

# MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT STALKING

**MYTH:** Stalking is annoying but not harmful.

**FACT:** 76% of intimate partner femicides were stalked before being murdered. While stalking might not kill, it indicates a high risk of lethality. Further, the stress and trauma resultant of stalking takes a serious toll on the mind and body. Many crime victims experience PTSD.

**MYTH:** It is not stalking if you are in a relationship.

**FACT:** If your partner's behavior is fixated or obsessive, and their behavior forms a course of conduct which causes you fear, distress or alarm, this meets the definition of stalking regardless of your relationship. However, many stalking behaviors that take place in a relationship are methods of coercive control. It may also be difficult to pursue a criminal charge of stalking regarding behaviors during a relationship due to the need to show that behaviors are unwanted. We would advise victims of stalking to keep a diary of all incidents, seek support from their local domestic abuse or specialist stalking service and report to police.

**MYTH:** The stalking will stop if you ignore it.

**FACT:** Unfortunately, the very nature of stalking and stalkers is persistence. The behavior will likely continue, and stalking perpetrators tend to behave very erratically. While one of the hallmarks of PTSD is avoidant behavior, it is so important to acknowledge stalking and to report the separate incidences to law enforcement as soon as you notice the pattern. One of the things that can make it difficult to prosecute these cases is lack of evidence, so it helps to keep a stalking log and to set-up a security system with cameras if you can afford it. The stalking log will help you to remember each separate incidence. In the description of the incident, also include how it made you feel, as it can be helpful when the officer is referring the case to a prosecutor, and it can be helpful to you in the long run. As a threatening situation wears on, we can numb/avoid and lose our ability to fully feel what is happening. As painful as it may be, staying tuned into your feelings can help you to calibrate a plan of action for getting out of the situation.

**MYTH:** If your stalker doesn't threaten you then you aren't in danger.

**FACT:** Just because your stalker hasn't threatened you does not mean that you are not at risk from them. Assessing risk in stalking situations is complex and risk can dramatically escalate at any time. Risk is not solely defined as risk of physical violence – although this can be a very real danger in stalking cases. Stalking also causes psychological trauma to victims, and the risk of this should not be underestimated. Recording all incidents may help you to see if the stalkers behavior has changed and whether the situation has escalated.



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