PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

Advanced Planning

First and foremost, you want to have a plan for safety. Have a plan in advance of a safe place you and your family can go (police or fire station, home of relative, friend, partner, etc.), if you become frightened or threatened. Acquaint yourself with stores in your area that are opened 24-hours, and that normally have a lot of people. Prevention and the safety of you and your family is the goal. Know in advance where you will go and what to do in an emergency situation.

You may want to keep a packed overnight bag and important records located at a friend or relatives house. You may even want to consider keeping important original documents in a safety deposit box at a bank.

Safety Precautions

- Never underestimate the stalker or the potential for danger.
- Treat all threats, either in person, by phone, or mail, as legitimate. Remember that a threat does not require words. An implied threat of black roses, a dead animal received in the mail, or a photograph with your image crossed out conveys a message loud and clear. Notify law enforcement immediately.
- Never attempt to return any correspondence or “gifts” you receive from the stalker. This can further escalate the situation. Even if you have decided not to prosecute, keep all correspondence or offerings as evidence. Place evidence in zip lock bags, date the bad, and handle the evidence as little as possible. Make sure to make copies of all correspondence and the envelope before you turn it over to law enforcement. Take photographs of larger items and print the date on the back.
- To determine if you are being followed while driving, make four left-hand or four right-hand turns. If you are being followed, lock all car doors and never get out of the car.
- Do not drive directly home if you are being followed. If the stalker did not know where you live, he/she will if you take him/her there. If you have a cellular phone, call the police immediately and let them know your destination. If you do not have a cellular phone, drive to the closest police or fire station and sound your car horn to attract attention.
- If possible, get the automobile tag number and description of the car, but don't put yourself or someone else in danger!
- If you suspect your auto may be tampered with, check for missing hubcaps, loosened lug nuts, slow leaks in tires, and check under the hood prior to driving. Look for anything out of the ordinary or suspicious. Also, pump your brakes and look under the car for brake fluid. If your suspicions are correct, get to a safe location and call law enforcement immediately. Do not attempt to drive the car, or tamper with evidence.
- If you have children, or if your child is being stalked, inform day care, school authorities, and/or their teachers of the potentially dangerous situation your child is in. If available, show them a picture of the stalker or provide a detailed description and include vehicle information. Tell them who has permission to pick up your child, and to be suspicious of strangers loitering nearby, or anyone asking questions.
- Never think twice about sounding your car horn to attract attention, deter a perpetrator, and get help.
- Always travel in groups or with a friend if possible.
- Inform everyone — your employer, coworkers, office security, apartment security, neighbors, friends, and family members about the stalker and events taking place. Everyone needs to know in order to help. Other people can be essential to catch the stalker, be a witness to authorities, and give you emotional support.
- If you have a picture of the stalker show it to neighbors, family, security, police, etc., and ask them to call law enforcement.
- If you don't have a picture, get a good description of the perpetrator, or consider keeping an inexpensive pocket camera handy in case he/she comes near you again. Never pursue or surveil the stalker to get a picture. A witness is much better proof and less potential danger.
- Tell all personal friends, family members, coworkers, and household members, not to release information about you, your address, or telephone number to anyone. Also, ask them to inform you of hang-up calls or suspicious people.
- If your mail is delivered to your residence, and you suspect mail tampering, purchase a locking mailbox or use a mail service. Also, notify the postal service and law enforcement. Mail theft and mail tampering is a federal crime.
- Ask law enforcement to periodically drive by your home.
- If you suspect the stalker may come to your home or attempt a break-in, keep a cellular phone with you at all times. This will prevent you from becoming cut off from help if telephone lines go down or are cut.
- Always carry some type of personal safety device, i.e. mace, pepper spray, aluminum flash light, etc. for protection.
A C-cell "police type" aluminum flash light, holding 4 or 5 batteries, can be used not only for visibility at night but also as a personal safety weapon. It’s a good idea to have one under the front seat of your car, in your home near the front door, or in your bedroom.

Realize that the stalker does not want to be seen, heard, or discovered by anyone. They usually work in silence and behind a wall of secrecy. The temptation for you to withdrawal and isolate is natural, but can be deadly, and works against you.

"Who then can so softly bind up the wound of another as he who has felt the same wound himself?"
— Thomas Jefferson