

Many stalkers will devote hours each day to their stalking campaign, are capable of stalking their victims for many years and use multiple means of contact (Richards 2011). Stalking rarely takes place at a distance. Some stalkers may approach their victims regularly and 75% of domestic stalkers will target their victim at work, with 79% of male perpetrators using work resources to target the victim. Research shows that those stalkers who visit the victim's home, workplace, or other places frequented by the victim more than three times in a week are those who are most likely to attack.

When stalking arises within the workplace, the relationship between victim and stalker is usually that of employer-employee, supervisor-employee, co-workers or service provider-customer (Mullen, Pathe and Purcell, 2009). It could also be a current or former partner. These can be the most dangerous cases and the one that we know are more likely to spill over into violence and, sometimes, murder. These cases do need to be taken seriously, particularly when threats to harm/kill are made.

Clare Bernal

Clare Bernal was murdered by her Michael Pech in Harvey Nichols in 2005. She worked there on the La Prairie beauty counter and he was a security guard. She had dated him on three occasions. There had been numerous warning signs which were not understood. The police risk assessment was inadequate and undertaken by a professional who was not trained. Clare was consequently told she was not at risk and rendered further vulnerable at the hands of the CJS – having been told by Pech 'if you report me to the police I will kill you' and that 'if I can't have you, no-one can'. We know from research that 1 in 2 stalkers, who have had a relationship with the victim, if they communicate a threat to kill will act on it. On September 13th he entered the store and shot her head and then turned the gun on himself.

Rana Faruqui

Rana met Stephen Griffiths at work. They started a relationship which was abusive and controlling. She ended it and he started stalking her. She reported it to police on a number of occasions over a three month period. Griffiths received numerous warnings after spying on her, taking photographs of her and stalking her by sending e-mails and text messages. Two weeks before she was murdered he cut her brake pipes on her car. Griffiths attacked Rana whilst she was tending to her horse. Moments before she died she called 999.

Be mindful that most stalking now includes a 'cyber' or technology aspect. The behaviours that you might see are normally the tip of the iceberg. You should take precautions to safeguard against digital and cyberstalking, as well as physical stalking.

WHAT DOES DIGITALLY ASSISTED STALKING MEAN VERSUS CYBERSTALKING?

Stalkers who stalk offline will usually assist their activities with some form of technology as a tool, e.g. mobile phones, social networks, computers or geolocation tracking. This can be characterised as 'digitally assisted stalking', as opposed to cyberstalking where the perpetrator uses technology but doesn't stalk the person in the offline world.

Pure cyberstalking still inflicts the same amount of psychological damage, with many victims suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Maple, Short and Brown, 2011).

WHAT ARE THE RISKS WHEN TECHNOLOGY IS USED?

Using technology can put stalking victims at risk. It is important that professionals and those who are being stalked understand how technology works, why it puts them at risk and what steps they can take to reduce those risks.

RISKS COULD INCLUDE:

- **Physical abuse** – stalker accessing or attempting to access the victim
- **Psychological abuse** – continued and persistent abuse impacts on victims emotional and psychological well being
- **Data gathering** – being able to access personal information about the victim and then act on it, either directly or indirectly using people that know the victim
- **Account take over** – digital footprint of victim reveals enough to take over the account
- **Identity theft** – abuser finds enough personal information to steal victim's identity

DO

- Regularly Google yourself and see what you can find out about 'what is out there about you' i.e. your digital footprint.
- Use a safe computer/laptop (friend, work, library, internet cafe), disconnecting yours until it has been cleaned.
- Change your passwords from a 'safe' computer i.e. a friend's or trusted third party.
- Set up a new e-mail account.
- Review all privacy settings particularly on Social Networking Sites.
- Be careful about what you put in the public domain – always 'err on the side of caution' as you never know who could be viewing that information.
- If you believe your computer/laptop has been compromised, clean it. Spyware software is easy to access and cheap to buy. You can use an anti-spyware product to do this.

- Tell friends, family, colleagues, workplace and neighbours about what is happening to you. Tell them not to give out any of your personal information including e-mail, phone number, home address etc. and to take care what they post on Social Networking Sites about you.
- Gather evidence – keep a diary of incidents/messages/offending posts and take screen shots of them to collate as evidence. Use the function on your laptop/computer 'Print Screen and ALT'. This will print a copy of your screen.

DO NOT

- Assume social networking sites will ever be safe.
- Open e-mails/attachments from the perpetrator.
- Use your name, pets name, family, places you went to school or lived, favourite colours etc. or any easy to guess passwords.
- Use the same password for every account – once one account has been compromised, all your accounts will have been compromised.
- Don't just change letters or numbers on passwords.

SPYWARE – CAN SOMEONE PUT IT ON A PERSONAL COMPUTER/LAPTOP? SHOULD THEY BE WORRIED?

In short – yes and yes. This can be easily put on to a computer/laptop just by the perpetrator sending an e-mail, attachment or PDF. It will just download in the background without you even knowing.

ANTI-SPYWARE SOFTWARE

You can buy this relatively cheaply or also download it for free but there are a lot of fake anti-spyware products on line so make sure you buy a well-known and recommended brand:

- www.malwarebytes.org £19.95
- www.pctools.com (spyware doctor) £29.99
- Microsoft windows defender Free
(<http://windows.microsoft.com/en-US/windows7/products/features/windowsdefender>)

MOBILE PHONES

We are all so dependent on your mobile phones. However, this could be used to continue and sustain the stalking behaviour. If you are leaving an abusive partner, you should assume that they may track you using your phone and other means. We do not advise changing your phone, as this in itself will probably not solve the problem. However, you should clean your phone and if you do want to change it, you can pick up an inexpensive phone at a supermarket for around £10.

DO

- In between time turn off your phone and remove your battery.
- Clean your old phone as it may have software or an 'App' to track you. Save all your photos, music and address book and then restore the phone to factory settings.
- Secure your phone. Set it so that if it is left unattended for a minute, that you have to insert a PIN.
- Ensure you hide your caller ID.
- Always collect and keep the evidence, including texts and voicemails. Make a recording of voicemails as they are only kept for an average of a week and take pictures of texts in case they are erased.
- If you get repeat calls and/or silent calls you should speak to your mobile phone provider. They can send a copy of your call log to police. You will need a crime reference report, name of contact in police force and their contact details etc. so in order to do this you must have reported it to police.
- Consider a 'Whitelist' App. This will ensure you only receive calls from those on your contact list. However, remember that you will need to add new contacts. A 'blacklist' feature bars certain numbers but this may not stop the stalker. They may get round it by using another phone.
- Turn off your Global Positioning System (GPS).
- Turn off your 'geotagging' settings in the camera application.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNS)

One of the most popular sites is Facebook. It is used by so many people nowadays and it is a great way of staying in touch with friends all around the world. It also creates a way for those who are isolated to stay in touch with people. However, it comes with inherent risks, particularly as many people 'friend' those that they do not know in order to increase how many 'friends' they have.

Here are some tips for staying safer. Please be aware that SNSs will never be safe as such.

DO

- Check your privacy settings and set them to highest level. Continuously review as Facebook changes features and privacy settings without always notifying users.
- Limit your friends – it is not a popularity contest and make sure those who are your friends are those you would be happy to tell information to.
- Be careful about what you put on there –be careful about what you say (changing relationship status) what you do (photos that give away personal information) or if you 'check-in' somewhere – all those people, and potentially the perpetrator will know where you are. They may try and physically find you.
- Educate friends and family who are on there that you have a stalker and encourage them to not put anything on there that could compromise you or make you less safe. Equally the stalker could try and approach them too unwittingly if they do not know what is happening.

ACCOUNT TAKEOVERS

This can easily happen, particularly if your stalker is your ex-partner. They may well know your passwords and so can assume your identity and take over your account without your knowledge or your permission. Once they have logged on, they may change your password and settings so that you can no longer use it.

Even if you have not been in a relationship with the stalker, it can be easy to guess at people's passwords and most people choose obvious passwords relating to them, their address, their pets and/or other personal and significant words. If they have worked out one account, it is more than likely they are just one step away from working out the others.

Perpetrators may even send themselves abusive e-mails from your account to incriminate you. They may equally send your family/friends/colleagues abusive e-mails from your account.

DO

- Be aware of the warning signs – e-mails people say they have sent, but you have not received, registered account changing, money unaccounted for, new password confirmation being sent.
- Use multiple e-mail accounts – one for work, one for friends and family, one of for social networks, banking etc.
- Regularly change your passwords to random and non-significant letters/names.

LISTENING DEVICES

Listening devices can be easily bought and cheaply on-line. Some are as small as a 50pence piece and others can be hidden in plug adapters, memory sticks, iPhone docking chargers and plug sockets for example. Software can also be bought to be put on a mobile phone if a person has the number, make, model and IMEI and it will intercept SMS, calls, record room conversations and can be remote control via SMS.

GPS DEVICES FOR CARS

These can be easily and cheaply obtained on-line. They are small devices that can be attached a car so that the car's movements can be tracked. All are battery operated with a battery life between five days and six weeks depending on level of sophistication and amount spent. Many devices can be tracked using a mobile phone/iPhone App and/or PC.

DO

- Check under the car for a small magnetic box, attached by a magnet the size of a deck of cards.
- Park the car in a safe place where it can be observed.

SIX GOLDEN RULES - ACTIONS TO CONSIDER AND ADVICE FOR VICTIMS

REPORT

1. **R EPORT IT AND TELL OTHERS** – report it to the police and ensure that other people know what you are experiencing including your family, friends, neighbours, workplace, children’s nursery/school etc. Do not suffer in silence. You are not alone.
2. **E NSURE YOU GET GOOD PRACTICAL ADVICE** - contact the National Stalking Helpline 0800 802 0300 www.stalkinghelpline.org and/or Paladin National Stalking Advocacy Service 0207 840 8960 www.paladinservice.co.uk
3. **P ROACTIVE EVIDENCE COLLECTION** – ensure you keep all messages/gifts preserving all the evidence. You can also film or video the stalker to collect evidence and if you are being followed in a car take them to an area with lots of CCTV. If you are in immediate danger call 999.
4. **O VERVIEW OF WHAT’S HAPPENING- KEEP A DIARY** - log everything that is happening including time, date and details of what happened.
5. **R ISK CHECKLIST - COMPLETE THE 11 QUESTION CHECKLIST VS- DASH** - If you think you are at risk complete the stalking screening checklist <http://paladinservice.co.uk/advice-for-victims/>
6. **T RUST YOUR INSTINCT AND NEVER MAKE CONTACT WITH YOUR STALKER**– always trust your instinct and if you are frightened or worried call the police or go to safe place. Once you have told the stalker you do not want any contact with them, ensure you do not contact or respond to them in any other way.