

Practical Advice for Dealing with a Stalker

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Table Of Contents

Practical Advice for Dealing with a Stalker	1
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What is Stalking?	3
Cyberstalking	3
List of Steps to Take if you Have a Stalker	4
Start Gathering Evidence	4
Involve Others	5
Contact Law Enforcement	5
Consider Getting Legal Help	6
Get a Restraining Order	6
Do a Background Check	7
Consider Buying a Weapon	7
Consider Installing a Home Security System	8
Find Out if You're Dealing With a Sex Offender	8
Proactive Steps to Avoid Stalkers	9
Additional Resources	10
About the Author	11
Disclaimers	12
Limit of Liability and Disclaimer of Warranty	12
Trademarks	12

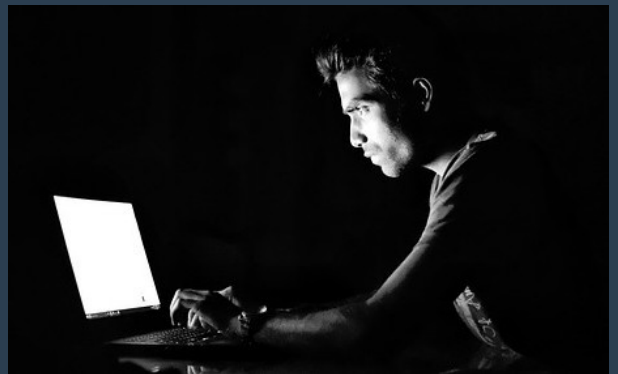
What is Stalking?

Stalking is defined as a repetitive pattern of unwanted, harassing or threatening behavior that is committed by one person against another. Acts that could be considered stalking include: being physically followed, repeated watching, harassment via telephone, receiving unwanted gifts, and other similar forms of intrusive behavior. The person doing the harassing is usually referred to as a **stalker**.

Definitions of stalking found in state anti-stalking statutes typically define it as “the willful, malicious, and repeated following and harassing of another person that threatens his or her safety”. Victims live in constant fear that they are being watch and that they may be harmed at any time by a stalker.

Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking is the use of information and communications technology, particularly the Internet, by an individual or group of individuals, to harass another individual, group of individuals, or organization. Stalkers love the internet because they can harass others and still remain anonymous.



Cyberstalking behavior includes false accusations, monitoring, the transmission of threats, identity theft, damage to data or equipment, the solicitation of minors for sexual purposes, and gathering information for harassment purposes. The **harassment** must be such that a reasonable person, in possession of the same information, would regard it as sufficient to cause another reasonable person distress.

Practical Advice for Dealing With a Stalker

Research shows that men are typically the ones who engage in this behavior and stalking is usually committed between people who know each other. Only one in four cases of stalking are committed by a stranger. In fact, most stalking cases involve a former intimate partner.

List of Steps to Take if you Have a Stalker

Following is a list of suggested steps to take if you have a stalker. Please note that this is not a foolproof plan and the steps are not sequential. Please don't consider this to be legal advice. These are simply practical ideas to help keep you safe.

Start Gathering Evidence

At some point, a person's behavior will cross the line from casual contact, to what is clearly considered to be stalking behavior. There are no hard-and-fast rules to define that line, but it is generally the point at which you become uncomfortable. If you've reached that point, and you don't feel comfortable with confronting the individual, it is time to start gathering evidence.

First, gather as much evidence as possible to document the behavior of the stalker who is bothering you. Examples of such evidence may include: phone records or call logs, copies of letters, copies of text messages, social media posts, pictures of injuries, pictures of the person as they are following you (if possible), physical notes or letters, statements from witnesses corroborating the behavior, etc.

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Involve Others

If you have a stalker, the first thing you should do is **make your friends, family and coworkers aware of the situation**. Talking to your friends and family is not only comforting, but is an important step in keeping yourself safe. Your friends, family and coworkers can provide critical support in regard to protection, gathering evidence and keeping an eye out for the person who is bothering you. If they are aware that you are in danger, they can be proactive about helping you.

Once everyone is aware, work together to develop a plan for staying safe. Add everyone's emergency contact information to your phone and stay in touch often. Share your schedule with everyone and provide updates on your location and activities frequently. Identify a **safe place** to go in case of emergency. Establish "code words" that signify when you are safe and when you are in danger.

Contact Law Enforcement

Once you've established your immediate support group, **contact local law enforcement and ask to file a report**. Be prepared to share the evidence you've gathered. The more evidence you are able to provide, the more help you are likely to get from law enforcement. Police officers can't take any action if someone "give you the creeps" or if you simply don't like the way someone looks at you. Keep copies of everything in case you want to take legal action at a later date.

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Consider Getting Legal Help

After you take the important general steps above, and report the matter to the police, you may want to think about taking legal action. First, you should familiarize yourself with the anti-stalking statutes in your state. This will give you and understanding of your rights and the actions you can take to protect yourself.

Next, consider contacting an attorney to discuss obtaining a **restraining order** against the individual. Meet with the attorney and share all of the information you've gathered, including a copy of the police report, if you can get one. Some police departments won't share a copy of a police report until the case is closed.

Get a Restraining Order

A **restraining order** is a form of legal injunction that is commonly used in stalking cases. The rules associated with a restraining order will vary from state to state. Please check your state statutes to learn the rules in your state, or contact an attorney. With a restraining order, a court may order a person to:

- Stay away from the victim. This includes their home, place of work, school, etc.
- Stop contacting the victim in any way. This includes phone, email, mail, fax, deliveries, etc.
- Stop making threats or harassing the victim
- Turn over any firearms, ammunition, or other weapons
- Take regular drug tests
- Attend some type of counseling or treatment program

If the person does something to violate the restraining order, the victim can ask the police to enforce the order.

Do a Background Check

If you need to learn about someone's history, run an online background check using a service such as BeenVerified or Intelius. BeenVerified allows you to search billions of public records online in just a few minutes. With their service, you can find out if the person has an arrest record, criminal record, bankruptcy, etc. In addition, you can search for known addresses, affiliate persons, phone numbers, and more.

BeenVerified has both basic and advanced search options at an affordable price, so it is worth it to learn the truth. Visit their website more about their Background Check services, and Search Police Records online now. If you need professional help, consider hiring a private investigator. Or, work with your attorney to order a background check from one of their contacts.

Consider Buying a Weapon

If, at any point in the process, you don't feel safe, you should consider purchasing and carrying a weapon for self defense. The weapon can be anything from a firearm, a baton, mace, pepper spray or a **TASER® gun**. Before you make a purchase, be sure to familiarize yourself with the local laws regarding such weapons. Then, be sure to purchase the weapon legally.



Consider Installing a Home Security System

If you don't already have one, a monitored [home security system](#) play an important role in your personal safety. A quality home security system includes important elements such as motion sensors, door and window sensors, home automation features.

If someone breaks in to your home, the monitoring company will call immediately and alert the police, if necessary. In addition, consider adding additional reinforcements to your doors. Alarms are great, but they won't prevent a door from being kicked in. Consider installing a steel door, or adding reinforcements to an existing door. Check your local hardware store for both.

Find Out if You're Dealing With a Sex Offender

In stalking cases, it is always helpful to know who you are dealing with. If the person harassing you is a former partner, a coworker, or friend, you may have an idea of what they are capable of. If you don't know the person, it is always a good idea to find out who they are. In addition to running a background check (described above), you may want to find out if the person is a registered sex offender. Read this article, [How to Search for a Sex Offender in Your Area](#).

If the person is a sex offender, you should consider the situation much more dangerous. Work with your support group to gather as much information as possible about the offender's previous crime. This includes, copies of registry reports, copies of newspaper articles, photos, etc. Share this information with the police and with your attorney. Also, make sure your family, friends and co-workers have the information as well.

Proactive Steps to Avoid Stalkers

Following are some general things you can do to avoid becoming a victim.

Generally, awareness of your surroundings will go a long way toward improving your personal safety.

- **Watch out for people who are loitering around your neighborhood, business, or place of work.** Do you notice anyone hanging around and watching from a distance? Do you see the same person at multiple locations? It may just be a coincidence. However, someone who is obsessed with you is likely to follow you from place to place.
- **Be aware if someone is watching you.** While in a public place, take the time to look around and take note of your surroundings. Make a mental note of anyone who seems to be stealing glances at you, or even staring at you. Again, these may be harmless flirtations, or simply one person noticing another. But, if someone is truly obsessed with you, you'll start to notice patterns.
- **Make note of repeated telephone calls.** In some cases, the individual may have your phone number, especially if it is a former friend or partner. Pay attention to repeated calls from the same number. Also, make a note of any calls where the person hangs up, or stays on the line and doesn't speak. Block the call if you need to, but keep your call logs in case you need them for proof.
- **Always go places with at least one other person.** Having at least one other person with you gives you a second pair of eyes and ears. They can help keep an eye out to see if anyone is watching or following you. In the event the stalker approaches you, they can help call for help or provide physical help if needed. Also, they can serve as a witness.

Additional Resources

- **National Center for Victims of Crimes** – The National Center for Victims of Crime is the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. Since its inception in 1985, the National Center has worked with grassroots organizations and criminal justice agencies throughout the United States serving millions of crime victims.
- **Sex Offender Search** – Make sure the person stalking you is not a sexual offender. Search the National Alert Registry to find sexual offenders in your neighborhood.
- **Stalking Victims** - Anti-stalking resources and information.

About the Author

Michael Kissiah is the owner of Brandy Lane Publishing, LLC, which owns and operates a portfolio of websites, including eInvestigator.com. Michael created eInvestigator.com more than 20 years ago after working as a private investigator in the state of Florida. Since that time, he has become an expert at how to find information online and has written over 1000 articles on topics related to the investigation industry.



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