

# Stalking

**A guide for family members, friends and others worried about stalking in someone else's relationship.**

Spotting the signs, recognising the risk, and responding helpfully.



# What is stalking?

Stalking is a pattern of repeated, unwanted behaviour that causes the victim to feel distressed or scared. A stalker repeatedly intrudes into another person's life where they are not wanted and have no right to be. They are fixated, and persistent. Stalking can escalate in intensity and go on for months or even years, causing unthinkable mental distress. It can be life-changing and dangerous.

## The 'rejected' stalker

People who stalk claim a range of justifications, and cases can have similarities but also be complex and varied. People often refer to 5 types of stalkers: rejected, resentful, intimacy seeker, incompetent suitor, and predatory. In this toolkit we are looking at stalking and domestic abuse, so we will primarily focus on the 'rejected' stalker - this is defined as the breakdown of a close relationship, often an intimate partner relationship.

- The rejected stalker appears when a coercive and controlling relationship ends, yet the behaviours continue, and can escalate.
- This can often be identified as a form of post-separation abuse, however this term can sometimes take away the serious nature of stalking.
- The perpetrator may present as being driven by the desire to reconcile the relationship or to seek revenge for perceived rejection.
- Family members, friends, and other close relationships can also become unconscious accomplices, recruited by the stalker to further the abuse.
- They can also become targets of the perpetrator's behaviour themselves.



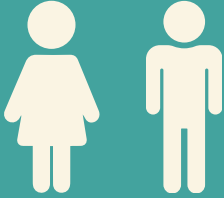
If I can't have you  
...nobody can

**No matter the reason, intention, or behaviour – STALKING IS NOT JUSTIFIED, remember:**

- **The victim hasn't done anything wrong**
- **The perpetrator is choosing to behave this way**
- **It is still, and has always been about the perpetrator having power and control over the victim.**

Most victims of stalking talk to a family member, friend, or someone else they know and trust about the situation before trying to access support through any specialist services or through a legal route. If a family member or friend discloses to you, your response can make a huge difference in how believed and supported they feel, and to what happens next.

# Stalking Statistics



1 in 5 women and 1 in 11 men aged 16 years and over has been a victim of stalking [1].

Victims do not tend to report to the police until the **100th** incident [2]



## 1 in 2

domestic abuse stalkers, if they make a threat, will act on it. In comparison to 1 in 10 stalkers, who had no prior relationship [3]

## 94%

Stalking behaviours were present in 94% of domestic homicides - demonstrating that early identification and intervention in cases of stalking are crucial [4]

## 79%

of domestic abuse stalkers will use their work resources to target the victims. [5]



75% of domestic abuse stalkers will turn up at the workplace. [5]

[1] ONS (2024) Stalking: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales

[2] Sheridan, L. (2005) Stalking: Perceptions and Prevalence

[3] McEwan, T. et al., (2009) Violence in Stalking Situations

[4] Monckton Smith, J. et al., (2017) Exploring the Relationship between Stalking and Homicide

[5] Safer Futures, 2024 [Online] [www.saferfutures.org.uk/stalking](http://www.saferfutures.org.uk/stalking)

# The important role of family and friends

One study identified that in 73.5% of cases, family members or friends were the first to be told about a victim's stalking experience [6].

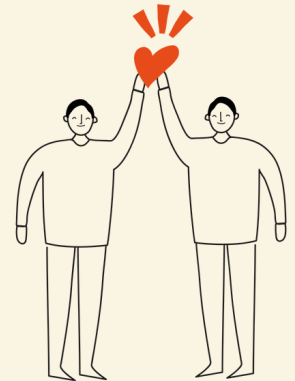
People who enlist the help of family and friends in informal responses to stalking are more successful in reducing the effects of both violent and nonviolent stalking [7].

Victims of stalking have also indicated that they thought their loved ones would not understand how there were being victimised [8].

How a family member or friend may respond deserves particular attention as research indicates that victims are more likely to seek support from family members and friends than any other official sources i.e. the police [9].

Family members, friends and other informal supporters have a really important role to play in supporting victims of stalking. If someone discloses to you, your response can make a huge difference in how believed and supported they feel, and what further support they might access.

Identifying stalking behaviours can be challenging, especially for those outside the relationship. However, if you notice any signs of stalking, don't ignore them. Ignoring them could leave the person you're worried about feeling more alone. Families, friends, colleagues, and neighbours are often the first to notice abuse and can offer support. There are many things you can do to help victims of stalking.



**If it is an emergency or if you or someone else is in immediate danger, always contact the police on 999**

[6] Galeazzi, G. et al., (2009) Experiences of stalking victims and requests for help in three European countries.

[7] Geistman, J. et al., (2013) What to do about stalking: A preliminary study of how stalking victims responded to stalking and their perceptions of the effectiveness of these actions.

[8] Korkodeilou, J. (2014) Dealing with the unknown: Learning from stalking victims' experiences.

[9] Klein, R. (2012) Responding to intimate violence against women: The role of informal networks.

# How do I identify stalking behaviour?

Stalking can leave someone feeling unable to trust, feeling fearful and scared at all times, and worried about going out. It can lead to concerns about using devices to stay in touch with people and can lead to withdrawing from family and friends. The four signs of stalking behaviour are FOUR. To determine whether a person is showcasing stalking behaviours ask yourself, is the behaviour fixated, obsessive, unwanted and repeated?

<b>F</b>	<b>Fixated</b>	The stalker makes the victim the focus of their attention.
<b>O</b>	<b>Obsessive</b>	They try anything to get contact or a reaction from the victim, way beyond what is considered 'normal'.
<b>U</b>	<b>Unwanted</b>	Their obsession drives them to keep going, even when told to stop or knowing it's unwanted.
<b>R</b>	<b>Repeated</b>	Just two or more incidents count as repetitive behavior.



**“Understanding the motivation behind these behaviours, and the risk that they present, is profoundly important”**

**- Professor Jane Monckton-Smith**

**“There is no such thing as a coincidence in stalking”**

**- Paladin**

**RECOGNISING THE RISK** - Stalking can present itself as acts such as sending unwanted gifts or loitering outside their house. While these acts may seem harmless, as family members and friends ask yourself: How much effort was taken to make your loved one feel scared and on edge? How much time has the stalker invested into their behaviour? And what was the true intention behind this behaviour?

**SPOTTING THE SIGNS** - There is no such thing as a coincidence - often a victim is left feeling afraid and uneasy after 'bumping' into their stalker. Stalking behaviours are usually planned and premeditated, therefore, by categorising any such behaviour as a coincidence, we risk minimising the behaviours and dismissing the dangerousness.

# The Red Flags

There are many warning signs of stalking, below are a list of some of the things you can look out for. This is not an exhaustive list, there are many potential indicators of stalking and abuse, to help determine whether a behaviour is stalking, remember F.O.U.R.

## The victim might:

- Seem on edge - constantly assessing their surroundings (i.e. looking over their shoulder).
- Mention that they repeatedly notice their ex-partner outside of their home or workplace.
- Appear frightened to 'bump' into their ex-partner.
- Be apprehensive about sharing information regarding their movements and whereabouts.
- Receive an unusually large amount of text and calls from their ex-partner.
- Have increased anxiety and fatigue due to a constant state of fear.
- Minimise their ex-partner's behaviour by saying things like they're "obsessed", "desperate" or "just lonely".

## The perpetrator might:

- Call or hang around outside their home or workplace.
- Send or leave materials or unwanted gifts.
- Contact their friends, family or work colleagues.
- Send unwanted letters, messages, texts and e-mails.
- Publicly share private information about the victim
- Continue to contact them after they have told them not to.
- Repeatedly mention them directly or indirectly in social media posts.
- Follow them or show up wherever they go.
- Contact the children or use the children to get close to the ex.
- Threaten to kill themselves because they can't live without them.
- Make up stories or spread harmful rumours to damage their reputation.
- Make false complaints to agencies about them.
- Threaten to disclose private sexual photographs of them.
- Break into their home and interfere with or damage their property.
- Physically assault or threaten them or those close to them, including pets.

**Remember: if you notice any signs of stalking, don't ignore them. Ignoring them or minimising them could leave the person you're worried about feeling more alone.**



# How to support

## Unhelpful responses

The way in which we respond to people in these circumstances are crucial. Try to avoid:

- Using language such as “just ignore him” – stalkers are persistent and unlikely to ‘just stop’.
- Suggesting they are to blame in anyway such as asking “why do you still reply to him?” - victims have very little power and control over the situation and may be afraid of the stalker and what they might do.
- Using any of your own previous experiences to try and relate to the situation.
- Pressuring the person you’re worried about to disclose.
- Excusing the perpetrators behaviour in anyway, including relating it to drug or alcohol use, loneliness, or love.
- Minimising the situation in any way – stalking is, and can be, an extremely dangerous behaviour and it should be treated as such.

## Responding helpfully

The more positive experience a person has whilst speaking to you, as a family member or friend, will increase the probability of them feeling supported and like they can come to you for help again in the future. Below are some examples of helpful responses:

### **Believe and validate victims**

For example, don’t say “well maybe they just miss you” or “they probably didn’t realise it was bothering you.” Instead, say “that sounds scary” or “I can see why that would be frightening.”

### **Focus on the offender’s actions, not the victim’s responses**

Even well-intentioned friends can accidentally blame victims. Don’t ask questions such as “why did you respond to that text message?” Focus on the stalker’s actions, for instance, “It is not right that they keep texting you.” Nothing the victim does or did justifies the stalker’s behaviour — remind victims that this is not their fault.

### **Respect the victim’s privacy**

Ask the victim who else they have told and respect their wishes about who to share this information with. Do not share any information about the victim with the stalker.

### **Give them time and check in**

Stalking cases can last a long time and can be very draining - your loved one’s reactions, wants, needs, and feelings might change over time.

Continue to check in and be a source of support. Ask questions like, “How can I help you feel safer?” Ask the victim how they feel the safest being contacted and use that medium to contact them.

# How to support

## Things you can do to help

- Help the victim think through options.
- Learning more about stalking.
- If they're ready, support them to access specialist services, see below.
- Help them to make an individual safety plan.
- Encourage them to record everything. Keep a diary, screenshots, calls, times, dates, places, any witnesses – ensuring they include how they felt at the time.
- Download the Hollie Guard App and be their 'safe person'.
- Keep a log of any incidents and collate any evidence. You can use this helpful tool: [stalkinglog.pdf \(suzylamplugh.org\)](#).
- Support them to become cyber-secure. You can find useful info on: [refugetechsafety.org](#)
- Stalkers may try to use family and friends to contact or monitor the victim. Encourage your loved one to talk about it and to tell as many trusted people as possible and to keep track of who they've told to avoid this.
- Support them to vary their routine - for instance, not going to the same coffee shop at the same time each day, mix it up and make sure someone knows where they are.
- Support them to report to the police if that is what they want.

## Specialist Stalking Services



The [Alice Ruggles Trust](#) raise awareness of stalking (including coercive control). They work to ensure that legislation is effective and adhered to, bringing lasting improvements.



The [National Stalking Helpline](#) is operated by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust. This service provides practical information, support and advice. Telephone: 0808 802 0300.



The [Suzy Lamplugh Trust](#) aims to reduce the risk and prevalence of abuse, aggression and violence with a focus on stalking and harassment through education, campaigning and support.



[Paladin](#) provides support, advice and advocacy to high-risk victims of stalking. If you know someone 16-25 who is experiencing stalking, they can get support from Paladin on their helpline: 020 3866 4107.