

STALKING: Criminal Harassment

Definition

Stalking: When one person is emotionally obsessed with another and demonstrates this through actions and contacts that are unwanted (www.metrac.org)

OR

Emotional fixation on another person followed by an unwanted obsessional pursuit of target. (Brant Workshop on Stalking, Feb. 2000)

The legal term for stalking is Criminal Harassment and it is against the Law!

'No person shall behave in way that makes another person fear for her safety'

This is a *building block* crime, because it often starts with small incidents that bigger, more frequent and more threatening.

Stimulus for stalking (*Categories of Stalking):

- Loss of relationship (*Rejected)
 - Loss of access to kids
 - Loss of employment
 - *Intimacy Seeker
 - Revenge (*Resentful)
 - Power and Control (*The Predatory)
- } Controlled and changed by offender

You Are Being Stalked, What are some Basic Safety Measures You can Take?

(Stalking; Coping with Criminal Harassment. METRAC and OWJN workshop. 2001)

- **Do not minimize or under-estimate the danger you may be in.**
- **Trust your own instincts;** try to identify the cause of your feeling, fears, doubts, anxieties and suspicions.
- **Avoid all contact with your stalker;** use different entrances to your home or office, take different routes to work or school, obtain a call display service.
- **Resist the urge;** to have just one more conversation with your stalker to make him stay away- this will only encourage him.
- **Tell people;** about what is happening to you and the danger you feel.
- Make the importance of keeping your phone number, address and any other **personal information secret** clear to others.
- **Record:** the stalker's actions.
 - ◆ This will help you to identify patterns so you are able to take steps to keep yourself safe
 - ◆ If you wish to discuss the situation with the police or a counselor
 - ◆ If your stalker is charged with Criminal Harassment, this info will be used as evidence against him.
- **Always be prepared:** carry with you at all times anything you would want or need if you had to suddenly go to a safe place...
 - ◆ Keys, ID, Cash and Credit Cards, Prescriptions, Children's Treasures, Lease/Deed to your home, Marriage/Divorce papers, Restraining order, His Bail Conditions, Custody Papers, Court Documents from previous assaults.

PERSONAL SAFETY PLAN

How could you make every day safer? Consider:

- Your home's security - change/add locks.
- Your routines and routes – Vary them!
- Your car and other forms of transportation – be alert!
- Your mail and telephone – have someone else collect and open your mail, get call display, change your number to an unlisted number
- Have readily available contact people – keep name and numbers handy
- Take a self-defense course
- Distribute a photograph of your stalker to family, friends and co-workers.
- Remove any name or ID from reserved parking spots.¹
- If you think you are being followed while in your care, 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.²

You may want to design your safety plan with someone else, such as a counselor or police officer.

If you live in a remote area consider:

- How you can get yourself to a safe place if you do not have a vehicle or transportation.
- Are there people you trust who can drop by your home on a frequent but irregular basis to check on you?
- Can you develop a communications code with a trusted neighbour to let him/her know if you are in danger (eg. A curtain pulled down, an object placed in or removed from a window)?
- Can you afford a cell phone to carry with you when you are not near a land based phone?
- Program emergency numbers into your phone. Talk to your phone company about security options that are available to you.
- Can you afford security lighting or powerful lighting for outside your home?

What should I Record?

- Name of the stalker – include a physical description
- Keep an on-going record of the following:
 - any incidents of contact from the stalker (phone calls, letters, visits, emails, messages through other people)
 - Any incidents of harassment or threats (to yourself or family/friends/pets)
 - The date and time of the incident
 - If you saw the stalker what was he wearing?
 - List physical evidence and any witnesses.
 - The measures you have taken to protect yourself
- If you call the police, record the officer's name. *Note: The Major Case Unit of Waterloo Police deals specifically with Criminal Harassment cases.*

You may consider also keeping a private journal that you write about your personal feelings.

¹ www.antistalking.com/vctim.htm accessed Dec 2, 2004

² *ibid.*

Types of Stalkers

Simple Obsessional

- Most common – 75-80%
- Majority are domestic
- A prior relationship exists between victim and stalker; acquaintance, neighbour, customer, prof. relationship, ex-partner/lover, formerly dated.
- Commonly a former relationship/ex-lover/ex-spouse
- Majority Male
- Most volatile, most violent.
- Can easily come across as average ‘nice guy’
- Often law-abiding outside of stalking
- Love gone sour, perception of mistreatment, narcissistic
- Campaign of harassment – may believe he can ‘coerce’ the partner back.
- Often has personality disorder and or drug/alcohol abuse
- ****Knows daily routine of victim****
- *Restraining order may give false sense of security to victim.*

Love Obsessional

- Stranger or minimal acquaintance (local waitress, nurse etc.)
- Campaign of harassment to make the target aware of stalking pressures.
- Fantasy motivated – ‘idealized romantic love’ between target and stalker.
- Delusional – may be secretive.
- Male
- Long-term obsession
- Not as frequently violent as simple obsessional.

Erotomaniac

- Rarest (1-2%)
- Only stalker classified under the DSM IV
- The victim is almost always known through the media
- Usually female – fixate on a target usually of superior status, such as fame.
- Central theme – the stalker believes the target loves them.
- No prior relationship
- Resourceful and intelligent.