

Stalking Safety Tips

Stalking is behavior wherein an individual willfully and repeatedly engages in a knowing course of harassing conduct directed at another person, which reasonably and seriously alarms, torments, or terrorizes that person. Stalking involves one person's obsessive behavior toward another person. Initially, stalking will usually take the form of annoying, threatening, or obscene telephone calls, emails or letters. The calls may start with one or two a day but can quickly increase in frequency. Stalkers may conduct covert surveillance of the victim, following every move his/her target makes. Even the victim's home may be staked out. Many will stop after they have been arrested, prosecuted, and/or convicted. Unfortunately, laws do not stop most stalkers. Studies of stalkers indicate that they stop when their target is no longer available to them, or they find someone else to harass.

Safety and Resistance

Here are some strategies that might help you fight back and regain some control of your life:

- x Notify the stalker to stop: Your attorney or you can send a registered letter to the stalker stating that he/she must stop the behavior immediately.
- x Notify law enforcement: Request that law enforcement agencies log your complaint each time you call whether they respond or not. Request a copy of the report.
- x Obtain a Protective Order: You will need to go to court to get a criminal warrant and then file for a protective order. While the stalker may not respect the order, the police are required to make an arrest if the order is violated.
- x Document everything: Record any information that you or any witnesses can provide.
- x Tell everyone: Give friends, neighbors, coworkers and family members a description of the stalker. Ask them to watch for him/her, document everything listed above and give you a written account for your records.
- x Take pictures: When you see the stalker, try to take a photo or videotape if it's safe to do so.

- x Press charges: Call the police each time the stalker breaks a law. The stalker should be arrested, bonded, and then released. Request that one of the terms of the bond be that the stalker may not have any contact with you at all. Obtain copies of all documents and the name of the arresting officer.
- x Save all communications: Save and date all cards, letters, notes, envelopes, e-mails, and taped messages on your telephone answering machine that are from the stalker.
- x Keep all legal documents: Obtain copies of protective orders, court orders, etc.
- x Make it hard to track you down:
 - o Alter travel routes and routines.
 - o Obtain a post office box.
 - o Give your address and phone number to as few people as possible. Inform professional organizations that they are to provide no one with information about you.
 - o Post a No Trespassing sign on the edge of your property where it is clearly visible.
 - o Report any threatening calls to the telephone company.
 - o Report to the FBI all threats sent by mail.
- x If you move:
 - o Don't ask the post office to forward your mail. Have them hold it for you
 - o Take all important records with you: your (and your children's) medical, financial, academic records, Social Security cards, green cards, passports, driver's licenses, etc.
- x Take a self-defense class: You may find that you feel more empowered and self-sufficient, even if you never employ the techniques that you learn in your class

The National Center for Victims of Crime Stalking Resource Center (2012b) provides a number of online resources for victim services providers to aid in victim