

Family Shelter Service

605 EAST ROOSEVELT ROAD • WHEATON, ILLINOIS 60187 • HOTLINE: (630) 469-5650

ABOUT STALKERS AND STALKING

Information from the Antistalking Web Site (www.antistalking.com)

Types of Stalkers

There is tremendous confusion in the stalking research literature about how to classify stalkers. Everyone uses different terms. For the purposes of this web site, we have broken down types of stalkers into three broad categories: Intimate partner stalkers, delusional stalkers and vengeful stalkers. Obviously, there is overlap. Since studies show that the overwhelming number of stalkers are men and the overwhelming number of their victims are women, we will be referring to stalkers and their victims accordingly. *I Know You Really Love Me* delves into much greater detail and provides extensive case histories about each of these types of stalkers.

Intimate partner stalkers are typically known as the guy who "just can't let go." These are most often men who refuse to believe that a relationship has really ended. Often, other people - even the victims - feel sorry for them. But they shouldn't. Studies show that the vast majority of these stalkers are not sympathetic, lonely people who are still hopelessly in love, but were in fact emotionally abusive and controlling during the relationship. Many have criminal histories unrelated to stalking. Well over half of stalkers fall into this "former intimate partner" category.

In these types of stalking cases, the victim may, in fact, unwittingly encourage the stalker by trying to "let him down easy," or agreeing to talk to him "just one more time." What victims need to understand is that there is no reasoning with stalkers. Just the fact that stalking - an unreasonable activity - has already begun, illustrates this fact. When the victim says, "I don't want a relationship now," the stalker hears, "She'll want me again, tomorrow." When she says, "I just

need some space," he hears, "If I just let her go out with her friends, she'll come back." "It's just not working out," is heard as "we can make it work out." In other words, the only thing to say to the stalker is "no." No explanations, no time limits, no room to maneuver.

A victim should say "no" once and only once. And then, never say anything to him again. If a stalker can't have his victim's love, he'll take her hatred or her fear. The worst thing in the world for him is to be ignored. Think of little children: If they're not getting the attention they want, they'll act out and misbehave because even negative attention is better than none at all. Former intimate partner stalkers have their entire sense of self-worth caught up in the fact that, "she loves me." Therefore, any evidence to the contrary is seen as merely an inconvenience to overcome. Since giving up his victim means giving up his self-worth, he is very unlikely to do so. Don't help him hang on.

Delusional stalkers frequently have had little, if any, contact with their victims. They may have major mental illnesses like schizophrenia, manic-depression or erotomania. What they all have in common is some false belief that keeps them tied to their victims. In erotomania, the stalker's delusional belief is that the victim loves him. This type of stalker actually believes that he is having a relationship with his victim, even though they might never have met. The woman stalking David Letterman, the stalker who killed actress Rebecca Schaeffer and the man who stalked Madonna are all examples of erotomaniac stalkers.

Another type of delusional stalker might believe that he is destined to be with someone, and that if he only pursues her hard enough and long enough, she will come to love

him as he loves her. These stalkers know they are not having a relationship with their victims, but firmly believe that they will some day. John Hinckley Jr.'s obsession with Jodi Foster is an example of this type of stalker.

The typical profile of delusional stalkers is that of an unmarried and socially immature loner, who is unable to establish or sustain close relationships with others. They rarely date and have had few, if any, sexual relationships. Since at the same time they are both threatened by and yearn for closeness, they often pick victims who are unattainable in some way; perhaps she is married, or has been the stalker's therapist, clergyman, doctor or teacher.

Those in the helping professions are particularly vulnerable to delusional stalkers, because for someone who already has difficulty separating reality from fantasy, the kindness shown by the soon-to-be victim, the only person who has ever treated the stalker with warmth, is blown out of proportion into a delusion of intimacy. What these stalkers cannot attain in reality is achieved through fantasy and it is for this reason that the delusion seems to be so difficult to relinquish: Even an imaginary love is better than no love at all.

These delusional stalkers have almost always come from a background which was either emotionally barren or severely abusive. They grow up having a very poor sense of their own identities. This, coupled with a predisposition toward psychosis, leads them to strive for satisfaction through another, yearning to merge with someone who is almost always perceived to be of a higher status (doctors, lawyers, teachers) or very socially desirable (celebrities). It is as if this stalker says, "Gee. If she loves me, I must

not be so bad." As Dean Martin compellingly crooned what could be considered the delusional stalker's anthem: "You're Nobody 'Til Somebody Loves You." It is not unusual for this type of stalker to "hear" the soothing voice of his victim, or believe that she is sending him cryptic messages through others.

Some studies show that delusional stalkers are the most tenacious of all. Erotomanic delusions themselves last an average of ten years. How is this possible when the stalker has had little if any contact with his victim? As if drawn from the National Organ Donor Registry, the victim becomes the perfect match, with the potential to save the stalker's life. When the victim says "no," he rationalizes it away, believing that, "her husband made her get that restraining order, she really loves me," or "her agent told her it would be bad for her career if we dated, but she really loves me." Therefore, as with every type of stalker, it is imperative that victims have no contact.

The final category of stalker is not lovelorn. He is the vengeful stalker. These stalkers become angry with their victims over some slight, real or imagined. Politicians, for example, get many of these types of stalkers who become angry over some piece of legislation or program the official sponsors. But, disgruntled ex-employees can also stalk, whether targeting their former bosses, co-workers or the entire company. Some of these angry stalkers are psychopaths, i.e. people without conscience or remorse. Some are delusional, (most often paranoid), and believe that they, in fact, are the victims. They all stalk to "get even."

Former intimate partner stalkers and delusional stalkers can become vengeful for a variety of reasons. For example, when their victims get restraining orders, or marry. Why a stalker's anger is a very bad sign is described under **what to do**.

In general, for any type of stalker, the less of a relationship that actually existed prior to the stalking, the more mentally disturbed the stalker.

What to Do If You Become a Stalking Victim

If you become a victim of a stalker you must, above all, educate yourself. There are several national organizations that provide information on stalking. These are listed on our **resources** page. Keep tuned in to our **upcoming educational events** page, as well, for continually updated information.

Security Precautions for Stalking Victims

Stalking victims don't like to be called victims. They will say, "I won't let myself be victimized," or "I'm not going to change my life because I'm being stalked." Sorry. Your life has changed. Forever. And unless you accept that, you will actually be helping the stalker. You are a crime victim. The crime happens to be stalking. You must understand that the phrase "stalking victim" says volumes about the perpetrator, but nothing about you. It does not tell us whether you stay at home in terror with sheets over the windows, or whether you've decided to move, or to become active to change the laws in your state. On the other hand, accepting that you are a stalking victim serves to remind you that you must, from now on, take extra precautions that others do not have to take.

Here are some basics to start with. These and other safety precautions can be found in *I Know You Really Love Me*:

1. Tell the stalker "no" once and only once, and then never give him the satisfaction of a reaction again. The more you respond, the more you teach him that his actions will elicit a response. This only serves to reinforce the stalking.
2. Get a dog. The Los Angeles Police Department's Threat Management Unit says this is "one of the least expensive but most effective alarm systems."
3. Block your address at DMV and Voter Registration. If you don't, *anyone* can get it for the asking. This is how Robert Bardo found actress Rebecca Schaeffer and was able to murder her at her front door.

4. Never give out your home address or telephone number. Get a post office box and use it on all correspondence. For those places that will not accept a post office box, change "PO Box" to "Apt." and leave the number. Put this address on your checks.
5. When the stalker gets your home telephone number, don't change it. Instead, always let an answering machine pick-up. Get a new, unlisted number, and give it to everyone who calls but the stalker. Gradually, only your stalker will be using your old number – it will become his private line. If it upsets you when he calls, put the machine in a room you don't use. You can even have someone else monitor the tapes. This way, the stalker will think he is still getting through to you, although you will never make the mistake of picking up when he calls. Whenever you close off one avenue for a stalker, he will find another and it could easily be worse.
6. Document everything. Even if you have decided not to go the legal route, you may change your mind. Keep answering machine tapes, letters, gifts, etc. Keep a log of drive-bys or any suspicious occurrences.
7. Take a self-defense class. A lot of security experts don't advise this, fearing that it gives victims a false sense of security, but we do. The best self-defense classes teach you how to become more aware of your surroundings and avoid confrontations, things that stalking victims would do well to learn.
8. Have co-workers screen all calls and visitors.
9. Don't accept packages unless they were personally ordered.
10. Remove any name or identification from reserved parking at work.
11. Destroy discarded mail.
12. Equip your gas tank with a locking gas cap that can be

unlocked only from inside the car.

13. Get a cell phone and keep it with you at all times, even inside your home, in case the stalker cuts your phone lines.
14. If you think you are being followed while in your car, make four left- or right-hand turns in succession. If the car continues to follow you, drive to the nearest police station, *never* home or to a friend's house.
15. Never be afraid to sound your car horn to attract attention.
16. Acquaint yourself with all-night stores and other public, highly populated places in your area.
17. Consider moving if your case warrants it. No, it's not fair, but nothing is fair about stalking. If you stay and fight through the legal system, you might get some justice, (although not necessarily your definition of it), but you almost certainly won't get safety: There is no possibility of life imprisonment for stalkers. Research how to keep your destination secret. Stalking and victims' organizations can help.
18. Don't be embarrassed and think you caused this somehow. Stalkers need no encouragement. Your shame is your stalker's best weapon. It makes you more likely to engage him or agree to plea bargains, which are bound to be taken as sympathy and we know where that leads. Instead, tell everyone you know that you're being stalked, from neighbors to co-workers, so that when the stalker approaches them for information about you, they will be alerted not to divulge anything and will let you know he's been around. One young widow moved to escape her stalker, a stranger she had never really met. Yet, after finding out where she moved, he was also able to pinpoint her exact location by showing her helpful neighbors pictures he had surreptitiously taken of her and her children, telling them that he was her

estranged husband and she had kidnapped the kids.

19. Join one of the stalking victims' support groups that are springing up all over the country. They can be invaluable resources for information in your community (such as how local law enforcement handle these cases) as well as provide essential support. See the **resources** section for organizations that can help. If there is no group in your area, start one. It only takes two. Tragically, we can guarantee you are not the only person being stalked in your area.

Restraining Orders

Many stalking victims are routinely told to get restraining orders. When they do, they often assume that the stalking will finally end, either because the stalker will stop on his own, or because the police will stop him. Neither of these outcomes happens with any frequency. About a quarter of stalking victims obtain restraining orders; in two-thirds of these cases, the restraining order is violated. About half of all stalking cases are reported to the police; a quarter of these result in an arrest.

Remember that a restraining order is just a piece of paper. It cannot protect you. In fact, the restraining order is just a tool police use to show intent by the perpetrator. Obviously, the police will not be there when the perpetrator violates. Only after.

In many, many instances, restraining orders only make a bad situation worse. From the stalker's point of view, restraining orders are humiliating; the victim has just announced to the world that she wants nothing to do with him: She has stepped-up the rejection. Because of this, many perpetrators feel they must step-up the pursuit. Or they just get mad and plan to get even. There have been far too many cases of stalking victims found murdered after they had obtained restraining orders; one victim's estranged husband knifed the order to her chest.

There are two types of stalkers that are most unlikely to respond to restraining orders: those former intimate-partner stalkers who are

very invested in the relationship and delusional stalkers.

Former intimate partner stalkers are less likely to adhere to a restraining order the more they have invested in the victim. For example, a man who was married to a woman for ten years and had three children with her, follows her around until she gets a restraining order. The same man, a year later, dates another woman a few times until she becomes concerned about how controlling he is and breaks it off. In which scenario will the same man be more likely to let go: In the former instance, in which he has ten years and three kids invested, or the latter in which he has only invested a few dates?

Delusional stalkers, by definition, cannot be reasoned with. They just don't get it and never will. A judge saying the same thing the victim did, "stay away," makes no difference. These types of stalkers have even been known to call their victims - collect from jail. Since in most cases the victim hardly knows the stalker, if at all, it might seem that these stalkers have nothing invested in the relationship. Remember, however, that in their minds, they have created an entire relationship with the power to completely transform their lonely lives. A piece of paper carrying some paltry penalty for a violation is hardly going to be a deterrent. A victim may assume that her stalker will respond to a restraining order the way she herself would. Such an assumption is, at best, terribly foolish; at worst, deadly.

An erotomaniac woman stalked a department store manager who had the misfortune of smiling in her direction. She was so relentless in her pursuit that he was eventually forced to leave the country. Here is what she wrote to the man she had never, in reality, met: "My dearest beloved...I cannot live without you. You are God of God and I depend upon your kindly help to save me from this hospital. Your high learning and important status are your two most admirable qualities. Your wise breeding will make a perfect lady out of me and in you is all I need to find security in my life." How can 30 days, 6 months, even a year in jail put a dent in these sentiments and their resulting pursuit?

Does this mean that a stalking victim should not obtain a restraining order? No. It does mean, however, that a stalking victim should not obtain one routinely. Before a victim obtains a restraining order, she *must* research how these orders are enforced in her jurisdiction in similar cases. Seek out other stalking victims, through support groups, domestic violence programs, etc. and ask them. Find out if a restraining order violation is a misdemeanor (as it is in most jurisdictions) or a felony. If it is a misdemeanor, it is much less likely to be enforced. When is the last time you heard of someone being arrested for spitting, littering or loitering? The police will almost always tell you they will arrest. Find out if this means taking the stalker to jail or just giving him a citation.

When a restraining order violation occurs and the police just go out and talk to the stalker or even give him a citation, they have just made the situation worse. The victim would have been far better off never obtaining such an order. What the police have done in this instance is given the stalker further proof that nothing will happen to him, that he can act with impunity. After all, what more can the victim do to him than call in the full weight of the legal system; first a judge to issue the order and a police officer to enforce it?

Stalker Violence

There are cases in which stalking lasts for years and years and never turns violent. Then, there are those cases that turn deadly quickly. How can you tell which cases will lead to murder?

First of all, the cases that seem harmless, may, in fact, be the most deadly. An Australian singer was stalked by an erotomaniac man who went to all her performances and even followed her to social events. When her friends expressed their concerns to the young woman, she told them he was simply sad and harmless. There was no warning before he finally did approach her in the street, fatally stabbing her. Weeks before, he had confided to his mother that he was going to marry the singer. What changed his plans from marriage to murder? A newspaper article reporting her engagement to a prominent local

businessman. He felt humiliated at her "betrayal" and decided to "get even."

Most stalking victims erroneously believe that if they have not been threatened, they are not in any danger. Here's a question, then: If he really wanted to harm you, why would he warn you ahead of time? Conversely, think about the many, many times in your own life that you threatened someone and then didn't follow through on the threat. Never happened? What about that jerk who cut you off on the highway last week? Didn't you threaten to – well, never mind. The point is, study after study indicates that whether or not a stalker makes a threat has no bearing on whether or not he poses a threat. Of course, any threat should be taken seriously. But there are other indicators that cannot be ignored when assessing a stalker's potential for violence.

Additionally, it is a false belief that if a perpetrator has no history of violence, the likelihood of his becoming violent in the future is small. John Hinckley, Jr., Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, Sarah Jane Moore, Lee Harvey Oswald, Sirhan Sirhan and John Wilkes Booth, never perpetrated an act of criminal violence on another person before the attacks that made them famous. That is also true of the most recent celebrity stalker-murderers, Robert Bardo, who killed Rebecca Schaefer, and Mark David Chapman, who killed John Lennon. While a past history of violence, therefore, is an important factor in increasing the risk of future violence, the absence of such a history is completely meaningless. After all, a history of violence is notably lacking before the first time anyone perpetrates a violent act.

Factors which studies show seem to increase stalker propensity for violence are: stalking more than one victim, a past criminal history unrelated to stalking, substance abuse, access to and knowledge of weapons, high degree of obsession with the victim, great length of time stalking the victim, travelling a distance to be near the victim. Male sex is usually added to this list because, in general, men are more violent than women. However, a recent study found

that, at least for former intimate partner stalkers, women stalkers were just as likely to become violent as their male counterparts.

It is also important to understand that it is not only the victim who is in danger, but those surrounding the victim, particularly if the stalker perceives them to be in his way. Madonna's stalker tried to kill her body guard because he was seen as an obstacle to the star. Peggy Lennon's stalker (from the singing Lennon Sisters on the Lawrence Welk Show) hunted her father down and shot him to death, believing he was an obstacle to being with Peggy, whom he called, "my true wife."

Resources for Stalking Victims

American Self-Help Clearinghouse
(201) 625-7101

Provides national listings and directories to help with finding or forming a support group in your area.

Communities Against Violence Network (CAVNET) www.cavnet.org

National Criminal Justice Reference Service www.ncjrs.org

P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000

(800) 851-3420

Sponsored by the National Institute of Justice. Victims and others an order papers reporting various studies done under grants by the Institute on stalking, violence and domestic abuse.

National Domestic Violence Hotline
3616 Far West Blvd., Suite 101-297,
Austin, TX 78731
(800) 799-7233

A free, 24-hour hotline that provides victims with referrals to agencies in their own areas.

National Self-Help Clearinghouse
(212) 642-2944

Provides national listings and directories to help with finding or forming a support group in your area.

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)

1757 Park Rd., NW, Washington, DC 20010

(800) 879-6682 or (202) 232-6682

A free, 24-hour hotline that provides information and referral for victims to resources in their own states.

National Center for Victims of Crime
www.ncvc.org

2111 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300,
Arlington, VA 22201

(703) 276-2880

Through Infolink, (800) FYI-CALL or (817) 877-3355, victims and others may obtain information and referral on victim and crime-related issues.
Open M-F: 9-5:30 ET.

The Stalking Assistance Site

www.stalkingassistance.com

a comprehensive, practical resource designed by women with over 20 years of combined experience in federal law enforcement and threat management. Step-by step detailed instruction is provided in a variety of relevant areas.

The Stalking Victims Sanctuary

www.stalkingvictims.com

Tricounty advocacy center in Rensselaer County New York; Victim Advocacy Program of the Capital District, 5 Broadway, Suite 201, Troy, NY 12180, E-mail: VACCD@aol.com

Victim-Assistance Online

<http://www.vaonline.org>

DOJ 1st Annual Stalking Report to Congress (1996)

<http://www.ncjrs.org/textfiles/stlkbook.txt>

DOJ 2nd Annual Stalking Report to Congress (1997)

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ocpa/94Guides/DomViol>

Stalking FAQ

<http://www.state.ia.us/government/ag/stalker.htm>

National Victim Assistance Academy training manual

<http://www.madcapps.com/Writings/faqabout.htm>

National Victim Center help guide for stalking victims

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/assist/nvaa/ch21-2st.htm>

National Victim Center safety tips

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/help/stalk/info44.htm>

State stalking laws

<http://www.nvc.org/gdir/svsafety.htm>

Cyberstalking

<http://www.cyberangels.org/stalking/>

Online Harassment Resources

<http://www.io.com/~barton/harassment.html>

"The Message Relay Center"

www.MessageRelayCenter@msn.com

acts as a mediator between parents when communication is either undesired or too dangerous to be conducted. This is especially true where domestic violence or stalking is involved. Assistance in these type of situations to prevent the aggressor in these situations from harming the other parties.

www.stopdv.com Provides information on domestic violence, stalking and stalking laws.

Cyberstalking: A New Challenge For Law Enforcement and Industry: A Report from the Attorney General to the Vice President
<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/cybercrime/cyberstalking.htm>

Privacy Rights Clearing House

<http://www.privacyrights.org>

www.stalkingbehavior.com

The Epidemic of Cyberstalking
As technology advances, so does its seedy underbelly. Cyberstalkers have terrorized thousands, but law enforcement often is unable or unwilling to deal with it. Congress is studying a bill to address the growing problem. By Katie Dean.

Cyberstalked? Use Common Sense

You wouldn't give a stranger on the street your name, address, phone number, or pictures of yourself. Internet safety advocates say you shouldn't do it online, either. By Katie Dean.

The Stalked Need a Safety Net

Jayne Hitchcock couldn't get the help she needed when she was cyberstalked four years ago. Now she's helping others -- by training law enforcement. By Katie Dean.