

What are

STALKING BEHAVIORS?

Adapted by TCFSH from information developed by ODVN and Evan Stark

Stalking is...

the willful, repeated, malicious following, harassing or threatening of another person.



Stalking is a crime under the laws of all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. territories, and the federal government. As many as 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men have experienced stalking victimization at some point during their lifetime and most often the stalker is someone the victim knows.

Stalking Behaviors

Though this list is extensive, it is not exhaustive. Some of the behaviors below may seem mundane but the stalking perpetrator's INTENT is what makes it criminal and dangerous.

- Repeated, unwanted phone calls & text messages
- Unsolicited or unwanted letters and/or emails
- Tapping phone lines, reviewing TTY histories, checking caller ID or call histories
- Following or spying on the victim more than twice
- Use of GPS/monitoring system to follow or spy
- "Checking up on" the victim
- Showing up at the same places as the victim without legitimate reasons
- Waiting at the same places without legitimate reasons
- Standing outside the victim's home, school, office
- Leaving unwanted items for the victim, e.g. presents, photos, flowers
- Vandalizing or damaging property
- Stealing and reading the victim's mail
- Making threats to the victim and/or those close to the victim
- Unsolicited and unrecognized claims of romantic involvement
- Posting information or spreading rumors

Effects of Stalking Behaviors

The effects of stalking are both unique to this particular crime and similar to those of domestic violence when it comes to emotional and mental health effects. Effects include:

- ◆ Job loss – over half of victims reported that they changed jobs due to stalking behavior
- ◆ Trapped in their own home and over 1/3 of victims were forced to move in secret
- ◆ Fear, humiliation and/or depression
- ◆ Distrustful of others, angry and/or hateful

73% of stalking victims increased security by:

- Changing their phone numbers
- Removing phone numbers from public lists
- Getting P.O. boxes
- Purchasing security systems for their homes
- Changing their name

PROXY STALKING

Proxy stalkers are the friends and/or family members of the original stalker, sent by the original stalker to follow, harass or threaten the victim. Proxy stalking is an increasing problem among high school and college populations.

Safety Tips:

Having a safety plan is one of the most important things you can do to keep yourself safe. Below are a few safety tips*:

Personal Safety with a Stalker

- Do not attempt to negotiate with a stalker. Avoid contact or communication with the individual.
- Telling a stalker ten times to leave you alone is nine times too many. Be consistent.
- If you have an order of protection, carry it with you at all times. Keep extra copies!
- If you think you are being stalked, call the police. Make sure each incident is reported to the police, keep the complaint number and obtain a copy of the report.
- Allow an answering machine to screen all of your phone calls and save the messages. Save any letter, packages or gifts from the stalker.
- Vary your routes to and from work or school. Inform your building, office or campus security guards that someone is stalking you. Travel with a companion whenever possible.
- Keep your windows and doors locked securely at home and in your car.
- Install deadbolts and chain locks. Have your locks changed and keep extra keys.
- Install a security system, including motion sensor lights and an alarm. Keep lights and a radio on at different times. Don't sleep near windows and keep your shades drawn.
- Tell trusted family members, friends and neighbors that you are being stalked. Provide them with a photo and description of the stalker and any vehicle they may drive.
- If you feel that you are being followed, drive to a police or fire station. If the stalker does not know where you live, do not drive home.
- Visually check front and rear passenger compartments before entering your vehicle and check your tires and vehicle for damage. Always park your car in well-lit areas.
- If you have children, notify their schools of the situation. Provide a photo and description.
- Maintain a private post office box if your residence is confidential.

Tips for Harassing & Threatening Phone Calls

- If you have become the victim of harassing telephone calls, it is very important that you keep records of the dates and time of the calls, what the caller says and any specifics regarding their accent/speech.
- Once you have developed a log of harassing phone calls, contact your local police department and file a report. If you receive a threatening phone call, file a police report immediately.
- You may also contact the annoyance call bureau at your local phone company for additional information and services.
- As soon as you hear obscenities, improper questions or no response, hang up the telephone.
- Do not state your name or number on your answering machine. If you are a female who lives alone, as a male friend to leave a greeting/message on your answering machine for you.
- Do not attempt to play detective. Do not try to extend the call to try to figure out who is calling. Do not let the caller know that you are upset or angry. This is the type of reaction the caller wants.
- Do not let everyone know about your telephone calls. Many calls are actually made by someone you know, such as an acquaintance, family member or friend.
- Do not talk to strangers. If you have any concerns about the legitimacy of a call, obtain the caller's name, company and telephone numbers.
- Never give your personal information, such as credit card numbers or your social security number to an unknown caller.

* Adapted from those provided by Laurie J. Tellefsen, Trauma Institute at Care Plus NJ, Inc.