

SaferCommunity

STALKING

Stalking is intentional, repeated, unwanted conduct by a person. It may be an attempt to maintain contact, or to threaten and intimidate through power and control. Stalking extends well beyond just physical following, and can be extremely distressing. Stalking is a criminal act.

What is stalking?

Stalking conduct includes a broad range of acts that can be both physical or technology-facilitated. As little as two unwanted occurrences can constitute stalking.

Examples

- Physically approaching or following you
- Tracking or surveilling you
- Phone calls, messages, voicemails, emails
- Loitering outside your home, work or school
- Entering your home
- Interfering with your personal property
- Accessing, using or changing your accounts
- Threatening you or people close to you
- Leaving or sending items, e.g. notes or gifts
- Ordering or cancelling goods for you
- Starting false legal action
- Publishing online about you

Stalking is illegal, however some actions that contribute to stalking are legal. A person may only realise they're being stalked once they identify a pattern of incidents.



SAFER COMMUNITY

Safer Community provides advice, support and referrals if you witness or experience unacceptable or concerning behaviour.

P: 03 9479 8988

E: safercommunity@latrobe.edu.au

W: latrobe.edu.au/safercommunity

Offices: Bundoora PE level 2, Bendigo SSC

Impact of stalking

Everyone's experience of stalking is different, so the impact can vary from person to person. The following are some common effects of stalking:

- Denial, confusion, and self-doubt
- Guilt, embarrassment and self-blame
- Depression, anxiety, panic attacks
- Fear for personal safety
- Isolation, withdrawal, avoidance of activities
- Becoming insecure, suspicious or untrusting
- Self-medication with alcohol or drugs
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts

STALKING MYTHS AND FACTS

Myth: Stalkers are strangers whom the victim doesn't know.

Fact: Anyone (a partner, friend, family member, acquaintance or stranger) can be a stalker, and anyone can be a victim.

Myth: You can't be stalked by someone you are in a relationship with.

Fact: Stalking does occur in intimate-partner relationships, it is a method of coercion, power and control.

Myth: Stalking is romantic, and a demonstration of how much someone cares about you, it's not dangerous.

Fact: Stalking demonstrates fixation and obsession, the longer it persists the more dangerous it can be to the victim's safety.

Myth: Stalking is just physical following.

Fact: Technology-facilitated or cyber-stalking is very common, it includes GPS tracking, searching or following online, sending viruses, accessing accounts, fake subscriptions, defamatory posts, false accusations or victimisation, catfishing etc.

Assistance and support

If you or someone you know is experiencing stalking, take action to be safe, then seek advice and support from professional services.

Immediate action

- Give one very clear message that the behaviour is unwanted, give examples, and ask them to stop the behaviour immediately
- If possible, cease all contact – do not respond to any messages or attempts to communicate with you (it serves to prolong the stalking, even a negative interaction with you can reinforce their behaviour)

Increase your safety

- Block their phone number, email and social media accounts
- Screen phone calls from unknown numbers
- Increase privacy settings on social media, particularly public viewing of your profiles
- Turn off location sharing and avoid sharing your location on social media
- Consider varying your routine where possible, including times and routes travelled
- Consider if you may need to change your passwords and get new email accounts or a new phone number
- Develop a safety plan, including putting numbers you can call in your phone (e.g. Security) and where you can go to be safe

Seek advice and support

- Tell people you trust - ask for their assistance in avoiding contact with the person and not sharing information about you
- Seek support from a professional service
- Tell your workplace and University – for support, safety planning, and to ensure they do not share your information with the person

KEY STATISTICS

- 1 in 5 women and 1 in 13 men experience stalking in their lifetime
- Stalker is most often (60-87%) someone known to the person
- Less than half (37%) of people stalked report to Police
- Most stalking (56%) occurred for less than 6 months; in 24% the stalking lasted 2 + years

Keep records

- Keep a record of all unwanted contact – include the date, time, and what happened (including when you told them to stop)
- Keep any evidence of the behaviour – including messages, screenshots of posts/comments, letters, gifts etc

Report the behaviour

- Report the behaviour to any relevant organisations if the person is also a member, e.g. University, workplace, club, social media sites
 - If you report to Safer Community at La Trobe, we will provide you with advice and assistance such as going with you to Police or the Magistrates Court
- If you feel unsafe, receive a threat, or the stalking has occurred for more than 2 weeks (indicating it is higher risk) report to your local Police station
- Consider applying for a personal safety or family violence intervention order at your local Magistrates Court
- Report image-based abuse to the e-Safety Commissioner

IMPORTANT: SUPPORT AND REFERRALS

Immediate assistance

- **Security** 24/7 assistance on campus 9479 2222 at all campuses, Bendigo call 5444 7999
- Police or Ambulance call **Triple Zero** 000

Internal support

- **Safer Community** provide confidential advice, support and referrals, call 9479 8988, email safercommunity@latrobe.edu.au or visit www.latrobe.edu.au/safercommunity
- **Student Counselling** offer free personal emotional support, visit www.latrobe.edu.au/counselling
- **Crisis Line** out of hours crisis support, call 1300 146 307 or text 0488 884 100
- **Student Association** offer free support, including legal advice, visit www.ltsa.com.au

External support

- **Police** for national reporting and response, find your local at www.police.vic.gov.au
- **Legal Aid** for free legal advice, call 1300 792 387 or visit www.legalaid.vic.gov.au
- **Victims of Crime** offer free support, they may be able to arrange a support worker to assist you, call 1800 819 817 or text 0427 767 891, from 8am-11pm, 7 days a week
- **Magistrates Court** for a personal safety intervention order, visit www.magistratescourt.vic.giv.au
- **eSafety Commissioner** has resources and information for online safety and to keep your devices secure, visit www.esafety.gov.au