

What is Stalking?

You are being stalked when a person repeatedly watches, follows or harasses you, making you feel afraid or unsafe. A stalker can be someone you know, a current or past boyfriend or girlfriend or a stranger. Stalkers may engage in a variety of controlling tactics to create fear in the person they are pursuing.

Here are some examples of what stalkers may do:

- Show up at your home or place of work unannounced or uninvited.
- Send you unwanted text messages, letters, emails and voicemails.
- Leave unwanted items, gifts or flowers.
- Make unwanted phone calls to you.
- Constantly call you and hang up.
- Use social networking sites and technology to track you.
- Access online accounts without your permission.
- Spread rumors or threats about you via the internet or word of mouth.
- Call your employer or professor.
- Wait at places you hang out.
- Damage your home, car or other property.

What if I'm Being Stalked?

If you're being stalked, you may be feeling stressed, vulnerable or anxious. You may also have trouble sleeping or concentrating at work or school. Remember, you are not alone. Every year in the United States, 3.4 million people are stalked and youth between the ages of 18-24 experience the highest rates. Most people assume that stalkers are strangers, but three in four victims are harassed by someone they know.

If you are in immediate danger, call 911. If you feel you are being stalked, you may report the stalker's behavior to your parents, a teacher, trusted adult or the police. Know that there are legal protections available such as protection orders, signed by a judge, that make it illegal for the stalker to come near you or continue to cyberstalk you. Know that stalking and cyberstalking are crimes and the person harassing you may face legal consequences.

Remember to save important information such as:

- Text messages
- Voicemails
- Videos
- Letters, photos and cards
- Unwanted items or gifts
- Social media friend requests
- Emails

It can also be helpful to write down the times, places and dates all incidents occurred. Including the names and contact information of people who witnessed the event may also be useful. To learn more about creating a log with this information, visit:

<http://www.victimsofcrime.org/docs/Toolkit%20Bulletins/stalking-incident-log.docx?sfvrsn=0>

Stalking is never your fault. You may have feelings of fear, anger, withdrawal and loss of control. These reactions are normal. It can help to tell your friends and family about the stalking and develop a safety plan. For help, including safety planning, emotional support, resources or assistance with filing a protection order, contact the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-500-1119 or your local domestic violence center. You can find your local domestic violence center by visiting:

<http://www.fcadv.org/centers/local-centers>.

For additional information, you may also visit the Stalking Resource Center:

<http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center>