

Scenario 1: Coffee



You receive a call. A woman is crying and gasping, struggling to speak on the other end. When she finally calms down, she says:

“There’s a cup of coffee in my car.”

In your group, discuss:

1. What is your initial reaction to hearing this (i.e., do you feel alarmed? Confused? Annoyed?)
2. Does this caller seem rational to you? Why or why not?
3. Does this call seem urgent to you? Why or why not? Do you think a friend, police, and/or campus responders would find this call urgent?
4. What possible situation(s) might be occurring that would cause this level of panic about a cup of coffee?

After you’ve discussed, turn the page to learn about what really happened in this case.

Scenario 1: Coffee

Eventually, the victim says:

“She’s here.”

It turns out that the caller is a stalking victim who recently relocated. She did not believe that her stalker ex-girlfriend – who has threatened her repeatedly and physically abused her in the past -- knew where she was.

When she left for class this morning, there was a cup of coffee in her car with the pet name her ex uses for her on it.

In your group, discuss:

1. Does this new information change your perception of the situation? If so, how?
2. What message might the stalker be trying to send?

Be ready to summarize your discussion for the larger group.

Scenario 2: Facebook Post

You receive a call. A woman sounds highly agitated and angry. She is breathing heavily and almost yelling at you. She says:

“He just posted a photo of himself in a tuxedo at the diner!”



In your group, discuss:

1. What is your initial reaction to hearing this (i.e., do you feel alarmed? Confused? Annoyed?)
2. Does this caller seem rational to you? Why or why not?
3. Does this call seem urgent to you? Why or why not? Do you think a friend, police, and/or campus responders would find this call urgent?
4. What possible situation(s) might be occurring that would cause this level of panic about a photo?

After you've discussed, turn the page to learn about what really happened in this case.

Scenario 2: Facebook Post

You learn that the caller is a stalking victim. Her ex-boyfriend from high school has been posting daily photos of himself on Facebook wearing the tuxedo he wore when they went to prom together last year.

He posts photos in locations where she has recently been – she was just at that diner the night before. She is afraid because she knows this means he must be monitoring her, but she doesn't know how or why.

In your group, discuss:

1. Does this new information change your perception of the situation? If so, how?
2. The stalker did not directly contact the victim. Do you think he still may be a threat? Why or why not?

Be ready to summarize your discussion for the larger group.

Scenario 3: The TV's On

You receive a call. A man sounds panicked -- he is speaking quickly and keeps interrupting himself, unable to finish his sentences. Finally, he slows down and says:



“I got back to my dorm room and the TV's on the cooking channel.”

In your group, discuss:

1. What is your initial reaction to hearing this (i.e., do you feel alarmed? Confused? Annoyed?)
2. Does this caller seem rational to you? Why or why not?
3. Does this call seem urgent to you? Why or why not? Do you think a friend, police and/or campus responders would find this call urgent?
4. What possible situation(s) might be occurring that would cause this level of panic?

After you've discussed, turn the page to learn about what really happened in this case.

Scenario 3: The TV's On

The caller's name is Justin, a freshman who never got along with his former roommate, Matt. Matt transferred dorms after Justin complained to his RA about Justin constantly watching TV loudly at odd hours, especially the cooking channel.

About a week after he left, Matt began leaving Justin angry voicemails and sending texts about how unfair it was that he had to move. Justin blocked his number. Matt then contacted Justin over WhatsApp. Justin blocked him. Justin believes that Matt broke into the dorm room and is trying to send him a message.

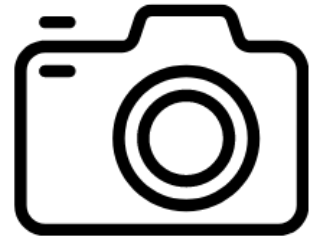
In your group, discuss:

1. Does this new information change your perception of the situation? If so, how?

Be ready to summarize your discussion for the larger group.

Brainstorm: SURVEILLANCE

Write as many surveillance behaviors that a stalker might engage in as you can think of below. Consider how stalkers may stalk in-person, through technology, and how third parties may become involved.



Be ready to summarize your discussion for the larger group.

Brainstorm: LIFE INVASION



How might a stalker show up in a victim's life without that victim's consent? Consider different aspects of a victim's life and how stalkers may be invasive in-person and/or through technology.

Be ready to summarize your discussion for the larger group.

Brainstorm: INTERFERENCE

How might a stalker interfere with a victim's life? Consider how stalkers might sabotage, attack, humiliate, or otherwise impact a victim's daily life or reputation, both in-person and online.



Be ready to summarize your discussion for the larger group.

Brainstorm: INTIMIDATION

How might a stalker intimidate a victim? Consider the different threats that a victim may be afraid of and how a stalker might communicate them, both in person and/or through technology.



Be ready to summarize your discussion for the larger group.

CAMPUS STALKING CASE STUDY: CAITLIN MATHIS

Transcript from "48 Hours: The Murder of Jackie Vandagriff," airdate 1/16/21. Edited for length and clarity. Used for educational purposes with permission from CBS.



Caitlin Mathis. CBS.

Caitlin Mathis: He would always get me flowers. Always. Especially if he had something to be sorry about.

Narrator: Charles Bryant lived some 20 miles away. But he had been making frequent visits to Denton, trying to rekindle a relationship with his ex-girlfriend, Caitlin Mathis, who had recently moved there to attend the University of North Texas.

Caitlin: He was just trying to win me back and I was just like, nothing is going to work.

Narrator: Caitlin's involvement with Bryant had begun 3 months earlier, in June, in the town of Grapevine, when he came into the restaurant where Caitlin was working as a server.

Caitlin: The day that I met him was the day after I graduated high school. He had lots of muscles and tattoos, which kind of interested me at the time.

Narrator: Bryant was then 29, working as a bartender and personal trainer. And Caitlin ran headlong into the relationship with Charles Bryant, that summer of 2016. Within weeks, Caitlin was having serious doubts of her own about Bryant.

Caitlin: That's when I started to see these warning signs. That he was manipulative, he was a bit of a narcissist. He thought very highly of himself. He would say things like, "oh, you'll never find anyone better than me." It was toxic. And he was toxic.

Narrator: In mid-August 2016, Caitlin broke up with Bryant. She thought that was the last she'd see of him. But the next day, he showed up, uninvited, at her mother's house.

Caitlin: And somehow, he convinced me to get back with him. He was trying to say, "oh, I can work on this, and I can be better," and making all these promises.

Narrator: But Caitlin realized she wasn't interested in promises.

Caitlin: That was one of the things that my mom taught me: people do not change, and you can't change someone. At that point, I was just waiting for the perfect time to end things.

Narrator: And a little more than a week later, after Caitlin moved away to school, she told Bryant it was over, again. Later that night, police found him on campus.



Caitlin Mathis and Charles Bryant. CAITLIN MATHIS.



CAMPUS STALKING CASE STUDY: CAITLIN MATHIS

Captain Polk: Just by sheer coincidence, I had made a traffic stop and he was driving that vehicle.

Narrator: Captain Jeremy Polk was then a Lieutenant for the UNT campus police. He pulled Bryant over early in the morning of August 24th.

Captain Polk: I thought he was an intoxicated driver, by the way he was driving, and that was my focus.

(Captain Polk in the body camera footage: So right now, I have to place you under, you know, arrest. So, you can just remain seated. It's all good.)

Narrator: Bryant was not over the legal limit. He was charged with a few outstanding traffic tickets and they let him go. Later that same day, he was back on Caitlin's campus again.

Caitlin: He actually knocked on the door of my dorm room. He didn't know, prior to, where I live and he said, "oh, your name is on the door."

Reporter interviewing Caitlin: Did that creep you out?

Caitlin: It did! At that point, I was scared.

Narrator: Caitlin got him out of there and called campus police. Captain Polk recognized Bryant's name on the report and went along to interview Caitlin the next day.

Captain Polk: She told us things like, "I just did not like the way Charles spoke to me. I did not like the way he treated me." And I made that choice then and there, I would do anything I could to help her with this situation.

Narrator: Captain Polk issued a no trespass order, banning Charles Bryant from the UNT Campus. But once again, Bryant would not take no for an answer.

Caitlin: First day there, and he walked through the door. And my heart just dropped to the bottom of my stomach.

Narrator: It was August 31st, 2016. A week since Charles Bryant had tracked Caitlin Mathis down at her new dorm. Now he was invading her space again. Coming into her new restaurant on her first day of work.

Caitlin: I was like, "I just want you to leave."

Reporter interviewing Caitlin: What did he say to that?

Caitlin: He didn't really say anything. He looked upset. My new co-workers, they were like, "yeah, he was here yesterday looking for you."

Narrator: Caitlin asked her manager to keep Bryant out. But her manager said there was nothing he could do.

Caitlin: [So, I said,] I can't work here. I don't feel safe enough to work here.

Narrator: Caitlin went back to her old job, a half hour's drive away. Her mother found it all hard to watch from a distance.

CAMPUS STALKING CASE STUDY: CAITLIN MATHIS

Caitlin's mom: I said, "come home!" It was my motherly instinct to protect her, and in order to protect her, I had to have her with me.

Narrator: But Caitlin thought she'd be safe in her dorm. A week later, on September 6th, what would have been their 3-month anniversary, Bryant was back, yet again.

Caitlin: He showed up to my dorm, knocked on my door. And at this point, I was shaking. I'm all alone. I, uh, actually hid in my suitemate's closet.

Reporter interviewing Caitlin: You hid?

Caitlin: Yes. When I was on the phone with the police, they were like, "we can't hear you, you need to speak up." And I was just afraid that he was going to hear my voice. And I did hear him say, "Caitlin, I know you're in there, just open up. I have something for you. And I'm like, "God, what, what do you have for me? I don't want it."

Narrator: Bryant left flowers and a 2-page letter. When police arrived, he was gone.

Caitlin in the body camera footage: I heard him say, "Hey, it's Charles. I have something for you."

Officer in the body camera footage: But you know for sure it was him?

Caitlin in the body camera footage: Yeah, I know it was him.

Narrator: Police found him outside, 10 minutes later...



After another visit to ex-girlfriend Caitlin Mathis' dorm, Charles Bryant was arrested for trespassing by University of North Texas campus police on September 6, 2016. CBS.

Officer in the body camera footage: You go to school here?

Bryant in the body camera footage: No.

Officer in the body camera footage: What's your name?

Narrator: ...Now in running clothes. And arrested him for trespassing.

Officer in the body camera footage: You know you're not supposed to be up here, right?

Narrator: Bryant posted bond and was released within hours. Although Caitlin had already blocked him on her phone, email,

and social media, he created a new email address and wrote to her later that same day: here I am, heartbroken and with a criminal record, for bringing the girl I love flowers.

Caitlin: He was telling his roommate that I was the crazy one in this relationship. So all of his friends were kind of coming at me, and they were like, why, you need to like, drop these charges against him.

Narrator: By September 13, Bryant was back in Denton. Just a half mile from Caitlin's dorm, in an area she had told him about back when they were still dating.



CAMPUS STALKING CASE STUDY: CAITLIN MATHIS

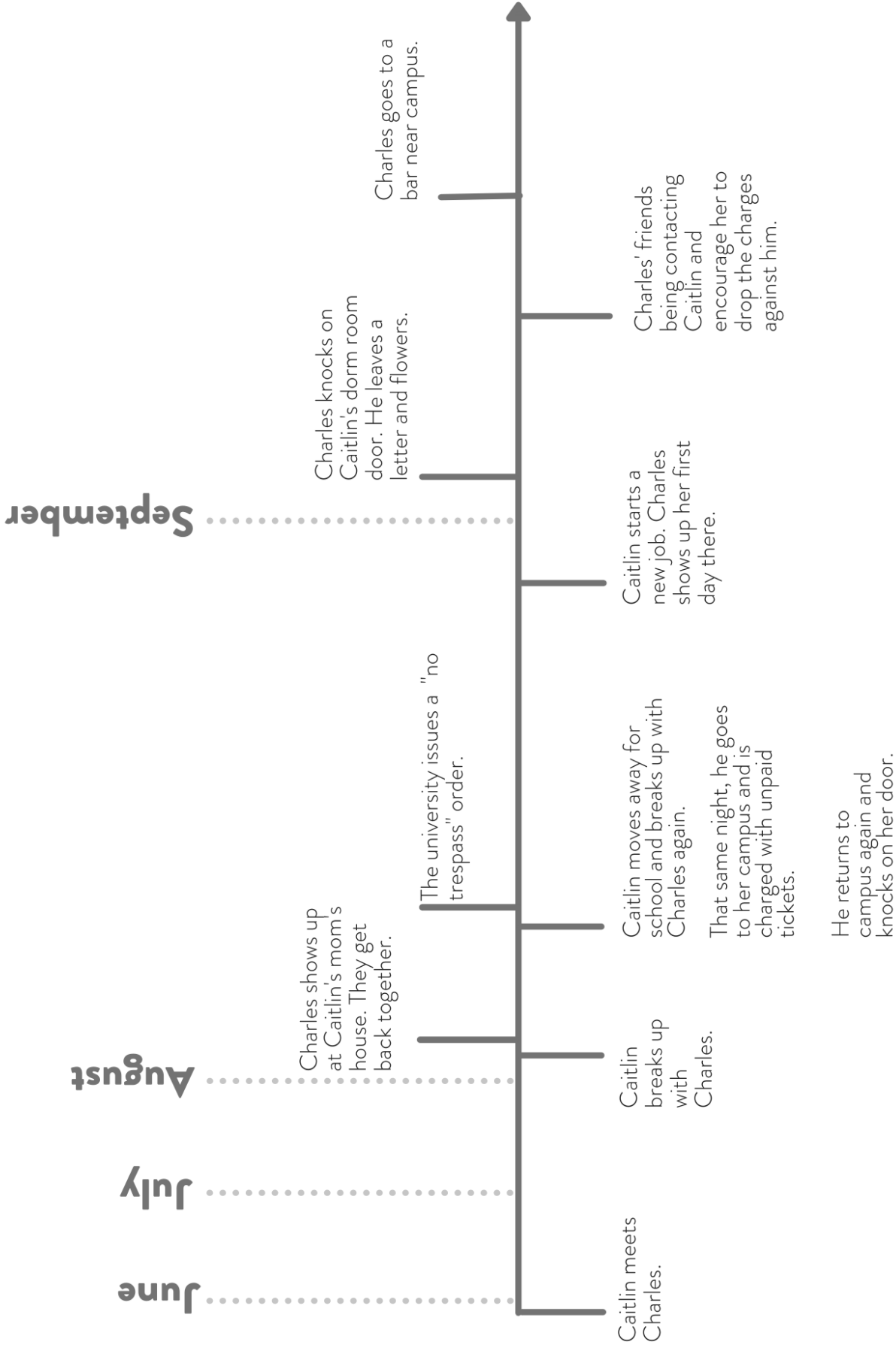
Caitlin: I was talking about going up to Fry Street, and like, meeting new people.

Narrator: Bryant went to Fry Street Public House that night, at about 7pm.

Caitlin was right to be afraid. That evening, Charles met Jackie Vandagriff. Jackie looked very similar to Caitlin. Charles brutally murdered Jackie that night. The next day, he sent Caitlin a friend request from Jackie's account.

Full video available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jackie-vandagriff-murder-targeted-killer-ex-48-hours/>

Timeline: Caitlin Mathis



Supporting Loved Ones Experiencing Stalking

Most victims of stalking talk to a friend, family member, or someone else they know and trust about the situation before pursuing any sort of professional or legal help. If a stalking victim talks to you, your response makes a huge difference in if they feel validated and/or seek help.

These tips can help you respond:

Believe and validate victims.

- Don't question or minimize what they tell you.
- For example, don't say "well maybe they just miss you" or "they probably didn't realize it was bothering you."
- Instead, say "that sounds scary" or "I can see why that would be upsetting."

Focus on the offender's actions, not the victim's responses.

- Even well-intentioned friends can accidentally blame victims.
- Don't ask questions such as "why did you respond to that text message?"
- Focus on the stalker's actions, for instance, "It is not right that they kept texting you."
- Nothing the victim did justifies the stalker's behavior.
 - Remind victims that this is not their fault.

Support the victim and encourage them to seek help and [document the stalking](#).

- Thank them for trusting you enough to have the conversation.
- Help the victim think through options – like learning more about stalking on the SPARC website, reaching out to local service providers, or calling police.
 - Victims may or may not want to take action. Respect their choices.

Respect the victim's privacy.

- Do not share any information about the victim with the stalker.
- Ask the victim who else they have told and respect their wishes about who to share this information with.

Refer them to resources to make an individual safety plan and learn more about stalking.

- Victim Connect. [VictimConnect.org](https://www.victimconnect.org). 855-4-VICTIM.
Victim Connect can refer victims to local services.
- [CoerciveControl.org](https://www.coercivecontrol.org)
A free, research-based assessment -- the Stalking & Harassment Assessment and Risk Profile (SHARP) -- can help victims determine the risk in their situation and provides suggestions for safety.

- Stalking Prevention, Awareness, & Resource Center (SPARC) of AEquitas
[StalkingAwareness.org](https://www.stalkingawareness.org)
SPARC provides information on stalking, including some general safety planning suggestions, statistics, and other information.
- National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) Safety Net
[TechSafety.org](https://www.techsafety.org)
This free app helps to educate the public about digital privacy and safety tools.

Check In.

- Stalking cases can last a long time, and your loved one's reactions, wants, needs, and feelings might change over time.
- Continue to check in and be a source of support. Ask questions like, "How can I help you feel safer?"
- Ask the victim how they feel the safest being contacted and use that medium to contact them. Some stalkers monitor victims' social media accounts, phones, and/or other forms of digital communication.