996; Tjaden and Thoennes 1998; and Pathé and Mullen 1997.

Despite the confidentiality that many of the above listed sources claim to provide, through clever lying and manipulation stalkers are able to access private information. They may seek information from the victim him or herself or from family, friends, acquaintances, and co-workers. For example, the stalker may pose as a family member with a serious emergency to get the unlisted phone number of a victim from a telephone operator. Additionally, some sources of information may also be used as a tool for harassment. The stalker may file complaints of ethical violations with professional licensing boards, or hit and run complaints with the department of motor vehicles and law enforcement agencies.

*The most frightening thing was that he would tell me very personal information that no one else would have known. It made me feel paranoid that he was watching me all day.*

**Stalking Survivor**

## **Unwanted Contacts — Gifts, Notes, Calls, Following, and Observation**

Unwanted contacts are the most common elements of stalking. Sometimes stalkers initially come across as charming by leaving gifts, flowers, love letters, or poems for their objects of interest (potential victims). When it becomes apparent these gestures do not have their desired effects (i.e., you didn't fall madly in love with the stalker), contacts can turn ugly and frightening. Gifts of dead flowers, hateful letters, or even dead animals may replace the original non-threatening objects of affection.

The telephone is another favorite tool of the stalker. Hang-up calls, answering machine messages, and persistent attempts to engage the victim in conversation are all too common. Though Caller ID may have initially thwarted stalkers, they quickly learned to dodge this roadblock through the call-block functions and the use of payphones. Additionally, victims who use beepers may be subjected to continuous threatening or harassing "beeper codes" left on their paging devices.



mirrors and seat positions, or damage the interior. Stalkers want their victims to know it was not some random act of vandalism, but intentional terrorism instead. As they escalate, similar traces are left in the victims' homes, representing further intrusion into private spaces. Furniture may be rearranged, photographs stolen or re-located, or other clues left to demonstrate the stalkers presence (the bed looks slept-in). These forms of vandalism are especially tricky since a victim may not be taken very seriously by law enforcement officers with a complaint that someone "broke into my car and rearranged my seats and mirrors." In these situations, the victims may be perceived as the ones who are mentally ill, instead of the stalkers.

*Sometimes I would unlock my car and find a rose on the seat — no note, just the flower. I knew he somehow got into my car and left it there; it was all he needed to do to terrorize me.*

**Stalking Survivor**

Threats to the victims (as well as their loved ones) may be explicit and direct or indirectly implied. Explicit threats, such as letters describing potential death or injury, are the easiest to use when bringing legal action against stalkers. Many stalkers recognize this and are more likely to resort to implied or symbolic threats, or direct threats that cannot be traced back to the stalker. A common implied threat is a torn or altered photograph of the victim. Symbolic threats, such as the abduction of a family pet, can be extremely terrorizing for the victim and serve to demonstrate the stalker's control over the victim's life.

Less than one-quarter of stalking cases escalate to the level of physical violence. In these cases, the victim as well as his or her loved ones become potential targets of violent attacks. If the stalker claims romantic interest in the victim, rape or attempted rape may be an additional concern. Few stalkers resort to murder (less than two percent), yet our ability to predict who will be homicidal is limited, leaving many victims to be paralyzed by the fear of this possibility (Meloy 1996). When stalkers resort to any form of violence it is important for victims and their loved ones to take all

## **Figure 2. Common Stalker Characteristics**

- ✱ Jealous
- ✱ Narcissistic
- ✱ Obsessive and compulsive
- ✱ Falls “instantly” in love
- ✱ Manipulative
- ✱ Does not take responsibility for own feelings or actions
- ✱ Needs to have control over others
- ✱ Socially awkward or uncomfortable
- ✱ Views self as a victim of society, family, and others
- ✱ Unable to take “no” for an answer
- ✱ Deceptive
- ✱ Often switches between rage and “love”
- ✱ Difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and reality
- ✱ Sense of entitlement (“You owe me . . .”)
- ✱ Unable to cope with rejection
- ✱ Dependent on others for sense of “self”
- ✱ Views his or her problems as someone else’s fault
- ✱ May be of above average intelligence

around entitlement (“you’re mine”), anger (“you’ll pay for this”) and/or destiny (“we’re meant to be together”). In some cases, the belief that the fantasy is real is so strong that the stalkers may appear more reliable and insistent than the victims. Law enforcement officers may call a stalker in for an interview who very convincingly spins a tale about the love relationship between he or she and the victim, right down to the insignificant details. Yet in reality no romantic relationship ever existed. These particular types of stalkers are referred to by psychological experts as sufferers of “erotomania”; they delusionally believe they’re in a romantic relationship with the victim that does not actually exist. These individuals represent a small percentage of all stalkers. The majority of stalkers, however, engage in some degree of fantasy, but maintain a stronger hold on reality. For example, a stalker may truly believe that he or she is *destined* to be romantically linked with the victim, but understands that he or she is not currently in a romantic relationship with that individual (i.e., “Someday we’ll be together.”).

## **Narcissism**

While many think narcissism is simply a love of oneself, with stalkers it is more often observed as an inability to recognize or respect the needs and feelings of others. Stalkers believe their own thoughts and actions take priority over all others. This is especially true in situations where there was a previous intimate relationship between the stalker and the victim. The stalker will justify his or her behavior with the belief that “If I’m suffering, so should you.” Because they lack the appropriate coping skills, they are unable to tolerate discomfort, rejection, loss, shame, or embarrassment. Furthermore, they are either unaware of or not concerned with the discomfort and pain they may be causing others. The statement, “If I can’t have you, no one can,” is the ultimate representation of a narcissistic belief of ownership.

## **Psychological Profiles**

Scientific research that profiles stalkers is just now beginning to flourish. Some researchers have studied celebrity stalkers, while

about their victims. Stalkers manipulate their victims in some of the following ways to establish contact and feed their obsessions:

- **Uses guilt:** guilt trips are stalkers' favorite tools. "I have something really important to talk to you about, but it's too hard to do it over the phone." "You're the only one who really understands me, I can't talk to anyone else about this." "Why are you doing this to me? Don't you care about me?"
- **Promises "one last time":** the stalker dangles the carrot of "closure" to draw the victim in. "I'll never bother you again."
- **Uses blackmail:** whether or not you've ever done anything slightly improper, stalkers will either find or fabricate something to blackmail you with. Sometimes the items they use to blackmail were initiated by them in the first place, leaving us to wonder if it was all part of the plan. "I'll send those nude photo's from our vacation to the newspaper." "I'll tell your boss about the time you called in sick." "I'll tell everyone you're a whore." "I'll file a report of child abuse against you."
- **Unfounded accusations:** stalkers often know what you might be sensitive about and intentionally find your most vulnerable "buttons" to press. "I knew you were a bitch like all the others." "You think you're better than everyone else." "You don't care about anyone but yourself."
- **Twists words:** the stalker turns the victim's words around to meet his or her own needs. "You're just saying that you don't want to see me to keep your family off your back." "I know that you really do love me and that your friends are just trying to brainwash you against me."
- **Gives gifts:** the stalker may give expensive or time-intensive gifts to the victim to facilitate a response. Dozens of roses, elaborate poems, or extremely generous gestures (paying for a car repair), all might be used as emotional

# 2

## **Taking Action: Practical and Legal Options**

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Many stalking victims have early misgivings about the stalker prior to the onset of intrusive and invasive behaviors. This is by far the best time to address the problem. Early intervention is the most potent tool a victim can use to address the festering obsession of the stalker. Unfortunately, some victims are ill-advised to take a “wait-and-see” approach to the problem. Waiting for the stalker’s obsession to intensify will often force victims to resort to more aggressive and drastic measures later on.

### **Pre-Stalking: The First Warning Signals**

It is recommended that at the first sign of discomfort, the victim clearly communicate an unwillingness to engage in further contact with the stalker. Many victims fear taking an early firm stance and pose the question, “What if he or she isn’t really a stalker?”. In these situations, it is important to acknowledge those gut feelings that are causing you to worry in the first place. Too often, we worry about hurting peoples’ feelings (even potential stalkers with whom we have no desire to have a relationship). Consider that in the long run, it might be better to risk hurting someone’s feelings now, than be terrorized by that person in the future.

### Figure 3

## Sample No-Contact Statements

-  *I'm not interested in having a relationship with you. Do not continue to call, stop by, or have any contact with me whatsoever.*
-  *I want you to stop trying to contact me. If I discover that you have followed me, been on my property, or called my work or home, I will call the police and file stalking charges.*
-  *I am ending our relationship. Do not make any attempt to try and renew it. I will not change my mind. I do not wish to have any contact with you now or in the future. If you try to contact me, I will take legal action against you.*
-  *I will no longer tolerate this harassment. If you try to contact me in any shape or form, I will call the police.*

It is helpful to early on locate a victim advocate in your area to assist you. If you are unsure of how to find an advocate, please refer to the resources in Appendix E. The sad truth is that many stalking victims aren't taken seriously until the case has escalated to a frightening level. Because of this problem, it is so important for victims to seek help from as many people as possible, and to assertively advocate on your own behalf. You might have to be very persistent.

## **Start from the Beginning: Just the Facts**

In order to start building a prosecutable case that will be taken seriously by law enforcement, it is critical to write down everything that has happened in chronological order in a journal. Do your best to remember dates and details. This will become your master list that you will continue to add to as new stalking behaviors occur. Keep in mind the "stick to the facts" principle when creating this list. If you decide to report the case to the police, they will need to know specific details, such as "On September 14, around 3:00 p.m., Joe Stalker drove down my street and parked his car directly across from my house. He stayed there, staring at my house, until 9:00 p.m. that evening. I did not leave my house at all during that time. My neighbor, Ms. Brown, stated to me the next day that she observed him doing this as well." For a Sample Stalking Journal, see Appendix A.

Other useful tips to assist the development of a prosecutable case are as follows:

- ✓ If you have filed more than one police report, ask the department to file them together, or make reference in each one to the previous reports. This is especially important in large police departments that maintain a variety of separate units.
- ✓ If you have filed police reports in separate jurisdictions, make sure that each jurisdiction has copies of the others' reports. It is imperative that all reports be viewed together as a "pattern of behavior."

- ✓ Do not change your phone number. Instead, install a new unlisted line and keep the old line connected to an answering machine that uses removable cassettes. Give the new number only to those whom you trust the most. If the stalker leaves messages on your machine, remove the cassette, date it, and keep it as evidence.
- ✓ Tell everyone you are surrounded by on a day-to-day basis that you are being stalked. Describe the stalker and ask them to tell you immediately if they ever see him or her in the vicinity. Stalkers rely on secrecy. *Break the silence and know that you have nothing to be ashamed of; you are the victim, not the criminal.* Also, eyewitness reports are critical in breaking down the “he said, she said” dilemma of prosecution.
- ✓ If you can afford to do so, purchasing or renting a surveillance camera is an excellent way to “stalk the stalker.”

## **Restraining Orders (Injunctions for Protection)**

The decision to get a restraining order can be very complex for victims of stalking. Some professionals recommend them wholeheartedly, while others are convinced they are totally useless. When trying to decide whether or not to get a restraining order, the most important thing to recognize is that they provide *absolutely no protection from harm*. They are pieces of paper. By themselves, they do little to stop stalking. In a minority of cases (20 to 30 percent), the stalkers have enough fear of the criminal justice system to stop their harassment of the victims. Though these statistics are rather grim, it is important to recognize the role that restraining orders can play in the criminal justice system.

When a victim has a restraining order, police are often able to make arrests under circumstances in which they previously wouldn't have been able. In some states, a lower level (misdemeanor) crime becomes a serious offense (felony) if a protective order was in place. The key to a restraining order's effectiveness is the willingness of the victim to follow through with reports of vio-



concept established when new American pioneers feared government corruption, has allowed many citizens to escape invalid charges. This protection, however, was not developed during a time where rampant interpersonal violence and victimization was as prevalent or obvious as it is today. Men were allowed to beat their wives with a stick no bigger than a thumb (the rule of thumb), and date rape was two centuries away from becoming a common phrase. Nowadays, victims play a critical role in our justice system. There are efforts underway to establish a victims' rights constitutional amendment, making the rights of victims equally important to the rights of defendants. Until this is passed, victims' rights will vary from state to state. Even when laws are in place, you might be forced to advocate for yourself to obtain the services and rights to which you are entitled. The Attorney General's office in your state should be able to provide you with information regarding your rights and role in the criminal justice system.

# 3

## Safety Planning

There are no easy answers to ensure safety, only helpful tips. Safety in the home, workplace, and areas of frequent travel should all be considered. It is also important to develop safety plans for loved ones, as well as yourself.

### **Safety in the Home**

The first step is to call your local law enforcement agency (police) to conduct a safety review in your home and surrounding areas. These are free services generally available in every community. When possible, follow the recommendations of the officer(s). These changes may be simple or expensive and complex. If it appears as though it will be very costly to make the changes, you may want to ask a victim advocate to check into any available funding sources in your community, including formal “victim services” funds, as well as churches, the Junior League, and other local organizations. It may feel very uncomfortable to ask for financial assistance, but keep in mind that you have not chosen to be a victim. Any way that the community can reduce the vast personal and financial costs of this crime can be helpful in lowering the overall trauma and disruption of your life. If possible, explore the use of the following home safety enhancements:

- ✓ Alarm systems that when set off will immediately notify law enforcement.

## **Safety in the Car**

It is helpful to peer inside and underneath your car prior to approaching it closely or getting inside. Tinted windows are dangerous because they may conceal the stalker hiding inside the vehicle. You may believe they will conceal you as you are driving, but most stalkers quickly learn your license plate number. Car alarms may be useful in that many can warn you if the alarm has been set off while you were away. Unfortunately, car alarms are often oversensitive (going off when a truck passes by) or under-sensitive (you can gently get into the trunk without ever setting it off). Below are other important options to consider:

- ✓ When you are driving to and from places of frequent travel (work, school, fitness center, etc.), you may want to learn a variety of different routes. Stalkers rely on predictability, so make it as difficult as you can for them to follow or track your whereabouts.
- ✓ Always drive with all of your car doors locked, from the moment you get inside your vehicle.
- ✓ Leave enough space between yourself and the car in front of you to be able to quickly change lanes when necessary.
- ✓ If you somehow find yourself in the car with the stalker, avoid driving anywhere at all. The more remote the location you are in, the more dangerous it becomes. In such circumstances, do your best to follow your instincts and remain visible to others.
- ✓ Consult with a locksmith about the methods that can be used to break into your car. Inquire about any additional devices that may make it more difficult. Some cars need only a “slim Jim” (long skinny piece of metal) to unlock the door.

## **Safety at Work**

The workplace is often the easiest way for stalkers to contact or observe their victims. For this reason, it is important for employ-

taught how to respond. Some helpful rules for co-workers, employers, friends, and family are:

- ✓ *Never* give out any information about the victim to the stalker (or anyone else that the stalker may have enlisted to help him or her). No matter how urgent the story sounds don't give in.
- ✓ Do not discuss the victim with the stalker. Avoid using the victim's name and re-direct any communication about the victim. Consider adopting a standard phrase that can be repeated, such as "I am not going to discuss this with you."
- ✓ Stay firm, calm, cool, and collected. Any expression of emotion is a signal to the stalker that he or she may have found a weak point, which will be interpreted as a sign to continue to persist.
- ✓ If you make a threat, follow through with it. Do not say that you are going to call the police and then not do it. Let the stalker know that you are serious.

## **Safety in Public**

Varying your routine and telling only a few people about your plans are two ways to avert the stalker in public. Many victims begin to feel as though their freedom has been robbed from them. The stalker may show up everywhere you go, even when you've been very secretive about your plans. In these circumstances, you may wish to consider some of the following actions:

- ✓ If you have a restraining order (injunction for protection), carry your copy with you everywhere. If you see the stalker, call the police (or quietly ask someone to do so for you so that the stalker doesn't leave before they show-up) and show them your order of protection.
- ✓ Tell your companion(s) and/or host(s) that you are being stalked and ask them to be on the look-out.

explain your situation, and ask for their assistance to assure your privacy.

- ✓ ***The Post Office:*** If the stalker does not yet know the location of your home, consider using a post office box to receive mail. If you have had to relocate because of the stalker, always use a post office box instead of your home address.
- ✓ ***Internet:*** the Internet is a vast source for an incredible amount of personal information. If you are not a skilled user of the Internet, seek the assistance of someone who is familiar with the various types of personal searches that can be conducted. Most public libraries now have computer terminals with Internet access and librarians who are knowledgeable. Once you (or your computer-literate helper) have identified all or most of the search engines on the Internet, contact (e-mail) each one of them separately to request that your personal information be deleted from their files. This process is very time consuming and requires a lot of checking and re-checking to make sure that the information has been deleted. Additionally, if you have your own e-mail account, contact the webmaster of your server to request that your personal information be kept confidential. Some servers keep “profile” information on their users that is accessible by anyone. If you have voluntarily placed personal information in your profile (such as on America On Line’s Member Profiles), it is advisable to remove it. You may also want to consider changing your e-mail address, especially if your current username is your actual first or last name.
- ✓ ***Other sources:*** Stop for a moment and brainstorm who may have personal information about you. The pizza delivery service? Cable company? Health care organization? Church? Fitness Center? School? Video rental store? Drycleaners? Bank? Pharmacy? Local, state, or national organizations (professional or personal). Insurance agency? Landlord? Magazine subscription company?

- ✓ Any time that you give your name, address and/or phone number to anyone, make sure you tell them you are fleeing a stalker and need to be assured privacy.
- ✓ Don't use credit cards or debit cards to make any purchases. It is too easy to track your whereabouts through credit card traces.
- ✓ If you have moved into an apartment complex, do not put your name on your mailbox.
- ✓ If you have the option, apartments or condominiums on the first floors are the *least* safe choice. The higher the floor, the more difficult it is for burglars to enter through the windows.
- ✓ Consider trading in your car for a different one and obtaining a new license plate number.
- ✓ Consider a residence with 24-hour security available. As soon as you move in, give the security supervisor a description or photograph of the stalker and his or her vehicle.
- ✓ Be very selective about who you give your new address and phone number. In the most extreme circumstances, you may wish to tell only those who know everything that has happened, and who you totally trust.
- ✓ Contact friends and family from locations other than your new home. Discarded phone bills can be obtained from roadside trashcans.

Obviously, the choice to re-locate is one made in the most desperate and difficult of circumstances. The trauma of being pursued makes it extremely difficult to make any decisions, much less a major one such as choosing to move. It is very important to seek assistance in this endeavor. Both emotional and practical support is necessary. You are not expected to be able to think of everything, and in this type of crisis it is simply not possible. Prior to making any decisions, you are encouraged to seek the help and advice of law enforcement professionals, victim advocates, state attorneys,

# 4

## Keeping Your Quality of Life: Self-Care

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Each stalking behavior by itself may not seem like such a big deal. But day after day, the unexpected and the unprovoked begin to eat away at your sense of control, well being and security. Stalking victims are perhaps one of the most ignored and minimized populations of crime victims today. As a society, we tend to look at each separate behavior and don't stop to consider the effects of the whole series. The stalker called three times last night, he or she came by your office yesterday, or you saw him/her at the movies last weekend. By themselves, none of these would cause much trauma. But when you are being stalked, each of these behaviors will trigger a biological and psychological fear response. The accumulation of these responses is damaging both physically and emotionally. Recognizing these effects is the first step towards healing and recapturing your sense of self.

*I was afraid to tell anyone. I thought, "Who would believe me?" It's not easy to describe the fear you have when you see the stalker everywhere you go. I thought people might think I was crazy . . . or making it all up.*

**Stalking Survivor**

chasing home-use exercise equipment or aerobic videotapes. Whatever you choose, try to not allow the stalker to take away this key method of stress reduction.

While exercise is very important, one must also seek the other end of the spectrum: relaxation. Unfortunately, there is no single relaxation technique that works for everyone in every situation. It is helpful to experiment for a while until you find something that meets your needs. However, like exercise, no one learns to relax during a first attempt. Just as you cannot run a 10-mile race without regular practice, it is impossible to slow your heart rate down, relax your muscles, and feel calm without “working” at it. Daily efforts at relaxation are critical to finding long-term inner peace. You may wish to consider trying any of the following methods of relaxation:

- ✓ **Biofeedback:** This is one of the most structured ways to train your body to relax. Many psychologists and therapists are trained to offer biofeedback sessions. A typical biofeedback protocol would be eight to 12 sessions where your body is hooked up to a computer that is monitoring your heart rate, sweat response, muscle tension, and body temperature. Over the course of several weeks, you are trained to directly regulate these bodily functions using your mind. While many may see this as an impossible task, biofeedback has been scientifically shown to be effective for large groups of people. With regular practice, the positive effects of biofeedback can last a lifetime.
- ✓ **Guided visualization:** At nearly every bookstore, you can find a variety of “relaxation” tapes. While some just have soothing background sounds or music, others use a person’s voice to “guide” you to relaxation with suggestions and images. For those who are able to conjure up images in their minds, the guided tapes often work quite well. If you find them to be effective, try to eventually learn to guide yourself into a state of relaxation using the same types of words and suggestions that are on the tape. This is especially important when you have recently been frightened and need a “quick fix” until you get home.



## ***I should have known better . . .***

*The first thing I had to do was acknowledge that it wasn't my fault.*

**Stalking Survivor**

Probably the most insidious of all potential effects of stalking is self-blame. This is especially true for those who had previously dated the stalker and are now kicking themselves for their choice of romantic partner. Too often victims begin to believe they must have poor judgement skills. For anyone who experiences self-blame, please know that stalkers do not introduce themselves as potential perpetrators. They don't have "stalker" tattooed on their foreheads — and more importantly, you don't have "victim" tattooed on yours.

*It has taken me a long time to realize that I did not ask for him to torment me. . . . It was all his doing.*

**Stalking Survivor**

Only now are experts starting to learn enough about stalkers to identify early "red flag" behaviors. Even with this knowledge, the manipulative nature of stalkers makes it difficult to assess their sincerity and true stability. They are masters of deception and often move from one victim to the next. *They didn't choose you because of who you are, but because of who they are.* Remember this! It's not about how you looked, acted, talked, or carried yourself — it's about the stalker's own deep-seated insecurities and psychological problems.

## ***I'm constantly looking over my shoulder . . .***

Though you and your loved ones may label it as "paranoia," keep in mind that fear is an instinctual human function intended to help keep us safe. It is generated from a part of the brain over which we have little or no control. Some level of fear and cautiousness is healthy. When it begins to create serious dysfunction in your life, there is cause for concern. Only you, however, can determine what a reasonable level of fear is for your particular situation. Common examples of fear include the sense that you are constantly looking over your shoulder, jumping when there is a knock at the

the middle, with a heightened sense of awareness and the ability to establish trusting relationships.

*I used to believe that there was **always** something good or decent you can find in anyone. This whole experience has unfortunately made me a more skeptical and cynical person. I hate him for that . . .*                      **Stalking Survivor**

### ***I feel like I don't have any control over my life . . .***

When you're being stalked, the sense that you've lost control over your life is greater than can possibly be expressed with words. Every safe space becomes a potential target for the stalker. Your work, school, home, belongings, pets, friends, family, and leisure activities all become vulnerable to the stalker's intrusive behaviors. To make things worse, good intentioned "helpers" often contribute to your loss of control by loading you with unsolicited or unhelpful advice. For some reason, victims of all types of crimes are often perceived as being helpless or weak. It is assumed that you are no longer able to think for yourself and must need others to take over this task for you. Between the stalker and the "rescuers," it can feel like life's rug has been yanked from beneath your feet.

Making your own decisions is the first step towards taking back some sense of control. Remember that you are the expert on your own individual circumstances. From this book, to police, counselors, co-workers, family, and friends you will find options, suggestions, and straight advice. In the end, however, the choices are yours to make. It helps to perceive yourself as the "team leader" of a group of people with whom you are consulting. By weighing the pro's and con's of every decision, you become an active participant in the war against the stalker.

Talking is another way to regain some control over the situation. Stalkers rely on silence and fear. By reaching out for help, you sever one of their most powerful tools — isolation. Some victims have even taken this as far as the media. When the whole community becomes aware of the situation, the stalker's shroud of secrecy is exposed. While this option is certainly not appropriate

- ✓ ***Psychiatry:*** Psychiatrists hold medical degrees (M.D.) and are able to prescribe medication. People are frequently referred to psychiatrists for medication to reduce feelings such as depression and anxiety. They typically are not providing therapy to their patients, but are supplementing another therapist's efforts.
- ✓ ***Psychology:*** Psychologists hold doctorate-level degrees (Ed.D., Psy.D., and Ph.D.), and are typically trained to provide therapy and counseling services. They are also qualified to conduct a broad range of psychological tests.
- ✓ ***Social Work:*** Social workers (M.S.W.) can hold a variety of positions. Masters-level clinical (licensed) social workers are able to provide individual and group therapy in most states. Social workers differ from psychologists in that they intervene not only with the individual, but with that person's environment as well. Social workers can function as counselors, advocates, and case managers.
- ✓ ***Mental Health Counseling:*** Mental health counselors (M.H.C.) can also provide therapy and are typically trained to focus on the psychological well-being of a person.
- ✓ ***Marriage and Family Therapy:*** While marriage and family therapists (M.F.T.) provide psychotherapeutic services similar to mental health counselors, social workers, and psychologists, their training emphasizes the functioning of the family system as a whole, and how it impacts the individual.
- ✓ ***Victim Advocacy:*** Victim advocates can come from a variety of professional backgrounds (from social work to criminal justice) and often play a critical role in the crisis and advocacy areas of intervention. While they are not likely to be offering therapy, victim advocates tend to be available for peer support, safety planning, information and referral regarding community services and options, criminal justice support, personal advocacy, and crisis in-

are pursuing criminal charges, an advocate will most likely be assigned to your case. In many communities, however, victim advocates can be found at police departments, universities, rape crisis centers, domestic violence centers, crisis hotlines, and other non-profit organizations.

# 5

## **Special Circumstances**

As mentioned in the first chapter, stalking occurs across all populations, settings and circumstances. While the information in the previous chapters is intended to help all stalking victims, there are a few circumstances that require additional attention. This chapter will cover the stalking of children, college students, and ex-intimate partners. In each of these situations, there are numerous factors that can aggravate and complicate the problem. These will be discussed, along with further options available under each circumstance.

### **If Your Child is Being Stalked**

Most parents' worst nightmare is the potential loss of or harm to their children. Stalkers pose such threats on a daily basis across the country. Despite the frequency with which this occurs, the stalking of children has received little attention. The State of Florida, however, recently passed a law to make the stalking of children an automatic felony (instead of a misdemeanor). A south Florida parent whose child was stalked helped to push this law through the legislature. Hopefully, the rest of the country won't wait for tragedy to occur before following suit with their own versions of this statute.

Very little is known about the profiles of stalkers who choose children as their targets. Whether they are pedophiles (sexual abus-

As a final thought, don't forget to attend to your own needs. The experience of parenting alone is cause enough for a fair amount of worrying, without the added trauma of stalking. It is important to get the proper help to allow you and your child adequate sleep, rest, food, and exercise. Occurrences like this put a heavy strain on family and marital relationships. Though safety is a primary concern, be careful not to neglect the emotional well-being of yourself and your family. It may be helpful to seek family therapy during such a stressful time.

## **Stalking on College Campuses**

Even though stalking is a common occurrence everywhere, college campuses seem to provide a fertile ground for this crime. Though many perceive the campus environment as a "safe haven" away from general community crime, the opposite is often the reality. Between interpersonal and property crimes, college students face a variety of dangers on a daily basis. Campus administrators, law enforcement, and students are just now beginning to recognize stalking as a significant problem. Research has indicated that between one-quarter and one-third of college students have been stalked (Fremouw, et al. 1997; Spitzberg 1998).

### **Numerous Aspects of Campus Life Allow for Stalking**

- The majority of students fall into a "dating" age group and some stalking behaviors seem misconstrued as "normal" dating practices.
- In addition to coursework, many campuses offer entertainment, food service, health care, fitness, recreation, and housing all within a contained community. This allows stalkers frequent opportunities to observe their victims and learn their habits, making it hard for victims to differentiate between "coincidental" appearances and purposeful pursuit.
- A semester is long enough for any stalker to develop an obsession with a classmate.

- Would it be helpful to take an incomplete in any of your classes?
- Have you considered telling your instructors what is happening and requesting their assistance (or support to change the parameters of your coursework)?
- If the stalker is another student, is it possible to pursue help through your campus' judicial system?
- Would you like to report the problem to the campus police department?
- If you feel you must quit school and relocate, have you thought about transferring to another school? Sometimes under these circumstances, all course credits can be accepted by another institution.

As more and more victims of stalking on campus come forward, colleges and universities will become more prepared to handle these situations. Many schools have incorporated anti-stalking guidelines into their codes of conduct and established support services for victims. If these are not available at your institution, you may find that you are forced to be a vocal advocate for yourself. Under these circumstances, you might find the support of community victim advocates, police departments and prosecutor offices to be quite helpful.

## **When the Relationship is Over: Stalking of Ex-Intimate Partners**

*You have to decide that you don't want to see this person anymore. You have to decide that you've had enough, that it's over . . . Whatever you do, don't let him [or her] decide for you.*

**Stalking Survivor**

Some of the most complex cases of stalking involve people who have previously held romantic relationships. Since stalkers rely on victims' personal information to terrorize them, ex-partners are at an obvious disadvantage. To make matters worse, these stalkers tend to be the most likely to use physical violence against

- ✓ If you have left your home or apartment and must return to pick up your belongings, do so only with a police escort. Do not bring a friend and assume you will be safe.
- ✓ If you live in a guarded community, give the security manager a photo (or physical description) of the stalker and tell them to call the police if he or she tries to enter the area.
- ✓ Develop safety plans for yourself, your children, and local friends and family. The stalker may try to use any leverage he or she has against you, which could involve threats to your loved ones.
- ✓ If you decide to start dating someone new — this person is at risk for harm. Stalking behaviors often escalate when the stalker perceives a new threat. Make sure that anyone you become involved with is fully aware of the situation.
- ✓ If you must flee for your safety, consider seeking help at domestic violence shelters. If you are a male and not permitted to stay at a shelter for women, ask if they have funds to pay for a hotel room. If the stalker knows the location of the shelter, their staff can assist you in locating another shelter in a different region.
- ✓ Learn what laws and services exist in your community to protect you. Some areas have developed elaborate systems to combat domestic violence. You may be eligible for a free cellular phone or other forms of added protection.

Finally, victims of ex-partner stalking must also recognize they've been doubly traumatized. Being betrayed by a person whom you loved and trusted adds to the horror of being hunted. Consider seeking professional help to work through the layers of pain, abuse, and deception. Also, it may be helpful to find a counselor who specializes in domestic violence. Even the most sensitive professional can do more harm than good if he or she has not had specific training in this area.



# Appendix A

## Sample Stalking Journal

Date and Time	Location	Description	Response	Witnesses
9/30/98 @ 9:50 p.m.	Home	J. Doe left a message on my answering machine stating "If you don't talk to me, you'll regret it."	Removed cassette tape and saved it in a dated envelope.	None
10/4/98 @ 11:00 a.m.	Work	Through my window, I observed J. Doe drive by our office 16 times between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.	Called the company's security guard, who documented the last six times.	Ana Smith Carl Joseph Melinda Garcia
10/5/98 @ 5:30 p.m.	Parking lot of workplace	As I was walking to my car, J. Doe approached me and demanded that I stop to talk.	I continued to walk towards my car, but J. grabbed my arm and yanked me back. I broke free and ran back into the building and called security.	None — when security arrived, J. had already left the premises.

## Appendix B

# Building a Prosecutable Case Checklist

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- ✓  Keep a detailed log.
- ✓  Obtain a copy of your state's stalking law.
- ✓  Keep a file of all police reports.
- ✓  Make sure each police department (for multiple jurisdictions) has copies of each other's reports.
- ✓  Make sure each new police report makes reference to prior reports.
- ✓  Maintain regular contact with detectives assigned to your case.
- ✓  Obtain assistance from a victim advocate.
- ✓  Report every incident (especially violations of restraining orders).
- ✓  Keep all evidence.
- ✓  Save all forms of Internet (e-mail) communications.
- ✓  Report e-mail harassment to your Internet provider (such as AOL or Prodigy).
- ✓  Save phone messages on removable answering machine cassettes.
- ✓  Use call trace (typically \*57) immediately after a harassing telephone call and notify police that you have traced the call.

# Appendix C

## Safety Checklist

### Home

- ✓  Add alarm system (or small motion-sensor alarms) to home or apartment.
- ✓  Trim bushes and trees around home to eliminate or reduce hiding places.
- ✓  Place security pins in windows and sliding glass doors.
- ✓  Install bars across the center of sliding glass doors.
- ✓  Make sure deadbolts are secured with screws at least two inches long.
- ✓  Attach motion-sensor lights to outside of home.
- ✓  Install locks on bedroom doors.
- ✓  Install panoramic peepholes on entry doors.
- ✓  Keep a cellular phone inside the home (in case phone lines are cut).
- ✓  Keep important documents in a security box at a bank.
- ✓  Keep an "escape" bag (with necessary daily items) at the home of a trusted friend.
- ✓  Consider getting a dog.

## **Public**

- ✓  Vary your daily routine.
- ✓  Tell only trusted individuals about your future plans.
- ✓  If you have a restraining order, carry it with you at all times.
- ✓  Tell companions that you are being stalked.
- ✓  Avoid isolated places such as alleyways, restrooms, etc.

## **Notify Sources of Information of the Need for Privacy**

- ✓  Phone company
- ✓  Utilities (electric, water, sewer)
- ✓  Homeowner Association
- ✓  City Hall
- ✓  Post Office (consider getting a P.O. Box for your mailing address)
- ✓  Newspaper delivery
- ✓  Internet provider
- ✓  Employer
- ✓  Professional associations
- ✓  Club memberships (fitness, hobbies, music, books, wine, discount stores, sports, etc.)
- ✓  Pizza delivery
- ✓  Church

(3) for not more than 10 years, if serious bodily injury to the victim results or if the offender uses a dangerous weapon during the offense;

(4) as provided for the applicable conduct under chapter 109A if the offense would constitute an offense under chapter 109A (without regard to whether the offense was committed in the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States or in a Federal prison); and

(5) for not more than 5 years, in any other case, or both fined and imprisoned.

### **Sec. 2261A. Interstate stalking**

Whoever travels across a State line or within the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States with the intent to injure or harass another person, and in the course of, or as a result of, such travel places that person in reasonable fear of the death of, or serious bodily injury (as defined in section 1365(g)(3) of this title) to, that person or a member of that person's immediate family (as defined in section 115 of this title) shall be punished as provided in section 2261 of this title.

### **§ 2262. Interstate violation of protection order**

(a) Offenses. —

(1) Crossing a state line. — A person who travels across a State line or enters or leaves Indian country with the intent to engage in conduct that —

(A)(i) violates the portion of a protection order that involves protection against credible threats of violence, repeated harassment, or bodily injury to the person or persons for whom the protection order was issued; or

(ii) would violate subparagraph (A) if the conduct occurred in the jurisdiction in which the order was issued;

and (B) subsequently engages in such conduct, shall be punished as provided in subsection (b).

(2) Causing the crossing of a state line. — A person who causes a spouse or intimate partner to cross a State line or to enter or leave Indian country by force, coercion, duress, or fraud, and, in the course or as a result of that conduct, intentionally commits an act that injures the person's spouse or intimate partner in violation of a valid protection order issued by a State shall be punished as provided in subsection (b).

(b) Penalties. — A person who violates this section shall be fined under this title, imprisoned —

(1) for life or any term of years, if death of the offender's spouse or intimate partner results;















(2) for not more than 20 years if permanent disfigurement or life-threatening bodily injury to the offender's spouse or intimate partner results;

(3) for not more than 10 years, if serious bodily injury to the offender's spouse or intimate partner results or if the offender uses a dangerous weapon during the offense;

(4) as provided for the applicable conduct under chapter 109A if the offense would constitute an offense under chapter 109A (without regard to whether the offense was committed in the special maritime and territorial jurisdiction of the United States or in a Federal prison); and

(5) for not more than 5 years, in any other case, or both fined and imprisoned.

## World Wide Web Sites

-  Survivors of Stalking  
<http://www.soshelp.org>
-  Stalking Victims Sanctuary  
<http://www.stalkingvictims.com>
-  The Anti-Stalking Website  
<http://www.antistalking.com>
-  Victim Assistance On-Line  
<http://www.vaonline.org>
-  National Victim Center (maintains a list of U.S. state stalking laws)  
<http://www.nvc.org/>
-  Florida International Victim Advocacy Center  
<http://www.fiu.edu/~victimad>
-  Privacy Rights Clearinghouse  
<http://www.privacyrights.org>
-  Office for Victims of Crime (U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs)  
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>
-  Results from national stalking study (Department of Justice)  
<http://www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/fs000186.txt>
-  NOVA (National Organization of Victim Assistance)  
<http://www.trynova.org>
-  Sexual Assault Information Pages  
<http://www.cs.utk.edu/%7Ebartley/saInfoPage.html>
-  David Baldwin's Trauma Pages  
<http://www.trauma-pages.com>
-  National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Information  
<http://www.dartmouth.edu/dms/ptsd>
-  International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies  
<http://www.istss.com>

## Appendix F

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