



Tracking the Stalker:¹

What you need to know about documenting the stalker's actions

ARE YOU BEING STALKED?

Is someone reputedly following or watch you, showing up unexpectedly or communicating with you in ways that seem obsessive or make you concerned or afraid for your safety or the safety of others?

Stalking is a pattern of behavior that is frightening and unpredictable. The stalker might be someone you have had a relationship with or someone you don't know very well or maybe not at all. Stalking can begin at any time including while you are in a relationship, after you separate, or even after a no contact order has been issued. Stalking is a crime in every state although the legal definitions vary from state to state.

This handout refers to the stalker throughout but includes anyone stalking, harassing, threatening or bullying. One important consideration when being stalked, harassed, threatened or bullied is to document what is happening in case you need to get help through the criminal or civil justice system (or potentially other avenues). You can document incidents from anyone you feel is harassing or stalking you. Below stalker is used to refer more widely to anyone who is harassing and stalking you.

Why keep a log of the stalker's actions?

There are many benefits to tracking the stalker's, harasser's, or bully's tactics by keeping a detailed log.



Document the intentional nature of the stalker's actions

Logging or tracking the stalker's action will increase your credibility if and when you seek help from others. Not only will it help you remember specific dates, times, and details but it will show others that you are not talking about a few minor instances that could be dismissed as "accidental." Tracking all of the things the stalker does shows others that what the stalker is doing is intentional not accidental.



Help others understand

Detailing the full scale of the tactics the stalker is using against you and the harms or losses you have suffered because of the stalker can increase others awareness of how harmful this behavior is to you and your family. This is key to getting others to take stalking victimization seriously.



Collect evidence

Even though you may not want to involve the police or the court system at this point, having this information can be crucial if you ever do decide to pursue help through the court. The log, if you collect all of the information you need, may show a course of conduct, document your fears, and may provide police with corroborating evidence or with a map to collect corroborating evidence.



Create a more targeted safety plan

Stalking logs can show patterns and areas of risk and provide information that can help you target your safety. Keeping a log of stalker behaviors can also help others identify ways in which they may be able to increase your safety and intervene with the stalker.

¹ TK Logan, Ph.D. (May 2017). For more information, email tk.logan@uky.edu or visit www.CoerciveControl.com

What might be included in the log?



Incident description

Date, time, and specific description of each incident and location. Include everything even if it seems insignificant and even if you are not sure it was the stalker, harasser, or bully. It is unlikely that all of the things that are happening to you during the course of stalking are coincidental.

Make sure you have copies of the evidence (e.g., tests, pictures, etc) that are printed out for others and that these copies are organized and easy to access so that they can be included in other agency records if needed. Always bring copies of the documentation and corroborating evidence to court other to other agencies that may need to see it.



Police and other agency involvement and responses

You may or may not decide to involve the police, the court system, or other agency (e.g., probation and parole, victim services, work security) but if you talk to the police or other agency personnel (e.g., probation officer, prosecutor, victim advocate, security officer) be sure to write down who you talked to, date and time of your contact, badge number or other employee identification, and the outcome of that interaction (e.g., report taken, no action taken). If the police or other agencies are involved, it may be helpful to get a copy of their report or statements.



Impact

It might also be helpful to document how the incident has impacted your life (e.g., any ways it changed your life, work or routines, any financial costs to you). This may be a short-term or longer-term impact from the contact or incident.



Corroborating evidence

All evidence should be preserved, including time, date, and location of the incident, and full name(s) and phone number(s) of any witness(es). When possible, take pictures or videos. Be sure to date all the evidence when possible. If the police are involved, it is helpful to get a copy of their report. Whether or not the police are involved, be sure to write as much detail as possible about where and when the incident occurred, even if you do not have any other evidence. It is possible that police can get evidence through surveillance videos or tracing phone numbers. All receipts for repairs from damages can be kept along with pictures or other evidence of damage. Also keep in mind your cell phone and computer may be “crime scenes.”



Why this “contact/incident” made you feel concerned for your safety or upset

It is important to document the specific fear or emotional distress the incident caused you. This is primarily focusing on your immediate reaction to the contact or incident. Also, be certain to explain the context of the incident, including past threats or behaviors that make this particular incident seem so frightening or harmful to you. The log is a good place to help explain how certain actions convey threats of harm. However, it is important to try to stick to the facts and try not to add any details that are not necessary.

Remember that police and others do not know the stalker as well as you do and you may need to interpret the behavior and what it means.

Stalking Documentation Log Example

DATE	TIME	DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT & LOCATION	WITNESS NAME(S), CONTACT & EVIDENCE COLLECTED	POLICE CALLED (BADGE #) OTHER AGENCY NOTIFIED	POLICE/ OTHER AGENCY RESPONSE	HOW THE INCIDENT AFFECTED YOUR LIFE	FEAR AND EMOTIONAL IMPACT
Feb 5, 2017	10pm	Walked outside of my house to go to the grocery store and I surprised him because I guess he had been in the bushes trying to see into my house	None	Yes, #571	No report taken	I am afraid to walk out of my house I cannot go out at night anymore which creates a hardship because I don't have time during the day to grocery shop	Afraid of being physically attacked. He has attacked me before and I don't know what he will do again—maybe even something worse Angry that I am a prisoner in my home.
Feb 8, 2017	4pm	I got off work and my tires were slashed and my car was keyed. Had to call tow truck. Was late to pick up the kids.	Co-workers saw tires slashed Sam Smith Mary Brown Have pictures and bill for repairs	No, what's the point? No proof		It cost me \$400 and my kids are now afraid that I won't be able to pick them up. I am concerned my work might get rid of me because of his harassment	I am angry and frustrated because I don't have the money to spend. I am tired of this constant harassment! I am afraid I will be fired. I am concerned about the health and well-being of my kids



I don't want to write everything down; I just want it to go away!



Many victims of stalking, harassment, or bullying just want to move on with their lives.

Writing about everything the stalker is doing can be uncomfortable, hard, and time consuming. Unfortunately, ignoring or reasoning with the stalker often does not deter the stalker. Stalkers often persist in making life miserable for their target. This is why it is so critical to take active control of your safety and to document everything that the stalker does.



Find someone who can support you during this process

Having a close and trusted friend or family member or an advocate who can support you during this process is critical. He or she may be able to help you maintain the log and to provide the emotional support that you need.



One key to making this work for you is to find some way to document or track the stalker's actions in a manner that is comfortable for you

It may mean keeping a small notebook in your purse and pull out any time you need it. Or you can document the events on a formal documentation log or in a password protected file on your computer or phone. Choose the easiest, safest, and most comfortable way to record what is happening so that you document the stalking as consistently as possible (including the elements that were mentioned above for each incident). It is important to see the whole picture and pattern of stalking behaviors. Also be sure to keep back-up copies (either electronically or in paper form) in case something happens to your original.

Is it safe for me to write all this down and keep it?

Safety must be kept as your primary concern at all times. You will want to keep your log in a safe place, with a trusted friend or family member, or you may want to keep it electronically and password protected.

It is also important to stick to the facts when documenting the incidents. Try to keep emotion and other details out of the log except where necessary to document the impact the stalking has had on you and your family. Keep in mind the information in the log could potentially be used as evidence by police or the courts and if this happens information in the log may be seen by the stalker, the stalkers lawyer, or the stalkers family.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. About 1 in 6 women and 1 in 19 men will be stalked in their lifetime. Over 6 million people are stalked in the U.S. every year. Stalking is linked to partner violence and sexual assault.

Below are some resources you can contact for more information:

The Stalking and Harassment Assessment and Risk Profile (SHARP)

www.StalkingRisk.com

www.CoerciveControl.Org

www.OutRageUs.Org

National Stalking Resource Center

www.ncvc.org/src

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-7233

www.thehotline.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline

1-800-656-4673

<http://www.rainn.org>

National Network to End Domestic Violence

www.nnedv.org