

TALKING STALKING: TIPS FOR PREVENTION/AWARENESS EDUCATORS

INTRODUCTION – WHY NAME STALKING?

Stalking is a serious, prevalent, and dangerous crime that impacts every community in the United States. While awareness and public discussion of intimate partner violence and sexual assault have increased in recent years, stalking remains frequently misunderstood and rarely discussed – both within the fields of domestic and sexual violence and among the broader general public.

It is essential for victims, survivors, service providers, and the criminal justice system to be able to identify and name stalking. Stalking is a unique crime that calls for particularized safety planning, investigation, charging, and prosecution, as well as the development and implementation of policies and protocols to ensure an effective response. For victims, it can be very empowering to accurately name their experiences as “stalking;” it enables them to make sense of what they are going through and helps them identify and seek appropriate help and resources.

A collective community response is required to end stalking. Friends and family members are usually the first people a stalking victim talks to about what’s going on and their responses heavily influence whether or not a victim seeks further help. When friends, family, neighbors, teachers, mentors, and colleagues know how to identify stalking, they are better able to support victims and help keep them safe.

Dating abuse and/or sexual assault educators have an incredible opportunity to increase knowledge about this commonly co-occurring crime. With this guide and the referenced materials, SPARC hopes to assist educators in their essential work to raise awareness of stalking.

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES:

- Strategies to incorporate stalking education into existing SA and DV programming
- Resources for workshops specifically focused on stalking
- Activities, videos, and other resources that can serve as building blocks for your own program

Please reach out to the Stalking Prevention, Awareness & Resource Center (info@stalkingawareness.org) with any questions or for additional assistance.

WHAT IS STALKING?



NAME/IDENTIFY STALKING.

Stalking is generally defined as a pattern of behavior targeted at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear. Fear is central to the definition of stalking. Common stalking behaviors include (but are not limited to) following, repeated contact, surveillance, spreading rumors, and threats.

RECOGNIZE THAT STALKING OFTEN CO-OCCURS WITH THE ISSUES YOU'RE ALREADY EDUCATING ON.

Consider the behaviors and examples that you already use in your workshops to illustrate interpersonal violence – it's very likely that you're already talking about stalking! Simply explaining that "X behavior is also an example of stalking, a prevalent crime that may co-occur with dating violence/sexual assault" can be a major step in helping victims identify their experiences and seek more information. More specific suggestions are below.

If your organization provides information on sexual assault, intimate partner violence, harassment in the workplace, elder abuse, child abuse, and/or a variety of other issues, stalking is relevant to your topic. Adding some statistics and/or examples about the intersection of stalking with your main topic can be an easy and time-efficient way to incorporate stalking into your educational efforts.

PROVIDE RESOURCES, EXAMPLES, AND VICTIM/SURVIVOR STORIES.

Consider the information and materials that you disseminate during presentations, on social media, and/or your website. Is information about stalking included? Do you define what it is? When providing case scenarios, do you ensure that your examples feature stalking? Do you link to Victim Connect or to local resources that address stalking? Make stalking part of the conversation.

UNDERSTANDING STALKING

While you do not have to be an expert on stalking, educators should have basic knowledge about the definition, dynamics, and prevalence of stalking. Please consider reviewing the following resources:

- [Stalking: Definition and FAQs](#)
- [Stalking Fact Sheet](#)
- [Webinar – Stalking: Know It, Name It, Stop it](#)
- [Understanding Stalking Brochure](#)

INCORPORATING STALKING INTO EXISTING DV AND SV PROGRAMMING



Many educators are given limited time to present on a variety of substantive and complex topics. If you are not able to dedicate an entire program to the topic of stalking, please consider the following ways to incorporate stalking into existing training.

ADD ONE SLIDE ON STALKING.

If possible, add one slide with very basic information on stalking. Sample below ([and available for download here](#)).

The Crime of Stalking: Sample Slide

- * A pattern of behaviors that causes fear.
- * Can include unwanted contact (text, phone, etc.), following, showing up, spreading rumors and more.
- * Usually, the stalker is a current or ex romantic partner, friend or acquaintance.
- * Stalking may happen during a relationship or after a relationship ends.

Stalkers can escalate their behaviors quickly and be dangerous. Seek help if you or someone you know is experiencing stalking.

IDENTIFY STALKING WHEN EDUCATING ON RELEVANT ABUSIVE BEHAVIORS.

Many behaviors that are often described as “emotional abuse,” including (but not limited to) texting or calling constantly, surveillance, tracking using technology, demanding constant check-ins, asking friends/family/colleagues where the victim is and following, are also examples of stalking behavior. In a presentation on dating abuse or domestic violence, simply identifying these behaviors as stalking can easily convey that stalking is a distinct crime and form of victimization.

Emotional Abuse

- Yelling, name-calling and put downs
- Withholding affection
- Blaming you for things that are not your fault
- Damaging your property
- Spreading rumors
- Texting or calling you excessively
- Following you, waiting for you or watching you
- “Keeping tabs” on you through social media, tracking or asking friends/family where you are

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SAMPLE SPEAKING NOTES ON STALKING

(Best Practice: Speak about stalking after emotional abuse)

- Many emotionally abusive behaviors can also be categorized as stalking.
- Stalking is a crime.
- Stalking can happen in a relationship as a type of emotional abuse, or it can happen outside a romantic relationship. The stalker could be a partner, friend, neighbor, or even a stranger.
- Stalking is scary and often becomes dangerous.
- If you're experiencing stalking, you may want to seek help (provide resources).
- Specifically identify stalking in your case studies, survivor stories, and examples. Is there a story/case study that you use in your trainings? Does it involve stalking? If so, articulate it. Simply saying “the offender also stalked the victim – [list of behaviors] – and it’s important to realize that stalking can be a dangerous predictor of violence and even murder” can be powerful.

For instance, campus educators often tell the dating abuse story of Yeardley Love, a lacrosse player at the University of Virginia who was murdered by her abusive ex-boyfriend (George Huguely) in 2012. This is an opportunity to educate on stalking, as the perpetrator also engaged in stalking behavior including (but not limited to) sending threatening e-mails and following her.

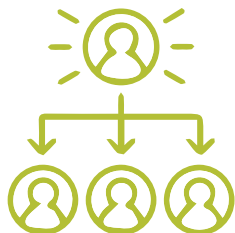
Analyze the examples that you use for any identifiable stalking behaviors and highlight them as such.

INCORPORATE STALKING EXAMPLES INTO BYSTANDER INTERVENTION EDUCATION.

Bystander intervention education can and should include examples of stalking, particularly when discussing cultural change/social norms. Just as learners are encouraged to be active bystanders who say something when they witness peers being abusive, they can “call out” stalking behaviors as well and try to change the norms. For example: “Hey, stop asking her roommate where she is – she’ll text you if she wants to” or “It’s not right to look through his phone like that.” These can be incorporated in trainings as well as public awareness campaigns.

There are limitations to including stalking in bystander intervention education. Stalking is a pattern of behaviors, so the incident-based intervention scenarios campuses often use for sexual assault (i.e., “You notice an upperclassman plying a freshman with drinks at a party”) are typically not quite as relevant. Bystanders could be encouraged to step in if they witness an act of stalking, but should also recognize they are probably only impacting one act in a pattern of behavior.

LEADING A SEPARATE WORKSHOP OR TRAINING ON STALKING



Stalking is a complex and important topic, and participants can benefit from longer trainings that focus on stalking specifically. Activity-based sessions should be contextualized with some basic information on stalking. Consider [this short lesson](#) (10 simple slides total with speaking notes) on stalking to frame your activity/activities.

COMPLETE SCRIPTED CURRICULA AT STALKINGAWARENESS.ORG

SPARC has two complete stalking public awareness trainings with slides and speaking notes free and [available for download](#) on the website. One is designed to inform the general public, and the other is for professionals in the DV field. The recommended time needed for both of these presentations is one hour.

Materials are free to download, edit and utilize, simply credit SPARC. Please include this citation: These materials are provided courtesy of the Stalking Prevention, Awareness & Resource Center (SPARC) of AEquitas, funded by the DOJ Office of Violence Against Women.

UNDERSTANDING STALKING THROUGH MEDIA

Using media can be an engaging way to encourage participants to think critically about an issue and the myths surrounding it. In popular media, stalking is often shown as romantic, harmless, and/or funny. There are many problematic media portrayals of stalking worth analyzing.

Resources on popular media and stalking:

- [These slides from SPARC \(with speaking notes\)](#) highlight some of the impacts of media normalization of stalking. These can be used to help build your session.
- [Discussion questions](#) for the Lifetime/Netflix series *You*.

The popular Lifetime/Netflix show *You* focuses on intimate partner stalking. Consider facilitating a conversation around these questions.

- *Pop Culture Detective: Stalking for Love* [This video](#) highlights and analyzes the trope of stalking as a form of love.
- Trailers and clips from music videos, film and TV. From cartoons to romantic comedies to superhero films, there are many examples of stalking in media. Typically, the stalking behavior is framed as harmless, funny, cute or romantic – it is almost never named or explored for the dangerous crime it really is. Brainstorm some examples in your community or reach out to SPARC for suggested examples.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING TRAININGS ON STALKING PROGRAM



Short Videos with victim and survivor stories are another powerful way to educate on stalking. You could build a short program or discussion around a video for a stand-alone presentation or incorporate the video into an existing workshop. To the right are a few video clips to consider.

To best meet the needs of your community, you may want to search for stalking case examples on your own that reflect your location and/or population (i.e., college campuses). Reach out to SPARC if you are seeking examples.

Real Fear, Real Crime: The Peggy Klinke Story

Produced by the Stalking Resource Center and Lifetime Television, this **18-minute training video** was created in response to the murder of stalking victim Peggy Klinke by a former partner.

Stalking Videos and Discussion Guides from OutrageUs.org

Designed with the domestic violence field in mind, this **7-part mini docuseries** (with videos ranging from 2 – 8 minutes) features survivors, law enforcement, and victim advocates discussing the dynamics and impacts of intimate partner stalking as well as tools to fight back. Each video has a discussion guide.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

Including a participatory activity or two in a stalking workshop can help engage your audience and reduce the amount of lecture to prepare.

1. Stalking Behavior Cards

These cards can be adapted for your audience, printed, cut out, and used for a variety of activities.

Sample Activity with Behavior Cards

(Note: This activity should be used along with slides defining stalking and providing more information.)

In pairs or small groups, choose up to 5 cards, one at a time. Consider each card as part of a pattern of behavior/course of conduct from the same victim.

After each card you select, discuss the following questions as a group:

1. How would you feel if this happened to you or to a friend? Scared? Confused? Flattered? Annoyed?
2. Does this seem like a stalking case?
3. Is this potentially criminal behavior? Why or why not?
4. What are some ways that you could plan for safety?

ACTIVITY IDEAS

2. Stalking Behavior Brainstorm

Stalkers engage in a variety of behaviors to scare their victims. Ask participants to brainstorm stalking behaviors that could be considered under one of the categories listed to the right, then ask participants to share what they discussed. These categories are from *Stalking: A Multidimensional Framework for Assessment and Safety Planning*.

Surveillance	Life Invasion	Interference	Intimidation
List examples of how the stalker acts to watch, track, and/or monitor the victim.	Provide examples of how the stalker “shows up” and invades the victim’s victim does not want the stalker to be there.	How is the stalker interfering in the victim’s life? What is the victim losing or afraid to lose as a result of the stalker’s behavior?	In what ways is the stalker threatening the victim?



3. How Does Stalking Look? Sound? Feel?

Give participants drawing materials (ideally, large pieces of flipchart paper and writing implements) and a time limit. You may wish to hang paper around the room with these three different questions so that attendees move from one chart to another.

In small groups, ask them to draw or write answers to the following questions from a victim’s perspective and/or from an outsider’s (like a friend) perspective:

- 1) What does stalking look like?
- 2) What does stalking sound like?
- 3) What does stalking feel like?

Have participants report out. Highlight the diverse ways that victims may experience stalking and the contextual nature of stalking, noting the following points:

- **Stalking behaviors often have specific meanings between stalkers and their victims.**

For example, a stalker might say “I’ll send you roses the day I kill you.” When the victim receives the roses, the victim is terrified. Outsiders might remark how nice it is that they received roses. Alternatively, stalkers may be overtly threatening or violent.

- **Fear is essential to the definition of stalking.**

Many stalking victims feel scared, trapped, and like they are always looking over their shoulder.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

4. Romantic Pursuit? Bullying/Cliques? Stalking?

Stalking is a highly contextual crime. Hang signs on different walls in the room:

“Romantic Pursuit,” “Bullying/Cliques,” and “Stalking.” Read the following behaviors out loud and ask participants to choose under which heading the behavior belongs.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORS (note that these examples were written with a campus audience in mind.

Feel free to adapt or add any that are relevant to your audience):

The person...

- 1) Unexpectedly (and repeatedly) approaches you off campus: at the movies, out to coffee with your friends, at a party.
- 2) Brings flowers to every a cappella concert that you're in, leaves “good luck” and “congratulations” notes on your dorm room door.
- 3) Takes your phone and reads your texts, emails, and incoming chats.
- 4) Steals things like your textbooks and jacket so that you have to go ask for them back.
- 5) Transfers classes to be in yours.
- 6) Sends multiple texts a day to check in, regardless of whether or not you respond.
- 7) Finds embarrassing information about you online and shares it with others.
- 8) Watches where you go – in the cafeteria, between classes, in the library.
- 9) Hacks into your Instagram account and pretends to be you.
- 10) Tries to be friends with your friends and roommates without invitation.

Ask a few attendees to explain their responses to the larger group, then facilitate a discussion highlighting the contextual nature of stalking. The take-home point is to recognize that some of these may be stalking behaviors – particularly if they are scary, become a pattern and/or seem to be escalating. Since stalking is a pattern of behaviors that can escalate over time, sometimes fear doesn't attach until later and the first behavior(s) might seem innocent or easy to excuse. Participants should be encouraged to trust their instincts and think about at what point they would (or wouldn't) consider this a stalking pattern of behavior as the example behaviors increase.

Thank you for incorporating stalking into your essential education work. Do not hesitate to reach out to SPARC (info@stalkingawareness.org) for more guidance, feedback on curricula, suggestions for cases or media examples or to share the work that you're doing to raise awareness on stalking.

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