

Stalking Behaviors

Stalking behaviors can vary. Stalkers may do any of the following:

- Follow you and show up wherever you are.
- Send unwanted gifts, letters, cards, or e-mails.
- Damage your home, car, or other property.
- Monitor your phone calls or computer use.
- Use technology, like hidden cameras or global positioning systems to track where you go.
- Drive by or hang out at your home, school or work.
- Threaten to hurt you, your family, friends or pets.
- Find out about you by using public records or online search services, hiring investigators, going through your garbage or by contacting friends, family, neighbors or co-workers.
- Post information or spread rumors about you on the Internet, in a public place, or by word of mouth.
- Take other actions that control, track or frighten you.

Stalking is a pattern of repeated acts directed at another person that would cause a reasonable person to be afraid.*

Impact of Stalking

Stalking may affect you in many ways. Common reactions to stalking are:

- Being afraid of what the stalker will do.
- Feeling vulnerable, unsafe or not knowing whom to trust.
- Feeling anxious, irritable, impatient or on edge.
- Feeling depressed, hopeless, overwhelmed, tearful or angry.

Stalking is serious, often violent and can escalate over time.

- Feeling stressed, including having trouble concentrating, sleeping or remembering things.
- Having eating problems, such as appetite loss, forgetting to eat or overeating.
- Having flashbacks, disturbing thoughts, feelings or memories.

- Feeling confused, frustrated or isolated because other people don't understand why you are afraid.

You are not to blame for a stalker's behavior.

Options for Victims of Stalking

Stalking is unpredictable and dangerous. No two stalking situations are alike. There are no guarantees that what works for one person will work for another; however, you can take steps to increase your safety.

- If you are in immediate danger, call **911**.
- Trust your instincts. Don't downplay the danger. If you feel you are unsafe, you probably are.
- Take threats seriously. Danger generally is higher when the stalker talks about suicide or murder, or when a victim tries to leave or end the relationship.
- Contact the Fairfax County 24-hour Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline at **703-360-7273**, or the Domestic Violence Action Center at **703-246-4573**. These organizations can help you devise a safety plan, explore options such as seeking a protective order, and refer you to other services.
- Develop a safety plan which includes things like changing your routine, arranging a place to stay, and having a friend or relative go places with you. Decide in advance what to do if the stalker shows up at your home, work, school, or somewhere else. Tell people how they can help you.
- Don't communicate with the stalker or respond to attempts to contact you.
- Keep evidence of the stalking. When the stalker follows you or contacts you, write down the time, date and place. Keep emails, text messages, phone messages, letters or notes. Photograph anything of yours the stalker damages and any injuries the stalker causes. Ask witnesses to write down what they saw.
- Contact the police. In addition to a stalking charge, the stalker may also have broken other laws by doing things like assaulting you or stealing or destroying your property.
- Consider getting a protective order that tells the stalker to stay away from you.
- Tell family, friends, roommates, and co-workers about the stalking and seek their support.
- Tell security staff at your job or school. Ask them to help watch out for your safety.

*In brief, the Virginia Code (*Va. Code Ann. § 18.2-60.3*) defines someone as guilty of stalking if they on more than one occasion engage in conduct directed at another person with the intent to place, or when he knows or reasonably should know that the conduct places that other person in reasonable fear of death, criminal sexual assault, or bodily injury to that other person or to that other person's family or household member. To search for the entire code section, visit: <http://leg1.state.va.us/000/src.htm>.

*Content from this fact sheet was adapted from the Stalking Resource Center at the National Center for Victims of Crime website: www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center.

