

STALKING SURVIVAL HANDBOOK.

*“Anyone can be a stalker, and anyone
can be a stalking victim.”*

~ Rhonda Saunders

www.stalkingalert.com

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE STALKED

YOUR COOPERATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE

It takes a team consisting of law enforcement, prosecutors and the victims themselves to successfully put together a viable stalking case. The investigation of these types of criminal cases are often work intensive in that the stalking incidents may take place over a period of time ranging from a couple of months to several years, as opposed to a burglary or robbery charge in which the criminal act takes place in a matter of minutes. Each incident needs to be documented. A proper stalking investigation may involve numerous witnesses, locations, and pieces of evidence. Whether it is at home, in the community, at work, or school, you need the help of law enforcement to defeat a stalker. And in order for the police, prosecutors and courts to best help you, you must help them first. You are in the best position to give the police the information they need to successfully put the case together. When you are interviewed by the police, be as thorough as possible. Don't let them rush you. Make sure they are taking down notes as you give them the information.

1. The moment you believe you are being stalked, immediately notify your local police department. Continue to notify them after each subsequent occurrence so you establish a "paper trail" if charges are later filed. If the officer at the desk or on the phone refuses to take a report, ask to speak to a supervisor and/or request that they at least take a "field report. Obtain and write down the name and badge number of the person who is taking the report, the date that the report was made, and any identifying number on the report.

2. You need to document the “when,” “where,” and “hows” of the stalking conduct. Keep a log documenting date, time and place of each occurrence, including phone calls, letters, e-mails, faxes, text messages, sightings of the stalker, following, receipt of packages, suspect showing in front of your house, school or work, etc. Witnesses are important. Write down the names of any persons, such as neighbors, friends, co-workers, security guards, classmates, family members, mailmen or delivery persons who were present during each occurrence. Turn a copy of this log over to the police, but always keep a copy for yourself.

3. Describe a typical day before the stalking conduct started. Describe a typical day since the stalking began. In other words, what changes have occurred in your life that illustrates your fear and the impact the stalking conduct has had on your life. As a prosecutor, I have to prove that the stalker’s conduct and/or words fall outside of First Amendment protection. The only way I can do that is by showing he is engaging in criminal conduct by intentionally trying to terrorize you .

4. Explain to the detective when the harassment first started. If you were in a relationship with the stalker, did the stalking behavior begin during the relationship, after it had ended, or both. When and why did you leave the relationship.

5. If the suspect made a threat, what were the exact words used. What did those words mean to you. Often the words used by the stalker need to be taken in context of the parties previous relationship. For example, a stalker might leave a message, “Why don’t we take another vacation to Las Vegas.” On the surface, these words don’t appear threatening, but the victim in this case explained to the police will that during their

relationship, the last place she and her ex-boyfriend went was Las Vegas where he beat her so severely that she was in the hospital for a week. Let the police know why the stalker's words or conduct is so personally frightening to you.

6. When was the last time the suspect met with, or tried to contact you, directly or through a third party. Have you initiated any contact with the suspect since the stalking began. Don't be embarrassed if you have, but let the officer know so we won't have any "surprises" later on.

7. Do you believe that the stalker will physically harm you or other people. Why. Has he harmed you in the past. Has he been violent towards or made threats against your family members. pets or friends.

8. Was anyone else present that observed the stalker or overheard his threats. If yes, give the police the names, phone numbers and address of the witnesses. Give the witnesses a "heads-up" call that the police will be contacting them. Tell them to cooperate with the police; their testimony is very important.

9. Do you have a certified copy of a restraining order. Was the order served on the suspect? Who served it and when. Give a copy of the restraining order and the affidavit you filled out at the time you applied for the restraining order to the police. Tell the detective if there are any other types of court orders in effect, or ongoing court proceedings, such as in child custody or divorce matters. Let them know why you originally obtained the restraining order and if you had obtained previous restraining orders against the suspect. When and where were they obtained. Did the suspect violate the order on prior occasions. Was he prosecuted for the violation. When and where. You

are the most important source of information to alert the police that the stalking previously took place in different cities or states. Often the police do not have the resources, other than you, to know if previous reports have been made in a different jurisdiction. Has the suspect been arrested on other occasions. What were the charges. Was the suspect convicted.

Make sure to let the officer know :

- Has there been a history of violence between you and the suspect.
- Do you have any physical evidence, such as phone messages, letters, photographs, e-mails, medical reports, etc. Turn these items over to the police.
- To your knowledge, does the suspect own any guns or other weapons. (This is also for officer's safety.)
- Does the suspect has a history of mental illness and/or drug or alcohol abuse.
- Be completely honest with the police and prosecutor. You cannot shock or embarrass us. It will be embarrassing if there is something we don't know and the defense attorney springs it on us at trial.

Reassure the police and prosecutor that you will continue to cooperate fully with them – and mean it.

BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY

At Home or in the Community

1. Ask friends and relatives to not give out your information. If someone requests information about you from them, they should tell you about it immediately. Ask them to get that person's information and you will contact that person if you so desire.
2. Do not destroy, delete or throw away evidence, such as voice messages, e-mails, letters, or packages:
 - a. Voice messages: Do not delete them from your system. Find a tape recorder, put the message on speaker phone, and record the messages.
There is no expectation of privacy violation if the stalker is stupid enough to leave the message on your voice mail. Often, it's not what is said by the stalker, but the way it is said that creates the victim's fear.
 - b. Text Messages: Do not delete. Take a photo of the message or phone number if it appears on your screen..
 - c. E-Mails: Do not delete. Keep it in your "saved" file. Print out a hard copy.
 - d. Letters: Do not throw away. Place in sealed plastic food bag. Handle on the edges if possible. It doesn't happen often, but occasionally we can get a viable fingerprint from a letter or package.

- e. Packages: (See “d” above.) If you are not expecting a package or if the package doesn’t have a return address from someone you know, don’t open it. Turn it over immediately to the police or your security department.
 - f. Instant messenger: Take a picture of the screen. These types of messages cannot be saved.
3. Cooperate with law enforcement. In many cases, the problem will not go away by itself and could escalate to violence.
4. Do not feel sorry for or make excuses for the stalker. Stalkers are very good at making the victim believe that the victim is being overly sensitive or is to blame for the stalker’s conduct. Stalkers rarely, if ever, take responsibility for their own conduct – it’s always someone else’s fault. Richard Poynton’s chilling words to the court at the time of his sentencing, where he blamed his wife’s death on the “war” she and her sisters had started against him, fully illustrates the psychopathy of these criminals. Thomas Agee’s frightening voicemails and letters vilifying his victims and blaming them for bringing his threats on themselves, further illustrates the stalker’s total lack of remorse.
5. Have no contact with the stalker. If you mistakenly pick up the phone and he is on the other end, or he encounters you on the street, tell him once, in no uncertain terms, that you do not want anything to do with him or her. Then hang up the phone immediately. Do not respond to his e-mails, letters, text messages, or telephone calls. If he tries to approach you, walk quickly away in the opposite direction. Run and yell if necessary.

6. Do not agree to meet the stalker, even if he promises to leave you alone if you see him one last time. If you do, you could be in physical danger. Janice Sugita lured her victim to a dark and deserted street and came within an inch of killing her. Agreeing to meet with your stalker also empowers him to believe that he can make you do whatever he wishes. We're brought up to be polite, and stalkers capitalize on that. A stalker will call or send a message: "Meet me on the corner or have coffee with me and I'll never bother you again." The victim agrees, thinking this will resolve the problem. It only reinforces the stalker's mindset that he or she can make the victim do as he wishes.

7. Never open the door to him – tell him if he doesn't leave, you will call the police. If he doesn't leave, call the police.

8. If you are in a car and see him following you, drive to the nearest police station or fire station. Call 911 immediately, if he is following you in his car, trying to block your car, or driving erratically. Do not drive home. If you see a police car on the street, honk your horn to get their attention.

9. If there are court orders granting child visitation or joint custody, arrange to have the children picked up and dropped off at a neutral party's home or at the local police station. Do not allow the stalker to come to your house or apartment. Do not allow him to manipulate the terms of the custody agreement. If he's calling you a dozen times a day, allegedly to check up on the children's welfare, document the times and frequency of the calls and bring it to the court's attention. Similarly, if he is repeatedly calling you late at night or becomes verbally abusive, notify the police. Don't let him use the children as an excuse to harass you.

10. Never go alone to any court hearing. Take a friend or family member with you. Your lawyer cannot be with you all the time. If the suspect attempts to approach or talk to you, notify the bailiff immediately.

11. Obtain a restraining order and carry a copy with you at all times. Make sure that a copy is given to the police station near your home, work or school. If you have children and they are listed in the restraining order, give a copy of the order to their school administrator. But be aware that a restraining order is a double-edged sword. On the one hand it's a tool for law enforcement and the victim. Without it a stalker can sit across from you at work or school. A restraining order allows police to arrest a stalker on the spot. It also puts the stalker on notice that the victim is afraid, which is crucial element needed in prosecuting a stalker, that the victim feared for his or her safety. The stalker no longer can claim, "I didn't know she didn't want me around." But understand that a restraining order is not a magic wand that will make the stalker go away. Many stalkers just consider it an annoying piece of paper and will ignore it. A restraining order is an excellent tool for law enforcement and prosecutors. On the other hand, there is the possibility that a restraining order can make a stalker angry and violent; we are talking about the ego and rejection factor here. The final decision whether or not to obtain a restraining order is up to you.

12. **A:** Alert your neighbors, friends, and coworkers that you are being stalked. They are extra eyes and ears for your protection. They can warn you if they notice strangers or unfamiliar cars in the neighborhood or at work. In domestic types of stalking, they might

recognize the stalker and warn you if they see him. Third parties make excellent witnesses for the prosecution, should the case go to trial.

13. Take a self-defense class. It will not only help you to defend yourself but will empower you and mitigate the feeling of loss of control over your life. If your children are old enough, enroll them in self-defense classes also.

14. Be vigilant about your privacy. For example, have a post office box address printed on your personal checks instead of your home address. Don't give out personal information, phone number, or e-mail address unless absolutely necessary. In some states, such as California, if you have a valid police report or restraining order in effect, the state will grant you confidentiality in your voting and/or driving records. Be aware that magazines, catalogues, on-line shopping sites, and even some banks will sell their subscription lists to third parties, no questions asked.

15. Get a dog – preferably a very loud one. I am not kidding! Dogs have better hearing than humans and can detect someone lurking around your house before you notice anything. If you hear your dog barking, pay attention. Also, it is a deterrent to the stalker because it is human nature to be afraid or more cautious around an aggressive animal. On the other hand, it is not uncommon in stalking cases for the stalker to commit pet abuse because he knows that it will devastate the victim and he wants to send the message that he is so ruthless that if he can do this to a helpless animal, imagine what he can do to you. If you do have an animal, take extra precautions for its safety, such as keeping it inside the house.

16. Keep a throw-away camera hand in your purse or by your window. If you see your stalker, cautiously take pictures of him. Try not to let him see you taking the pictures.
17. Always carry your cell phone, even on short errands or using the restroom at work, school or in a restaurant. Program the telephone number of your local police department or the detective in charge of your case into your phone. If your children are old enough, provide them with cell phones programmed with your work and home number, 911, and an emergency contact for a trusted relative or family friend.
18. Notify you child's school about the situation and, if possible, give them a picture of the stalker and an emergency number where you can be reached.
19. Do not put your child's name on his or her backpack where it can be seen. Do not dress them in clothing that has their names or initials on the outside.
20. Show your child a picture of your stalker or give them a good description of him. Tell them if they see this person not to talk to him, let him inside the house, or get close to them. Tell them to run to the first responsible person they see and know such as a teacher or a neighbor and report the sighting.
21. Make sure your children understand not to talk to or give personal information to strangers. Establish a code word with your children that will be used in case of emergency. Reinforce the fact that you will never send someone to them who doesn't know the code word. Give the code word to a trusted relative or friend whom you can call if you are in trouble and cannot speak freely.

22. If the stalker is leaving threatening, obscene, or other types of intimidating messages on your phone, do not disconnect the phone. Leave the voice mail on. Don't erase the messages. Do not answer that phone. If possible, get a second phone and only answer that phone. Give that number only to a select, trusted number of people.
23. Change your daily routine often. Take different routes to work or school, change the hours you drive to school, work or appointments. Don't allow your children to walk to school alone or even with one other friend.
24. Change the locks on all your doors. Put in dead-bolt locks. Install a security system with a panic alarm that goes directly to the police or fire department. Some security systems come with a portable keypad with a panic alarm in case the stalker confronts you in front of your house or as you are getting into your car at home.
25. Trim all trees and bushes around your house so there is no place for the stalker to hide. Don't leave out ladders or other objects in your yard that the stalker can use to climb into your house.
26. Install a motion detector light in the front and back of your house.
27. Have an escape plan in place at home and at work even before you actually need to use it. Keep an extra set of keys, a credit card, medication, and cash in one place and keep it close to you at all times in case you have to "run for it." Rehearse your escape plan with your children so they will know what to do in an emergency.
22. Have an unlisted and unpublished telephone number.

PROTECT YOURSELF IN THE WORKPLACE:

1. Stalkers know that the easiest place to find their victims usually is at work, because it is much easier for a stalking victim to change her home address or phone number than it is to change her job. Tell your supervisor, human resource department and trusted co-workers if you are being stalked.
2. Request a parking space close to the door of your office building and ask for an escort to and from your car. A parking lot or structure can be a very solitary and dangerous place.
3. Let the receptionist, security guard and other people in your office know about the situation so that they don't inadvertently give the stalker information as to your whereabouts or schedule. Your co-workers provide extra eyes and ears around you. Keep a picture of the stalker posted in the front office and at the security desk.
4. If possible, stagger or change your working hours or location to make it more unpredictable. In domestic violence stalking cases, the stalker will often cause disruption in the workplace in an attempt to get the victim fired or have her quit her job because the job represents her independence and he wants to regain control and power over her.
5. Have someone screen your calls. Make sure they don't inadvertently give out information about you such as, "Oh, she just left for lunch at the corner deli. She'll be back by 1:30."
6. Inquire as to whether your Human Resource Department has specialized programs to help employees who are victims of domestic violence and/or stalking. Many larger

companies have policies that allow you time to go to court to obtain a restraining order or to testify in a case. Often, they may provide a support person to accompany you to court or provide counseling services. In some states, if the situation is affecting the workplace, the company can obtain a “workplace violence” restraining order that would cover you at work and at home, and also protect your co-workers. It is obtained in the name of the company rather than under your name so it could deflect some of the stalker’s anger away from you.

7. If the stalker is a co-worker, report the conduct immediately to your Human Resource Department. If there isn’t a Human Resource Department, report it to your supervisor. If your stalker is your supervisor, report it to the next higher level. Request to be transferred to either a different shift or location. Document not only the stalker’s conduct, but the date, time, place and name of the person to whom you made the report.

8. Check to see what your company’s policy is with regard to giving you company time to go to court to obtain a restraining order or to testify in court. Some companies will even provide a person to accompany you to court and free counseling sessions to help you through this trying time in your life.

9.. Don’t be embarrassed to let people know that someone is stalking you. It is not your fault. Remember, under OSHA regulations, an employer has a legal duty to provide a safe workplace.

PROTECT YOURSELF ON CAMPUS

1. Document and report the stalking to your campus police immediately. Give them a description of the stalker and his name, if known.

2. Never remain in a classroom, library or lab by yourself.
3. If you are out on campus at night, always call the campus police or community service officers for an escort back to your dorm or car. Most campuses have escort services available 24 hours a day. Don't hesitate to call for an escort, even if you've had a drink or two. This is when you are most vulnerable, and most in need of assistance. They can call a cab for you if necessary to drive you to your apartment if it is off campus.
4. Make sure the door to your dorm and your dorm room is locked. If you have a roommate, tell her about your situation and impress on her the importance of keeping your door locked and not allowing strangers into your room.
5. If the stalker enrolls in your classes or follows you into the classroom, don't confront him but immediately notify the professor or Teacher's Assistant. If necessary, report it to the school administration. Let them know if you've filed previous reports with the campus police about the stalker.
6. Tell the administration, your friends, advisors and trusted professors if you are being stalked. Give them a description of your stalker.
7. Do not give anyone your class schedule; do not post it on any websites.
8. Tell your friends not to give your personal information to strangers or casual acquaintances without your permission.
9. Date rape drugs are becoming more prevalent. Never leave your drink unattended at a party, local bar or restaurant. Never accept a drink from a stranger.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM CYBER-STALKING¹

Cyberstalkers collect data that they use to locate and terrorize you and the people you care about. A cyber stalker will spend hours scouring the internet looking for any byte of information that leads them to their next ‘fix’ of information about you. They will spend hours looking at image sites for photos, blogs for information about your schedule and people search sites to find your address and telephone number. Information is everywhere. Be aware that in this technological age, if someone really wants to find you, they can. But you can make it more difficult for them.

Stalkers endanger not only you but the people around you. All the precautions that you take to keep yourself safe online should be taken by the people you associate with. The term “Neighborhood Watch” now incorporates not only those neighbors that you physically live next to but your online neighborhood as well.

1. Do not give out your e-mail address to casual acquaintances or strangers.
2. Get a PO Box and use it for all your correspondence. Use it when online shopping, signing up for email accounts, subscriptions, on your checks, and as a return address. If allowed by your employer, have all package deliveries sent to your office address.
2. Do not use your real name or date of birth as your online screen name or user ID.
3. Set up multiple email accounts. For example, one for ordering items/giving to people online, one for family and close friends, and another that you can use for

¹ With many thanks to Catherine Monson

acquaintances or people that you don't know that well. Providers such as G-mail or hotmail allow you to set up multiple free e-mail accounts.

4. Never give your user name or password to someone else. Ex-partners or friends that turn into stalkers don't just happen in the movies. Identity theft by a stalker isn't make believe.

5. Periodically check your credit on sites such as Experian (www.experian.com), Equifax (www.equifax.com), and Transunion (www.transunion.com). These sites may show if someone is using your personal information to apply for credit cards or loans.

6. If you bank on-line, access your accounts including checking, savings, and bank issued credit cards on a daily basis and look for unauthorized charges or withdrawals. Notify your bank immediately if there are charges or withdrawals that you have not authorized.

7. Keep your personal information off the Internet. . Do not publish personal information on internet sites such as Face Book, Twitter, etc. or in chat rooms. It is best to avoid these sites completely. Do not post: where you live, your telephone number, your legal name, what type/color/model of car you drive, the names of your spouse, children or pets, where you visit on specific times (I go to dinner every night at ___), pictures of yourself or people that you associate with. If possible, don't let the company that you work for post pictures of you on their website either.

8. Search your name online on various "find someone" websites. If you find your information is listed, notify the company to take your information off their site immediately.

9. Keep copies of all the emails you send and receive. Log AIM Chats, IRC, etc. You never know when you will need to retrieve these items to establish a course of conduct..
10. Do not use your company/business email account for personal email interactions or shopping online. Not only can you get into trouble with your employer, but many company emails contain footers with the location and phone number of where you work. You don't want your stalker to show up at your workplace.
11. Keep a log of every contact you have had with them and after you tell them to stop. Record every instance of contact in your log. This includes emails, attempts to IM you, caller ID logs, voicemail, etc. When logging internet communications include the IP (internet provider) of the email, ICR contact, etc. in your log. Keep every item that you are logging.
12. Save anything that the stalker does online that involves you. For instance, if they blog about you on their blog page, save that page with what they said on it.
13. Do not close the email account the stalker is attempting to contact you with. Discontinue using it for your other interactions, but allow the email account to stay open to collect any additional attempts at contact the stalker makes.
12. Change all your passwords frequently. Your computer password, your online banking account password, and all your email account passwords. Change to an individual password that you have never used before. Use 5 letters and at least 2 numbers in each new password you will be using.

13. Report any threats to your internet provider and the stalker's provider. Most internet providers have special departments that will investigate inappropriate use of their site.
14. Do not respond to the stalker's e-mails. Do not be drawn into the stalker's attempts to instant messenger you. If you are in a chat room (which you shouldn't be in the first place) and the stalker signs on, sign out immediately.
15. Keep your spyware and virus protection up to date. Perform scans frequently.