

## Stalking and Criminal Harassment

### Criminal Harassment

Criminal Harassment is intentional, malicious and repeated following and harassing of another person such that this person is in fear for his/her life.

#### Forms of harassment include:

- Frequent and unwanted telephone calls
- Unwanted internet contact
- Unwanted letters, gifts or other objects
- Following; being a visible presence in places frequented by the victim

#### Impact of stalking and harassment on the victim

- Fear for personal safety
- Fear of injury or death
- Feeling of powerlessness
- Frustration and anger
- Symptoms of general stress and anxiety
- Constant wariness of others
- Loss of appetite and sleeping disorders
- Disruption of daily life

## Safety Precautions

1. Most stalkers are known, if only briefly, by the victim. It is, therefore very important that the victim tells the stalker directly that she/he does not want him/her to have any form of communication with her/him.
  - Tell the stalker “no” once and only once. Never give him/her the satisfaction of a reaction again.
  - Do not try and reason with a stalker. The more you respond, the more you teach him/her that his/her actions will elicit a response. This only serves to reinforce the stalking.
2. Keep an accurate account of any physical contact, communication, or visual contact with the stalker, include the date, times and place of the occurrences (***see Criminal Harassment Log in this section***)
3. Keep record of any suspicious or disturbing incidents such as the delivery of “gifts” or letters, drive-bys, vehicle damage, harming of pets, etc. Do Not accept unexpected packages.
4. Delete or put on hold your Facebook account. Change all passwords for your phone, internet and email accounts.
5. Consider getting a dog with a protective temperament. This is one of the least expensive, but most effective alarm systems.
6. Consider a video camera to film the stalker if he/she arrives at your workplace or residence. This is intimidating for the stalker and provides evidence for court.
7. Have an overnight kit ready in the event you feel you need to leave your home temporarily (***see “Safety Pack Quick Reference”***)
8. Get a cell phone and keep it with you at all times, even inside your home.
9. Install a home security system at your home (***refer to Residential Security Brochure***)
  - Install activity lights around your home and identify people before opening a door.

- Remove view obstructions and vegetation from around your home, so a stalker cannot hide.
10. Use your maiden name or a different name to register your utilities and your phone.
  11. **Never** give out your home address or telephone number. Get a post office box and use it on all correspondence. For those places that will not accept a post office box, change “PO Box #” to “Apt #”. Put this address on your cheques. Destroy any discarded mail.
  12. If the stalker gets your home telephone number, don’t change it. Instead, always let an answering machine pick-up. Get a new, unlisted number and give it to everyone who calls but the stalker. Gradually, only your stalker will be using your old number. If it upsets you when he/she calls, put the machine in a room you don’t use and have someone else monitor the tapes. This way, the stalker will think he/she is getting through to you and you record his/her calls for court. **Always be aware that whenever you close of one avenue for a stalker, he/she may find another.**
  13. Take a self-defence class to help teach you how to become more aware of your surroundings and avoid confrontations.
  14. Inform your employer and coworkers about the situation. Have a co-worker screen your calls. Remove any name or identification from reserved parking at work.
  15. Equip your gas tank with a locking gas cap that can only be opened from the inside of the car.
  16. If you think you are being followed while in your car, make four left or right-hand turns in succession. If the car continues to follow you, drive to the nearest police station, **never** home or to a friends house.
  17. If you know what type of vehicle the stalker drives, give the description to the police, friends, family, neighbors and co-workers.
  18. Keep a pen and paper in your vehicle to write down license plate numbers of vehicles that are following you.
  19. Alternate your walking/driving routes, where you buy groceries, the time you pick up mail etc.
  20. Never be afraid to sound your car horn to attract attention.
  21. Acquaint yourself with all-night stores and other public, highly populated places in your area.
  22. Don’t be embarrassed and think you caused this somehow. Stalkers need no encouragement. Your shame is your stalker’s best weapon. It makes you more likely to engage him/her or agree to plea bargains, which are bound to be taken as sympathy. Instead, tell everyone you know (and show a photo if you have one), that you are being stalked, so that when the stalker approaches them for information, they will be alerted not to divulge anything.
  23. Seek therapy if you experience the symptoms of anxiety
  24. Obtain a Protection Order (see Restraining and Protection Orders under Court Section)