

DOMESTIC ABUSE RESOURCE

STALKING & HARASSMENT

Stalking is usually a course of conduct, not one dramatic event. Repeated “small” contacts can create a powerful message: I can reach you, find you or watch you whenever I want.

■ WHAT IT IS

Stalking and harassment involve repeated unwanted contact, monitoring, following or intrusion that causes fear, distress or a loss of safety. It can occur during a relationship, but risk and frequency may increase after separation.

LOOK FOR THE PATTERN

Focus on repetition, unwantedness and impact. A single message may seem ordinary; dozens of contacts across multiple channels, uninvited appearances and monitoring can become an escalating pattern of intrusion and fear.

■ THREE SIGNALS WORTH NOTICING

REPEATS

It keeps happening.

ESCALATES

The impact or consequences grow.

RESTRICTS

Freedom, safety or choice gets smaller.

A single incident can be confusing. Repetition, escalation and reduced freedom are often what make the wider pattern easier to see.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

One incident can be confusing. The pattern shows what life is becoming.

CONTINUE → WHAT IT CAN LOOK LIKE

RECOGNIZE THE BEHAVIOR

WHAT IT CAN LOOK LIKE

These examples are not a checklist or a diagnosis. The context matters: frequency, fear, consequences, escalation and whether one person is losing ordinary freedom or choice.

- Repeated unwanted calls, texts, emails, messages or contact through new accounts.
- Using shared children, legal processes or practical arrangements as a reason for excessive contact.
- Following, driving past, waiting near home or work, or repeatedly appearing where someone is likely to be.
- Monitoring social media, location data, vehicles or devices to track movement.
- Sending unwanted gifts, letters or deliveries after being asked to stop.
- Threatening, damaging property, leaving objects or creating signs that they have been nearby.
- Contacting friends, family, employers or new partners to obtain information or pass on messages.
- Using multiple methods of contact when one channel is blocked.

■ READ THE BEHAVIOR IN CONTEXT

ONE EVENT

Ask what happened in that moment and whether there was fear, force, pressure or intimidation.

THE PATTERN

Then ask what has been happening across weeks or months, especially when the other person resists or says no.

The useful question is not only “Did this happen?” It is “What does this behavior do to the other person over time?”

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Context matters. Notice what happens when a boundary is set.

CONTINUE → PATTERNS TO NOTICE

SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE

PATTERNS TO NOTICE

Patterns are often easier to recognize when you stop judging each incident separately. Look at what repeats, what escalates, what creates fear and what choices are gradually disappearing.

■ Contact continues after a clear request for it to stop or after a breakup.	■ Contact expands to friends, family, work, children or a new partner.
■ The person changes accounts, numbers or methods when blocked.	■ You change routes, schedules, social media use or daily routines because you expect them to appear.
■ They seem to know information about your movements that you did not share.	■ The behavior becomes more threatening, more frequent or more focused around separation.

■ WHY IT MATTERS

Stalking can create constant vigilance and can escalate unpredictably. Post-separation stalking is especially important to take seriously when combined with threats, prior violence, weapon access or escalating control. Laws and legal definitions vary by state.

MYTH “If they are not threatening you directly, it is just annoying contact.”	REALITY Repeated unwanted monitoring and contact can create fear and loss of freedom even when each individual contact sounds harmless.
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Healthy relationships can include conflict, mistakes and disagreement. The concern is a repeated pattern that creates fear, removes autonomy or changes behavior through pressure or control.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Look at the pattern: what repeats, escalates or changes behavior?

CONTINUE → CASE STUDY & PRACTICAL STEPS

ANONYMOUS COMPOSITE EXAMPLE

CASE STUDY

This composite combines common patterns and is written to protect privacy. It is not presented as one identifiable person or investigation.

After a person ended a relationship, their former partner began sending “just checking in” messages. When the person stopped replying, the former partner created new accounts, left gifts at the workplace and contacted mutual friends for updates. They occasionally appeared at places the person visited and claimed it was coincidence. None of the incidents seemed dramatic in isolation, and some friends thought the former partner was simply heartbroken. The person, however, began checking parking lots before getting out of the car, changed routes to work and stopped posting online because they felt watched.

■ WHAT TO NOTICE



Look at the course of conduct rather than whether each individual contact appears harmless.



Repeated unwanted contact can change how a person travels, works, socializes and uses technology.



Post-separation behavior deserves particular attention when boundaries are repeatedly ignored or access is being recreated through other people or accounts.

■ IF THIS IS HAPPENING

- If safe, preserve a dated log of contacts, appearances, messages, gifts and third-party approaches.
- Avoid prolonged back-and-forth communication if it is feeding the contact pattern or increasing risk.
- Review digital location sharing, account security and information that friends or family may be unintentionally sharing.
- Tell trusted people at home, work or school enough information to help them recognize unwanted contact.
- Consider professional safety planning and local legal advice, particularly if behavior is escalating or linked to threats.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

You do not need to explain away every incident before you are allowed to take a pattern seriously. Notice what repeats, what changes your behavior, and what happens when you set a boundary.