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- As a society, we aren't taught very much about stalking.
- We mostly learn about stalking through how it's presented in media.

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- It's essential to recognize that the media does not cause stalking.
- Casually using the term "stalking" does not cause stalking.
- Many people are exposed to the same media and language and do not choose to stalk.
- Only perpetrators are responsible for their behavior.

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- You may have heard people use the word "stalking" casually in conversation, especially about their use of social media.
- Consider this example --
 - Let's say you run into a friend you haven't seen in a while.
 - S/he says: "I was totally Facebook stalking you and I saw you went to Mexico – it looked awesome!"
- **Is this stalking? Why or why not?**
- Based on the information we have, assuming these people know each other,

this is not stalking because it is not scary for a friend to look at pictures that you posted on social media.

- **Why does it matter that the term “stalking” is used casually?**
 - It dilutes the meaning of the word.
 - Stalking is underreported and misunderstood.

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- Again, the media does not cause stalking.
- However, the messages that media sends can create a warped landscape in which stalking is minimized, normalized, accepted and/or laughed off.
- A lot of media on stalking is from the stalker’s perspective and shows hopeless romantics with good intentions.
 - This builds empathy with the perpetrator and may lead us to make excuses for stalkers and/or assume the best about them
 - Instead, we should be focusing on how victims feel about stalking and empathizing with them.
- Victims may minimize or dismiss their experiences instead of taking early warning signs seriously.
- Friends and potential supports – including law enforcement and service providers -- may underreact to a victim’s concerns, treating stalking as “awkward” or “romantic”

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The Fantasy	The Reality
The stalker is an attractive stranger or "secret admirer."	The stalker is usually known to the victim and is most often a current or former intimate partner.
The stalker has only good and pure intentions, usually romantic.	Stalkers have different motivations, but often intend to scare their victims and/or do not stop when the victim is scared.
The stalker's actions range from sexy to flattering to harmless.	Stalking can escalate quickly and often co-occurs with or predicts serious violence.
The stalker's target should feel amused, flattered and/or affectionate towards the stalker.	Many stalking victims report feeling extreme fear and emotional distress.

- Stalking in media often creates a fantasy of stalking that is different than the reality.
 - Stalkers are often presented as attractive strangers or secret admirers with good intentions.
 - In reality, stalkers are usually known to the victim, intend to cause fear and are likely to become threatening and/or violent.

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www.StalkingAwareness.org

- * Training modules
- * Victim resources
- * Practitioner guides
- * Webinars

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- For more information on the crime of stalking, visit SPARC at www.StalkingAwareness.org
 - SPARC does NOT provide direct services to victims.