

STALKING AWARENESS

Stalkingriskprofile.com

What Is The Impact Of Stalking On Victims?

EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

- Denial, confusion, self-doubt, questioning if what is happening is unreasonable, wondering if they are over-reacting
- Frustration
- Guilt, embarrassment, self-blame
- Apprehension, fear, terror of being alone or that they, others or pets will be harmed.
- Feeling isolated and helpless to stop the harassment
- Depression (all symptoms related to depression)
- Anxiety, panic attacks, agoraphobia (frightened to leave the house, never feeling safe)
- Difficulty concentrating, attending and remembering things
- Inability to sleep – nightmares, ruminating
- Irritability, anger, homicidal thoughts
- Emotional numbing
- Symptoms of Post-traumatic Stress disorder e.g. hypervigilance (always on the lookout), flashbacks of frightening incidents, easily startled
- Insecurity and inability to trust others, problems with intimacy
- Personality changes due to becoming more suspicious, introverted or aggressive
- Self-medication alcohol/ drugs or using prescribed medications
- Suicide thoughts and/or suicide attempts

EFFECTS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Fatigue from difficulty sleeping, being constantly on guard, symptoms of depression
- Effects of chronic stress including headaches, hypertension
- Gastrointestinal problems –
- Fluctuations in weight due to not eating or comfort eating
- Development or exacerbation of pre-existing conditions e.g. asthma, gastric ulcers and psoriasis.
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Impact on health of increased use of alcohol, cigarettes or drugs
- Sexual dysfunction
- Physical injury due to not concentrating or being under the influence of substances
- Heart palpitations and sweating

EFFECTS ON WORK AND SCHOOL

- Deteriorating school/work performance
- Increased sick leave
- Leaving job or being sacked
- Changing career
- Dropping out of school – poorer education and career opportunities

EFFECTS ON SOCIAL LIFE

- Insecurity and inability to trust others impacting on current and future relationships and friendships,
- Problems with physical and emotional intimacy.
- Avoidance of usual activities e.g., going to the gym, going out.
- Isolation through trying to protect others, feeling misunderstood or psychological symptoms.
- Others withdrawing from the victim because they don't believe the victim, they are unable to cope with the victim's mental state or as a direct consequence of third-party victimization.
- Victim moving to a new area, changing their phone number, name or even their appearance.

EFFECTS ON FINANCES

- Loss of wages due to sick leave, leaving job or changing career.
- Costs incurred through legal fees.
- Expense of increasing home and personal security.
- Cost involved in repairing property damage.
- Seeking psychological counselling and medical treatment.
- Cost involved in breaking leases on rented properties.
- Expense of relocation.

WHAT MAY PREVENT A VICTIM FROM SEEKING HELP?

- Not understanding that what is happening to them is stalking and/or illegal.
- Trying to pretend that it is not happening.
- Believing that they should be able to deal with the situation, thinking that the stalker will see reason, or not wanting to get the stalker into trouble.
- Fear that others will think they are over-reacting or that they will be blamed for somehow having encouraged the stalker in the first place. The latter is particularly pertinent for those who have had a previous intimate relationship with the stalker, even if it was only brief or just a flirtation.
- Fears about how the stalker will respond either to them or those that they love or care for.
- Direct threats from the stalker
- Feeling isolated in their plight, believing that there is nothing that can be done to help them, or not knowing who to go to.
- Previous requests for help being ignored
- Fear of losing their job or the situation becoming more difficult when the stalking originates in the workplace.
- Financial limitations in regard to seeking legal advice or taking time off to seek help.
- Limited options in respect to changing their situation e.g. relocation to safer housing
- Language barriers.