An illustration featuring several hands of various skin tones (brown, tan, and light brown) holding each other in a circle, symbolizing community and support. The hands are rendered in a stylized, cartoonish manner with blue nail polish. At the bottom of the image, there are several blue leaves with dark blue veins, growing from a stem. The background is a solid light brown color.

HOW COMMUNITIES CAN SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF STALKING

SURVIVOR
GUIDES

A THRIVING THROUGH + MENSEN COLLABORATION



*We dedicate this guide to all survivors of violence,
to those who came before us,
to those we have lost,
and to those who stand with us to build a
future free of violence, abuse, stalking and oppression.*



This Guide Has Been Endorsed By:

[Ballet After Dark](#)

[Center on Halsted](#)

[The Network Advocating Against Domestic Violence](#)

[NYC Cyber Sexual Abuse Task Force](#)



The Network
ADVOCATING AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE





COLLECTIVE COLLABORATION

Many resources for stalking focus on victim safety, self-advocacy and the expansion of legal interventions. Yet, there are few pragmatic care tools that address how communities can intervene to support survivors of this violence.

Thriving Through and mensen collaborated to build this resource for people who are supporting a loved one who is experiencing stalking. This guide centers survivors, builds the strength and knowledge of survivors' support networks, and relieves some of the burden on people experiencing this form of abuse.

We believe that our communities can and should be sites of safety and healing. Ending violence within our communities requires that we engage one another to actively participate in dismantling cultures of shame, fear, silence, bystanding, victim blaming and individualism.

By building power with each other to intervene where violence exists, we create an infrastructure for a new world to live in.


We humbly present this guide as an offering to our communities.

survivorguides.org /// thrivingthrough.com /// mensenxoxo.com

Written By:
Thriving Through + mensen.

Design + Illustration:
mensen.

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INTRODUCTION

When someone you love is being stalked, it can be scary and confusing to know how to be there for them. **“How Communities Can Support Survivors of Stalking”** was developed by survivors to provide a clear, empathetic and effective care tool for communities.

Stalking is a pattern of behavior intended to create and instill fear in another person. It is a deliberate form of psychological, emotional and spiritual abuse* that is targeted at a person for the sole purpose of exerting power and control. Stalkers are intentional, purposeful and dangerous.

Stalking can take place in person, online and through other people and institutions. A person who is being stalked may sometimes not even be aware that they are actively experiencing this form of abuse and surveillance. While stalking can happen to anyone, it is more likely to occur before, during and after an intimate relationship.

When someone is aware that they are being stalked, they are living in a state of fear. Every decision they make is based on considering risk, assessing threat and protecting themselves. Survivors are always trying to act in the best interest of their safety and will often change their behavior to protect themselves. This may not always make sense to those around them.

Survivors measure their stalker’s ability to access them at any moment. Technology can provide unlimited points of access for a stalker. Even with the best intentions, friends, family and community members may not realize when they are jeopardizing a survivor’s safety or putting them at risk.

By supporting survivors in your life in intentional ways, you can help reduce their continued traumatization while creating a culture of safety.

We know you want to support your loved ones who are experiencing this abuse.

We hope this guide will help you do so.

On Language

People who experience stalking and abuse use many terms to refer to themselves. Some of these terms include "survivor," "victim," "target," "victim-survivor," or "sur-thriver."

People may identify with all or none of these.

In this guide, we use the terms "survivor" and "person being targeted."

People who are experiencing abuse may refer to the person who is responsible for it in many ways. These may include using the person's name, or other terms such as "stalker," "abuser," "harm-doer," "offender," "perpetrator," or "my ex". Sometimes people prefer to use code words to mask the identity of the person stalking them to help them cope through the experience.

In this guide, we refer to the person inflicting the abuse as "stalker" or "abuser."

We acknowledge that people who harm and people that are harmed do not exist solely within a binary. While anyone can engage in abusive behaviors, we use the terms "stalker" and "abuser" throughout this guide to name this violence, and to center the responsibility for ending it on the person doing the stalking.

Ask the survivor in your life what terms they are comfortable using to identify themselves. Respecting the language chosen by the person going through these experiences is an important way to help them feel a semblance of control.

How To Use this Guide

This guide can be read from beginning to end, or you can also skip throughout to the sections that are most relevant to you. In areas where there are related ideas in other parts of the guide, you'll notice the phrase (*see section*) to help direct you.

There are questions at the end of each section to guide you in self-discovery of how you want to be supportive and how you can offer support to your loved one.

You may come across terms that are new or unfamiliar to you. We have marked some of these terms with an asterisk (*), and brief definitions can be found in the glossary. We encourage you to continue to research ideas or concepts that may be new to you.

If you are reading this, you have likely been exposed to stalking or abuse in the life of someone you know. This can bring up a lot of feelings and concerns. Taking care of yourself is very important as you go through this material. You'll notice we've incorporated coloring pages throughout this resource at the beginning of each section. We encourage you to print the ones you like out and keep crayons or colored pencils nearby when you need a short mindfulness break.

The more widely this resource is shared, the more impact it can have. We provide a downloadable, printable and shareable PDF of this guide on our websites listed below. We encourage you to help us spread this resource far and wide amongst your communities.

DISCLAIMER: "How Communities Can Support Survivors of Stalking" is a framework for community care. The guide is intended as a supportive resource. It does not replace seeking mental health care or legal assistance. This guide is NOT legal advice.

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**BELIEVE
US**





BELIEVE US.

The absolute, number one, most important thing that survivors need from those around us is **to be believed**.

Believing survivors is the non-negotiable and absolute foundation upon which the strength of all of your support is built.

If your instinct is to discount, minimize or avoid facing the uncomfortable and terrifying truth that the survivor shares with you, the first thing you must do is examine this within yourself. This may be even harder if the stalker is someone you know or have also cared for.

We're Not "Crazy" - but Someone Wants You to Think We Are

People who are stalked are living in a reality marked by hypervigilance*, paranoia and fear. They may behave in a way that is formerly out of character for them. **The paramount experience most survivors report is "feeling crazy."**

It can be difficult to witness your loved one going through this, and it may cause you to hesitate as you learn about what is being done to them. Sometimes, you may just not want to believe what is happening because it is too upsetting. There may even be a part of you that would prefer to believe that the survivor is "crazy," "hysterical" or dishonest, because that would be easier than facing the truth.

Remember: false allegations of abuse and violence are incredibly rare.

Most survivors know the person stalking them, and many stalkers are serial abusers. It can be very hard to acknowledge that those among us can be simultaneously those who hurt us and the people we care about. This is particularly true when a person is abused by a loved one, family member or intimate partner. When stalking and abuse is exposed, community members can struggle to rectify their perception of the stalker with the adversarial antagonist that has been revealed.

This is because the stalker is a masterful manipulator.

There is no way to prevent stalking, but community members can help reduce further abuse and violence when they *start by believing*.

Trust the survivor when they tell you they “feel crazy” or that “things are off.” Trust your own instincts when you recognize that things are not “right.” Confronting these feelings and listening to intuitions are primary interventions. Discuss them and any other warning signs directly with the survivor.

Believing the survivor fortifies the trust between you. While your relationship may shift throughout the duration of this abuse, this foundation of trust will be the anchor you can both come back to. Believing what the survivor tells you about their experience is necessary to convey this trust.

The stalker is the only one who has the power to stop the stalking. However, you may be able to help avert or neutralize some of the harm if you communicate and act immediately to support the survivor.

If you want to support a survivor, ***you must begin by believing them.***

Credibility and Oppression

If you find yourself discounting, minimizing, or blaming the survivor, it is an important moment for you to have a deeper, honest conversation with yourself about who you determine is “credible” and who you are more likely to consider “hysterical,” “dramatic,” “dishonest” or otherwise untrustworthy.

White supremacy*, sexism*, racism*, anti-Blackness*, misogyny*, misogynoir*, transmisogyny*, wealth supremacy*, classism*, elitism*, ableism*, homophobia*, cis-centering*, xenophobia*, fatphobia*, sex-worker antagonism*, queerphobia* and biphobia* are just some of the interlocking systems of the power structure we all live within and under. Stalking is often a feature of hate violence*.

We are all influenced by some combination of oppression*, internalized oppression* and/or bias and this can show up when someone we love reports abuse. We are not “above it”-- we are of it. Each of us should conduct an internal examination to identify where we hold power and where it has been taken from us, and how that impacts how we perceive, interact with and treat other people.

While anyone can be stalked, people from oppressed communities are less likely to be believed or considered credible when reporting experiences of violence.

If you find yourself struggling to believe the survivor, ask yourself:

- Who do I consider to be a “reliable narrator”?
- Who do I tend to take less seriously or be more dismissive of?
- Where is my disbelief really coming from?
- How do I acknowledge, address and change my bias so I can show up for my loved one with integrity?

The ways we unknowingly reproduce oppression in our relationship with a survivor can be done through victim blaming* or victim shaming*. These are acts of collusion with the violence and gaslighting* of the stalker, which compounds and deepens the trauma* of the survivor.

For survivors, it can be difficult to explain to others the particular kind of agony and devastating harm that being disbelieved can cause. No one chooses to be terrified. No one wants this to be happening to them. In fact, survivors often struggle to wrap their own minds around what is happening, especially at first, and particularly if the stalker was someone they once loved or trusted. It is normal for a person to feel “crazy” while being stalked. When a survivor is navigating their experience of stalking, they are processing the all-encompassing upending of the reality and unreality of their lived experience.

Fully understanding the entirety of the psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical impact of stalking on your loved one is overwhelming. This is normal- it’s why you are reading this guide.

Even more than your understanding, survivors need you to *believe* them -- from the beginning.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Have I second guessed my loved one when they have told me their experiences?
- How can I talk with my loved one about their experience without letting my own feelings impact them in ways I don't intend?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- I believe you. How would you like me to show you that?
- How can I help you navigate what you are going through?
- What language would you like me to use when referring to you and your experience? What language would you like me to use to refer to the person causing you harm?



UNDERSTANDING STALKING







UNDERSTANDING STALKING

Stalking is not a single act- it is a course of conduct. Stalking is a pattern of covertly and overtly threatening and malicious *behaviors* intended to harm, control and cause substantial emotional distress*.

This constellation of behaviors may include acts that are clearly violent or dangerous. Other behaviors may appear to be mild, generous or even loving to those on the outside, while the person it is directed at will understand it as the threat it is intended to be. Stalking is a sign of coercive control*.

When stalking occurs in the context of an intimate relationship, it is intimate partner violence. This takes place within all communities and amongst all forms of gendered, non-gendered and familial relationships. Stalkers are typically someone the survivor knows.

Stalkers want power and control over the people they target. A common tactic of stalkers is to do something that may appear to others as benign in order to deliberately induce fear and terrorize those being targeted. For example, stalkers may make seemingly innocuous public statements that are designed to speak directly to the survivor to frighten them.

Stalkers shift their methods and usually employ a number of tactics at the same time. If there has been a close or intimate relationship, the stalker will have studied precisely how to send messages to the person they are targeting for maximum impact while still appearing harmless to others. Remember that these methods are calculated to cultivate fear into an audience of one- the survivor.

If you judge an incident involving the stalker to be ordinary, ask the survivor for their assessment. While you may not fully understand the threat, the best way to evaluate risk is the survivor's expression of concern or fear.

It can be confusing for the person who is being stalked to grasp what is happening to them when the methods appear invisible or covert. It is further disorienting when the stalking behaviors have aspects of performative affection, such as leaving flowers or other gifts loaded with intimate or manipulative meaning.

Stalkers may use the survivors' loved ones as tools to harm them, by threatening to hurt people in their life or calling for others to hurt them.

Defining Stalking

While there are state and federal laws prohibiting stalking, many factors need to come together before an abuser's actions fit these legal definitions.

For context, it wasn't until 1990 that any state in the US had an anti-stalking statute, after 22-year-old Jewish actor Rebecca Shaffer was murdered by a serial stalker who had targeted her for 3 years. It wasn't until 1996 that the federal government passed the Interstate Stalking Punishment and Prevention Act. These statutes faced a great deal of resistance. These debates have led to statutes becoming more specific and constrained. In turn, this has limited how we define stalking, and what it has to look like to be considered "serious."

It is important to note that while there are laws against stalking, this does not mean that these laws are uniformly or automatically enforced, or that all survivors have the ability to access these protections. Jurisdiction restrictions can limit the application of these laws.

Federal Law defines Stalking as:

- Placing another person in reasonable fear of death or serious bodily injury to themselves, immediate family members, or intimate partner
- Causing, attempting to cause, or could reasonably be expected to cause, substantial emotional distress* to the person they are targeting
- Acts with the intent to kill, injure, harass, intimidate another person
- Placing a person under surveillance in order to kill, injure, harass or intimidate that person

Cyber Stalking is Stalking:

- Using the internet, email, text messages or other electronic communications to stalk
- Any course of conduct or acts on the internet that places the victim in reasonable fear of harm, death, serious bodily injury, or emotional distress* to the victim or those close to them
- Harassment and threats communicated through computers, cell phone and other devices

Here are some examples to help you start to see the who, what, where and when of stalking. Stalking is expansive in the scope; keep in mind that it is constantly shifting.

Stalkers can include:

- partners
- boyfriends / girlfriends
- husbands / wives
- family members
- family member's romantic partners
- friends
- roommates
- neighbors
- bosses / supervisors
- colleagues / co-workers / employees
- professional affiliates
- community members
- peers
- acquaintances
- celebrities / public figures
- strangers

Some places where stalking can take place include:

- at home
- in the workplace
- schools and education spaces
- spiritual centers
- community spaces
- on the streets
- through the judicial system
- online
- through technology and devices

Stalking behaviors can be done physically and through technology, including:

- harassment / bullying
- threats
- sexual abuse
- following and tracking
- surveilling and monitoring
- intimidation and menacing
- defamation / character assassination
- unwanted contact / non-consensual communication
- stalking-by-proxy*
- showing up uninvited
- unwanted gifts
- contacting people connected to the survivor
- using pets to control
- damaging property
- image based abuse*
- sharing the survivor's personal identifying information
- financial / economic control

Stalking and Technology

Sometimes the tactics the abuser employs are readily recognized as stalking, such as physically following someone, or hiding in or near their home. Much more common, however, is stalking through anonymous means. Technology has made surveillance easier than ever. Instead of binoculars, stalkers can use street view on online maps.

Technology enables stalking.

It can be hard to see stalking behaviors, as these methods are in plain sight in our digital culture. To the benefit of stalkers, technology's continued advancement promotes anonymity with little to no oversight from the companies that capitalize on our reliance on their tools and platforms. This industry promotes and profits from tracking people through sharing locations, metadata* and our social networks- creating a playground for stalkers with limited recourse for exposure or accountability*.

While laws differentiate stalking and cyberstalking as crimes in certain states, the behaviors are actually one and the same. All technology and electronic devices can be used to stalk. Digital Violence* is a term used to describe abuse that technology facilitates. Abuse that takes place through electronic means is never only siloed to "digital life." The negative mental health impacts of being abused both online and off are paramount to understanding the experience of this abuse. (See *Section: Understanding Trauma Responses*).

Tech-Enabled Stalking can take place through:

- phones, tablets, computers
- cameras, video recording equipment
- email
- text, messaging services
- social media
- websites
- internet platforms
- GPS, software tracking systems*
- IoT / home automation*
- virtual assistants
- event platforms
- routers
- wireless networks
- home security systems
- appliances
- personal and financial accounts
- digital calendars
- medical records
- any electronic devices

The Gravity of Stalking as a Form of Violence

Being stalked is terrifying for the person being targeted - and it is also scary for those around them. Not knowing how to support the survivor in your life can be intimidating. This guide aims to be pragmatic and avoid unnecessary amplification of alarm because the first thing that fear impedes is the ability to cognitively process information.

However, due to the collective cultural desensitization and normalization of abuse and violence, especially against oppressed communities, it is imperative to take a moment to understand the scope of this form of violence.

We share the following information with you not to feed the fear that the stalker is purposefully instilling in your community- but to help you understand just how serious this is.

While stalking does not always result in physical harm, not every person survives the abuse of stalking. We need to acknowledge the psychological, emotional and physical impact of being stalked. Minimizing and/or normalizing this specific abuse enables it, and can lead to missed opportunities for crucial safety planning. Stalking is a strong indicator that the survivor's life may be in danger, and should be approached with a solemn respect for the gravity of the threat.

All forms of violence aim to destroy meaning and sense. Stalking is a particularly effective behavior in the spectrum of violence that will escalate when unchecked. Being stalked is a demolishing assault on a survivor's intuition and trust in themselves and others - and a flashing, bright red warning sign.

**Stalking can go on for a long time,
and include periods of dormancy**

The average length of time that an experience of stalking lasts is 2.5 years - but 11% of survivors interviewed by the Bureau of Justice Statistics said they had been stalked for 5 years or more¹.

***Understand that supporting your loved one may require
endurance for much longer than you expect.***

1 <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=973>

Stalking indicates that other abuse has likely already happened

81% of women who were stalked by a current or former husband or cohabitating partner, were also physically assaulted by that partner, while 31% were sexually assaulted².

Understand that your loved one may have experienced a number of other forms of violence that they may or may not have informed you of.

Stalking can be a warning sign for femicide*

Murder by a current or former intimate partner is a leading cause of homicide for women. 76% of women killed by a current or former partner were stalked, and more than half -54%- had reported the stalking to the police before being murdered.³

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic violence, "72% of all murder-suicides involve an intimate partner; 94% of the victims of these murder-suicides are female."⁴ This is not only dangerous for the person being targeted, but those around them. "A study of intimate partner homicides found that 20% of victims were not the intimate partners themselves, but family members, friends, neighbors, persons who intervened, law enforcement responders, or bystanders."⁵

Understand that your loved one's fear for their life and the safety of those around them is rational.

2 <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/169592.pdf>

3 <https://www.thehotline.org/stakeholders/domestic-violence-statistics/>

4 <https://ncadv.org/learn/statistics>

5 <https://www.ncadv.org/statistics>

A Note on Statistics + Reporting

Like all forms of abuse, stalking is under-reported. And even when it is reported to law enforcement or other agencies, it may not be categorized for what it is due to bias, limitations on statutes or ignorance. This means that statistics often under-represent the scope of this violence.

Often, people do not report being stalked due to fear of their stalker, police, or law enforcement. There can be an overwhelming feeling of powerlessness that “no one can or will do anything anyway.”

Femicide* statistics are unable to accurately capture the prevalence of stalking as an abuse that occurred before the homicide due to the nature of reporting and intimate partner violence.

When stalking occurs within systemically oppressed populations, such as Black, Indigenous, POC, immigrant and/or LGBTQIA+ communities, there is reduced reporting of this abuse to others and law enforcement, even when some forms of violence are overrepresented.

Stalking is Deliberate

Survivors of stalking may struggle to communicate in a linear fashion or express opposing ideas about their experience or abuser. This is normal, and should not be interpreted otherwise, even if your instinct may be to begin to doubt the survivor's experience.

The survivor may hold conflicting feelings about their stalker, especially if they were an intimate partner. One moment they may be angry and express feelings of hate or even revenge, and another moment they may express care or concern for their abuser, such as missing them or worrying about them. This can be compounded if the stalker has a history of substance abuse or mental health conditions, as the survivor may try to grasp reasons to rationalize their abuser's behavior. This is a lingering survival mechanism and internalization of self-blame from the abuse and manipulation they experienced within the relationship.

As someone who is supporting a survivor, it is important that you clearly understand that while an abuser may indeed have addiction or mental health problems, this is never a justification or excuse for abuse or stalking. Not all abusers have these conditions, and most people with these conditions do not abuse. Conflating these issues both minimizes the seriousness of abuse, and contributes to the broad and wrongful stigma that all people with addiction and mental health conditions are inherently dangerous.

Abuse and stalking are active, deliberate choices made by the abuser to control, terrorize and exert power over the survivor. Do not shame the survivor if they express feelings about the abuser that make you uncomfortable or don't make sense to you. It is likely that over time, their feelings about their abuser will change multiple times.

Consistently remind the survivor that:

- this is not their fault
- they do not deserve what is happening to them
- the stalker is doing this on purpose to harm them
- it is normal to have a lot of conflicting feelings

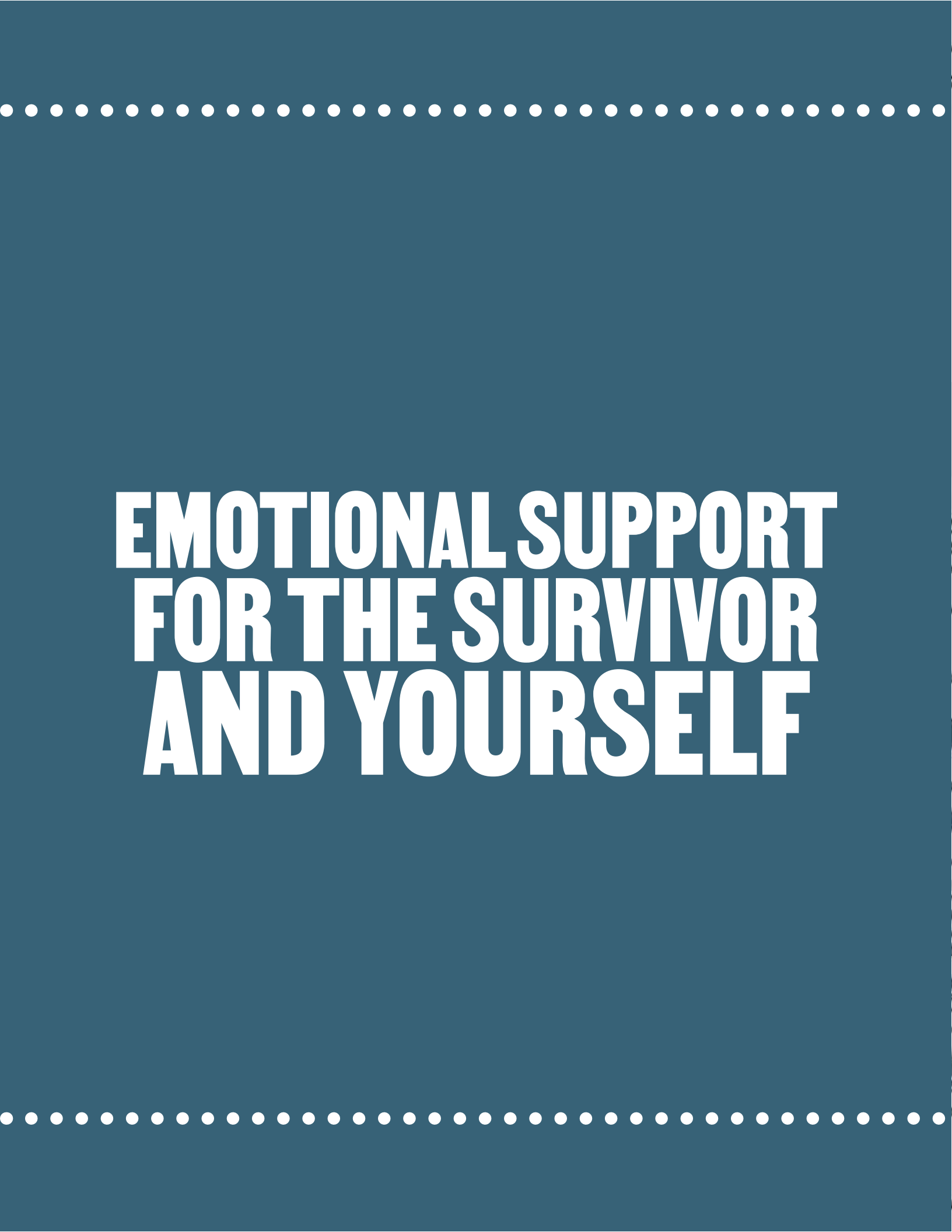
Remind them through your words and actions that they are not alone.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Are there feelings showing up inside of me that are different than before I learned of the stalking?
- What representations of stalking do I hold?
- What is my relationship with my phone, devices and technology?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- When did you start to feel something was wrong, or suspect that something had changed?
- How did you come to learn you were being stalked?
- Was the recent behavior or incident something that scared you?



**EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
FOR THE SURVIVOR
AND YOURSELF**





EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE SURVIVOR AND YOURSELF

Always remember that your loved one who is being stalked is constantly prioritizing their safety and well-being. In addition to the practical reality of keeping themselves physically safe, survivors are also trying to protect their mind, emotions and spirit under extreme duress.

This may impact how they communicate with their loved ones. It can be extremely difficult for the survivor to communicate what they are going through, what they need, or to have “normal conversations.” Be mindful that if you feel something is not right, they may need more support than they are telling you.

Know that your loved one’s caring, safe and positive connection with you is absolutely essential to help them move through this abuse.

Connections with community are an invaluable support.

Empathetic Listening

The first people survivors usually report to are close friends and family. Being stalked can make it difficult to trust others, so if the survivor is confiding in you, honor this. The shock, anger, or fear that you may feel when you first learn of what your loved one is going through can be overwhelming. As your loved one continues to confide in you about their experience and the impact it is having, you may find yourself struggling to really listen.

You may find yourself consciously or subconsciously judging the survivor for their actions, thoughts or emotional response. When this happens, pause and bring your focus back to what the survivor is saying to you. If

When the people we love are suffering, our first impulse can be to try to “fix” the situation, and offer advice or analysis.

While well-intentioned, offering unsolicited solutions may compound the isolation and hopelessness a survivor feels. They may want your advice or help in strategizing - just ask before jumping in with your own response. Help them locate their own power by being present with them and listening. Ask them how they would like to be supported, and be prepared for their answers to change over time. They may want your help and be struggling to understand what that looks like. Consider what resources you can access to support the survivor. Ask the survivor, "I may have some resources to share. Would you like me to tell you about them?" before offering this information.

It is important to remember that what is being done to the survivor is outside of their control - and therefore, it is also outside of yours.

Communicating in Small Bites

Survivors may sometimes communicate in ways that are not linear, are out of character, or do not make immediate sense. They may not be able to receive or process information from the people who are trying to help them. Focusing on solutions can be overwhelming when a person's brain is stuck in "fight, flight or freeze mode*." If you are trying to support them with action steps, do things in "small bites." Cognitive processing* and executive functioning* are impacted during traumatic stress, leading to barriers in communication and follow through.

Being heard and seen by those they trust is grounding* and healing for survivors. Be patient, present and listen deeply.

Intuitive Responses

The best support you can give a survivor is helping them listen to their own internal alarm system. Surviving stalking is a delicate balance of hypervigilance* and paranoia. Hypervigilance* is how survivors stay safe, but to others this may look like paranoia. Maintaining hypervigilance* sends the survivor's body into a continuous state of trauma, making it difficult to differentiate threats and causing them to live in fear of everything.

When a person is under attack, their amygdala (located in the front brain) is flooded with fear signals. Survivors need to be able to discern their intuitive responses of fear from this neurochemical response. You can support the survivor to feel safe by talking with them about their experiences. Do not add to the fear with your own responses or minimize their fear by reducing the stalker's behavior as inconsequential. Your reactions directly impact your loved one's internal fear radar.

If your loved one shares experiences of being stalked with you and expresses their fear, support them without further gaslighting* them. Don't react by ignoring, minimizing, shaming or blaming when a person who is being stalked tells you of recent events in their life that they consider triggering* or identify as dangerous.

Avoid saying things like,

- "That doesn't seem so bad."
- "Maybe they just still care about you."
- "You are being paranoid."
- "They aren't really serious about hurting you."
- "They didn't mention your name, though"
- "They are just (insert excuse, such as: drunk, high, unstable, crazy, heartbroken)."
- "It's only on the internet-they wouldn't do anything in real life."

If the survivor is scared, they have a reason to be. No one knows this better than them.

Instead, you might say things like,

- "I believe you."
- "You don't deserve this happening to you."
- "This is not your fault."
- "I am here for you."
- "I love you and I will stand with you."

Support the survivor's belief in themselves by helping them to follow their internal intuition. This will strengthen their ability to understand themselves so when their fear levels are going up, they know it's due to escalations and not false alarms. Help foster your loved one's ability to trust themselves so they can listen to their internal alarms when different safety measures need to be activated.

Reality-Checking + False Alarms

For survivors of stalking, the world can be rife with emotional triggers, terror trip wires and trapdoors to paranoia. The mundane nuisances and incongruities of daily and digital life may appear to the survivor to be the work of the stalker or a sign of escalation. A survivor may develop a default reaction of perceiving danger in any privacy invasion or bizarre occurrence. Survivors of tech-enabled abuse can find it difficult to discern what is or isn't truly an invasion or attack. Phone glitching? Apps you never noticed before? "Wrong number" calls? Seeing a stranger in multiple places in a short period of time? It is not always possible to know

for certain what is or isn't the actual work of the stalker, and it can be difficult to accurately distinguish real threats from false alarms. Sometimes a survivor's hypervigilance does, in fact, overreach and become paranoia. While sometimes this paranoia leads to inaccurate assessments, the paranoia itself is never truly unfounded. Fear can overtake the survivor's brain and intensify paranoia. It can be confusing to discern when fears are rooted in the present facts of reality - or if they are a reflexive trauma response from previous stalking incidents.

There will likely be times when a survivor is terrified that an incident is caused by their stalker - but the incident is completely unrelated. In these moments, a survivor will need help "reality-checking" with someone they trust.

When alarms occur, a survivor needs to be able to turn to their loved ones for help to pull up from spiraling anxiety. Survivors need to know you believe them, so they can trust you to support them without feeling minimized, dismissed or gaslit. Trust is the most effective tool to help the survivor reality-check and identify false alarms.

Reality-checking looks like helping the survivor to ground, observe, assess and analyze to identify if the alarm is real or false. This is a space of delicate and necessary intervention.

Some ways you can help a survivor reality-check and discern false alarms include:

- Gently helping to gather facts about the incident
- Doing research about possible benign or mundane causes of perceived incidents, especially issues rooted in technology, apps and devices
- If upon further inspection, it becomes clear that the incident was not related to the stalker, the survivor may feel a combination of relief and shame. Help them lean into the relief, and remind them that they have nothing to be ashamed of and you are here to help them assess incidents to support their safety

When A Survivor “Ghosts”

If you have not heard from your loved one, do not immediately assume that they are ignoring you or in danger. It can feel impossible for a survivor of stalking to answer calls or messages, as these interactions can create pressure to fake normalcy or explain recent events. Avoiding contact eliminates the pain of explaining escalations and why specific solutions are not working.

It can be hard to know how to respond to ‘no response’ during stalking. Be empathetic and gently reach out again if you have not heard from them. Trauma* can be a barrier to communicating with others, but survivors want to stay connected with people they trust.

Digital Violence = Digital Trauma

Digital violence includes all forms of abuse weaponized by technology. This weaponization extends outside the stalking, changing the ways survivors interact with electronics and their online needs. Re-traumatization may occur when survivors are forced to use their electronic devices to connect. Be mindful that messaging and communicating through devices, social media and other electronic means may be a trigger* for survivors. Alerts and pings from devices can send signals to the survivor’s brain and body that they are in danger, which can impact their ability to communicate with others. (See *Section: Understanding Trauma Responses*)

Potential Digital Triggers:

- Late night calls or messages
- Push notifications*
- Unrecognized friend requests or tags
- Calls from unknown or blocked numbers
- Texts from unknown numbers with hyperlinks
- Privacy violations / security breaches
- Unidentified apps, programs, accounts found on devices
- Image based communications
- Public spaces where recording, pictures or live streams are taking place
- Computers, phones and/or electronic devices with impaired functioning

Invisibility is Stressful

We live in a world where we have to share our names, phone numbers and email addresses to function in everyday life. For survivors, having to hide personal identification is a constant and overwhelming practice. Be mindful that it is hard to move through the world while trying to not leave a trace. There are potential triggers* any time the survivor has to do something public facing. These triggers* may cause the survivor to not participate in life the way they want to. If the survivor's work or career requires a public profile, having to become invisible can dramatically impact their economic stability.

Everyday examples where survivors have to consider visibility:

Purchasing items online

Requires a name, address, email and electronic banking access

Making appointments

Usually requires sharing a name, phone number and email address in an insecure method and location

Employment

Current employers may expect or force workers to have social media as a part of their job, such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, or for the employee to be publicly listed on their website

Potential employers may expect to see a professional social media presence, such as LinkedIn profiles

Meeting new people

The first series of questions people ask to build rapport always includes "Where do you live?"

Voting

Voting requires registration in your district through name and address

Buying a house

Personal information becomes public and is sold to ad companies to further distribute your name and home address

Dormancy + Escalations

Dormancies are periods of time where the stalking behaviors appear to decrease or even completely stop. These time periods may extend for hours, days, weeks, months or even years. Stalkers may stop their behavior for a long time, and then unexpectedly start again with the same or different methods.

It is hard to predict how long a stalker will target the survivor. Stalkers tend to de-escalate over time, but the overall duration can be long. Dormancies may be a temporary respite in between escalations or indicate that the stalker has stopped or moved onto another target. Familial stalking can extend throughout the survivor's life span.

Sometimes, the stalker's behaviors are not visible to the survivor or their community. This can look like a period of dormancy, while the stalker is still causing harm out of plain view. Dormancy can make it impossible for your loved one to believe the stalking has stopped, and the survivor may believe that this will go on forever.

During these periods of possible dormancy, understand that a survivor wants to believe their torture is over - but they cannot afford to accept possible false hope. Help them to alleviate their fear by talking through concrete examples that remind them of their periods of safety (such as celebrating increased freedom of movement, or a greater sense of calm or clarity), rather than reinforcing the permanency of a reality which may be a manipulation or illusion.

Stalkers are notorious for their sudden and unpredictable escalations. While escalations can happen at any time, stalkers often attack near important dates or events, such as birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, court dates, and milestone moments. These escalations can destabilize the survivor, and may feel particularly intense after a period of dormancy. For the survivor, this can trigger* an intense emotional response, including vivid flashbacks and emotional re-experiencing (*See Section: Understanding Trauma Responses*).

It may be difficult to watch this happen to your loved one, especially if they had begun to heal or stabilize their life during a period of dormancy, only to be suddenly thrust back into their crisis responses. Over time, particularly after periods of dormancy, it can be easy for supporters to be less regularly engaged with the survivor.

Remember that even during periods of dormancy, the survivor is still impacted by their experience of having been stalked. When escalations occur, it is important to re-engage regular contact with the survivor.

Do not assume or promote that court or police interventions stop stalking. Orders of protection, incarceration and other legal involvement may or may not provide respite for survivors. Ask them how they feel when system involvement contributes to periods of dormancy.

Taking Care of Yourself

Supporting someone going through continuous trauma* can be traumatic. You may experience indirect and direct trauma* from your loved one's stalking. Secondary trauma*, vicarious trauma*, compassion stress*, compassion fatigue*, burnout*, and empathic strain* refer to the effects on your own mental health that you may experience.

When someone you care about is going through this, it is important to manage your own feelings - especially your own fear. Fear can manifest in different ways and you may not realize you are acting in response to it.

Your mental health is important, too. Do not care for others at the expense of yourself. Prioritizing your own wellness helps the survivor you are supporting to prioritize theirs as well. You may experience the polarizing emotions of fear and apathy when you are trying to connect with someone who is experiencing this form of abuse.

Stalkers often target those close to the survivor, so you may experience direct trauma* if you have been subjected to the stalker's abuse yourself. If you feel you are at risk of harm, seek support. It is important to have your own wellness plan. This may consist of a safety plan if you are also being targeted by the stalker. Even indirect exposure can impact your well-being and mental health. If you notice changes in yourself, listen to them and take care of you.

Maintaining your own emotional regulation helps keep your loved one safe. It helps to limit the burden on the survivor of them feeling like they have to care for you or hide their experiences to protect you. They have enough on their hands with the constant job of protecting themselves. They don't want you to experience their emotional pain, so if you notice your own feelings shifting, find ways to care for them.

Stalking can feel like a crisis marathon. If you are supporting someone and need some time away from updates, escalations and processing, identify that within yourself. Make sure to communicate this to the survivor in a way that feels right, and affirm to the survivor that this is not their fault. Remember that the only person responsible for the impact of stalking is the stalker themselves.

If you and others in a survivor's support team are feeling overwhelmed, ask the survivor if you have permission to talk with their other friends and family so you can support one another with the collective emotional impact. You may also consider seeing a therapist yourself, especially if you have also been targeted by the stalker.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- How do I feel interacting with my loved one as they go through this?
- How can I take care of myself throughout this time? What do I need?
- How can I talk with my loved one about their experience and not let my own feelings impact them in ways I don't intend?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- What makes you feel most heard when you are sharing your experiences of being stalked with others?
- Can we make a plan on how to stay connected during times when you may not want to be in direct communication?
- Are there any digital triggers* you experience that you want me to be aware of?
- During times of dormancy, how can I support you to work toward your healing and stability?
- What do you want from me and your support team when sudden escalations arise?
- If I need to take a break from active support, what is the best way to inform you?



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA RESPONSES







UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA RESPONSES

Being stalked is traumatic. By learning about and understanding this trauma*, you will better understand the survivor in your life. Stalking is fear-based, which activates a person's internal crisis management system, also known as the fight, flight or freeze response*.

A person surviving stalking is experiencing continuous shots of cortisol and adrenaline (stress hormones) in their brain, which is toxic to their mental, spiritual and physical health. These stress hormones cause hyperarousal*, essentially kicking the brain into high gear to mobilize against a potential threat.

Types of Trauma Responses

A trauma* response occurs involuntarily to help the body fight the terrifying things that it does not deserve to experience. These reactions create constant stress in our nervous system.

This can lead to, but is not limited to:

- hypervigilance*
- dissociation*
- anxiety
- intrusive, ruminative or compulsive thoughts
- panic attacks
- sleep disturbances
- exaggerated startle responses
- depersonalization*
- derealization*
- impaired concentration
- irritability
- mood and affective dysregulation*
- negative and distorted cognitions
- overwhelming feelings of being detached and estranged from others
- intense distress
- avoidance
- helplessness
- hopelessness
- powerlessness
- altered sense of space and time
- wanting to hurt self and/or others
- pain
- exhaustion
- memory loss
- physical symptoms

Being forced to live in isolation or hiding can trigger* flashbacks (emotional, somatic, visual, tactile, olfactory) and exacerbate extreme feelings of aloneness. It becomes a struggle to see or understand the future.

These responses can cause a survivor to feel paralyzed in every aspect of their own life. These responses don't leave after the trauma* is over because a person's body is motivated to keep surviving. These responses may not end when the stalking is over.

The physiological toll of living in a constant state of fear is known to create intense stress on the nervous system. This can lead to the development or exacerbation of adverse health conditions, which can impact quality of life and life expectancy. The long term effects of this trauma can become disabling. Gender-based violence is a public health issue, and we need to understand stalking through this lens.

Coping

When a person is triggered* into a trauma* response, they may not appear to behave like their normal self. The survivor may communicate incoherently or in a non-linear fashion. Remember, their brain may be "short-circuiting" as they are both consciously and unconsciously trying to cope (meaning to meet their basic psychological, emotional, spiritual, and physical needs) under great duress.

Managing these trauma* responses look different for each person. Coping with triggers*, fear responses, and threats on a person's life can change from moment to moment.

We typically cope with things we cannot control by trying to find things we *can* control. Not all coping mechanisms are healthy, and can involve compulsive engagements with things such as substances, sex and food. You may also experience your own challenges around coping, or observe challenges in community members close to the survivor. This is normal, because while trying to support a survivor, you will often be confronted by the reality that you cannot control the stalker's behavior or the survivor's response.

Do not judge the way a survivor copes. Instead, try to offer support to find ways that will reduce the harm of unhealthy coping mechanisms. If you are increasingly worried about a way someone in your life is coping, communicate your feelings of concern in ways that do not offer judgment, shame or blame. Recklessness and self harming methods are never promoted, but shaming a person around survival strategies will only make things worse.

Structure and routine are essential to coping with abuse and healing through trauma*. Routine can be very frightening to survivors, as they may feel the need to be constantly shifting their daily routines to stay steps ahead of their stalker. Help encourage them to have some form of stability in their day. This can build an infrastructure for other healing practices to grow from.

What No One Wants to Talk About

When a person has their life threatened, they will often start to think about their own death. This could look like the survivor creating survival contingency plans. For some, this will show up as passive and/or active suicidal ideation or rumination about being murdered. The survivor may not share this with you as they do not want to scare you or hear statements that minimize their reality. Take all statements about death seriously.

Do not negate or minimize any statements, behaviors and actions related to death- EVER.

It is not uncommon that a survivor might ask their most trusted loved ones to hold secure documents for them and provide a plan for what to do with them in the event of their death or if they go missing. These documents may include evidence and information about the person they believe will be responsible. These materials may be kept in a secure physical or virtual location that only the trusted person is privy to. The survivor may provide a detailed plan on what to do with this information.

They may share their preferences for afterlife arrangements and/or make a will. If the survivor is discussing these types of plans with you, talk with them about why they are doing this. You need to understand if there has been a change in risk assessment due to escalations. Ask them to be clear and concrete about what they need from you. Assess if these plans are survival contingency or driven by a plan for intentional harm to self and/or others. Affirm their life, what they mean to you and the support they have to keep moving through this abuse. Seek emergency response if needed in crisis.

While it is painful to hear your loved one make plans in the case of their own death or murder, remember that it is even more difficult for them to have to exist in a reality where these considerations must be present.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Have I seen any of these responses from my loved one?
- Have I experienced any of these responses in myself? Who can I talk to about this?
- What are some healthy coping mechanisms I can turn to or develop to support myself through this?
- If I am struggling to cope or process this experience, will I consider seeking mental health support?
- What resources do I need to support myself during this time?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- How is this impacting you?
- Have you thought about mental health support to help you with what you are experiencing?
- How do you want support from me to help locate therapeutic resources?
- Do you want to, or have you already, made a safety plan if you start to feel overwhelmed and have emotions that make you feel unsafe? Do you need help working through this safety plan?
- How can I be present with you to reduce harm if you feel you are coping in unhealthy ways?



**COMMUNICATING
SAFELY**







COMMUNICATING SAFELY

Surviving stalking is isolating and lonely. Staying connected to the survivors you love is crucial to their well being. If you are a trusted person in their life, honor this. Surveillance capitalism* makes it difficult to know what personal information is shared without consent. Ensure you are protecting their privacy and your own. When communicating through text and other messaging apps, here are some important things to keep in mind.

Communication Platforms + Apps

When texting, emailing or messaging a survivor of stalking, you should always ask what platforms they prefer to communicate on. This may change and evolve in time or in response to the survivor's circumstances as they continue to prioritize their safety. It is important to regularly and gently check in to confirm that you are using the correct current platforms that the survivor chooses. Affirm to the survivor that you want them to feel safe communicating with you and understand that these methods may shift over time.

Some survivors may communicate through encrypted platforms. This may require you to download a new app you are not familiar with. You should do this as soon as you can when a survivor informs you. Ask for their permission to share their preferred communication with others in their support networks. This helps to reduce stigma and exhaustion, as it is continuously triggering* for a person being stalked to explain why and how they need to keep themselves safe. Remember that your two minutes of downloading time directly impacts your loved one's feelings of security.

Do not second guess or inadvertently shame survivors when they ask you to communicate in ways that are unfamiliar to you. Take the time to learn the new platform and then offer to help others do the same. Do not hesitate or complain about having to use a new platform to the survivor, as this can make them feel like a burden or as if you do not respect their choices. Never, ever tell a survivor they are "too paranoid" if they insist on using an encrypted platform.

Make sure to ask the survivor if there are things they want to avoid discussing through writing, including emails, texts and messages. Some stalkers install tracking software into the cellphones, laptops or accounts of survivors. These softwares can be as advanced as geolocating* the device, and even accessing the screens or keystrokes on the device. These stalking apps can be hidden or difficult to identify. Even if the survivor finds and deletes the app, and resets their device, the stalker may be able to reinstall it or other surveillance software. Deleting and/or removing surveillance software may send signals to the stalker, which can impact the survivor's safety status.

Group Communication

The phone numbers, emails and social media profiles of survivors should be considered highly protected and sensitive personal information. Never include them in texts, emails or chats without their explicit consent. When you include survivors in group communications, such as group texts or email blasts, you are broadcasting their identifying information. This can compromise their personal data and put them at risk.

Many survivors of stalking have to change their phone numbers and/or emails, sometimes repeatedly. This is stressful, time-consuming and highly triggering*. Continuously changing communication tools can become a barrier for survivors to access their personal accounts and further isolate them from their relationships and resources.

As you discuss how the survivor wants to be included in group communications, affirm that you recognize and respect that they are keeping themselves safe. Tell them that you want to help protect their communication methods and personal information.

Camera Consent

We live in a world that is increasingly lived through screens. Image based communication methods, such as video calls and video-conferencing, are increasingly common venues to communicate face-to-face. For a survivor of stalking, this can create anxiety. Being on camera can compromise a survivor's location or create a sense of being intimately observed.

Cameras and recording devices are a way to control and stalk. Survivors of stalking may have had images and/or video taken of them without their consent, forcibly against their will, and/or been threatened with image distribution (image based abuse*). This can create a trauma response when the survivor is forced to be around recording devices, in digital and physical life (See *Section: Understanding Trauma Responses*).

Do not assume that communications and virtual life must automatically involve camera access. Practice affirmative camera consent in your daily life by normalizing that people do not need to be on camera to connect and communicate. Let survivors know that it's okay for them not to be on video, and that they can turn their camera off at any time on the occasions that they do choose to be on video. Camera consent is a practice you can use at work, among community and in your personal life to create a safety culture.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- How do I feel most comfortable communicating? How will I manage this if it is different than that of my loved one?
- How can I secure my own digital security?
- How can I normalize camera consent in my daily life?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- What ways do you feel the most secure to communicate? What platforms and applications would you prefer?
- Are there things you want to make sure we only communicate about in person or that I should never put in writing?
- Do you want to be included in a group communication? If so, on what platform or app?
- Are there people in our shared community that you feel safe being in group communications with? Are there people in our shared community that you do not want to be in group communications with?
- Is there any information you do not want discussed in group communication?
- If you choose to be on camera, do you have a space that is “anonymized”, or the ability to to obscure your location?
- Do you want to talk about your relationship with technology and if it has changed?



SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY







SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY

While social media is one of the main ways that communities stay connected, it is an incredibly vulnerable space for survivors of stalking. Social media is often the frontline of a survivor's experiences of digital abuse and surveillance. Many survivors of stalking would like to have a social media presence, but may have to limit, reduce or eliminate this for safety. It is important to discuss a survivor's boundaries on social media, and how they would like you to respond if you witness their abuse online. Here are some suggestions of how to support a survivor's safety on social media.

Photos + Tagging

Never, ever post photographs of a survivor without asking first. If they have social media, do not tag their account or put their account handles on other people's pages. Offer to remove pictures, current and past, from all account platforms.

Ask the survivor if they want to share pictures and content in other ways that make them feel secure. Sharing content is a way of connecting. Offer other ways to connect with social media content, especially content that creates happiness and laughter, such as sharing funny memes through direct messages.

Harassment, Threats, Defamation + Doxxing

The internet is a stalkers' playground, as they have unlimited access to methods of terrorism. Threats, harassment and violations of privacy through social media can create the same psychological response as if a person was experiencing these harms while walking down the street.

If a person removes their presence from social media, it does not mean their stalker has stopped using the internet to hurt them. Stalkers will still post and/or create false content to defame or harass the person being targeted. Stalkers may post a survivor's private information online, such as their home and work address and online handles (doxxing*). Stalkers may go after a survivor's community online to try to scare or harm them, or to gain information about the target. They may also recruit other people or communities to go after the survivor online (mob attacks*).

If a survivor has removed their profiles or blocked their stalker's accounts, they may not see threats or information that can be relevant to their safety planning or legal case and must rely on their community to inform them. It may be critical to inform the survivor of any communications or threats from their stalker, as the survivor may need this information to help them assess the stalker's escalation.

Learning about threats and defamation by the stalker is extremely distressing for a survivor and can produce trauma responses. (See *Section: Understanding Trauma Responses*).

Talk with the survivor in advance about what they want you to do if you see any threats, images or information about them being posted by others online.

They may ask you to report posts or accounts. They may ask you to take screenshots. They may ask you to do nothing at all. They may ask you to not tell them again. Never contact police or other authorities without the survivor's direct consent. Make a plan with the survivor for how they want you to respond if you believe immediate violence is about to occur or has happened.

Never directly respond or engage with a post or an account that has threatened or shared information about the survivor without discussing this directly with the survivor first. This can lead to further escalations of abuse. Some survivors will want to be informed of threats, while others may not. If they do want to be informed, ask them how they want to be informed and by whom, or if there is someone else they want the information shared with instead, such as a friend, advocate or lawyer.


Remember that stalkers may sometimes impersonate those being targeted online or through digital communication methods. Have a code word with the survivor that you can both use to verify that you are who you say you are. Don't write it down anywhere, and change it as needed.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:


- What are my privacy settings on social media?
- Do I feel comfortable and in control of what information about me is accessible online?
- What actions am I willing or not willing to take if I witness the abuse happening online?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- Are you using social media? If so, how are you using it?
- How can we stay connected and share photos and content in ways that feel safe to you?
- How would you like me to communicate to you if I see something online about you?
- What actions would you like me to take if I witness abuse happening to you online?
- Do you want me to communicate to you about things the stalker is doing or if I witness anything bizarre related to the stalker on social media? If so, when and how?
- How do you want to communicate about any potential threats, harassment or privacy breaches?



SAFEGUARDING LOCATIONS







SAFEGUARDING LOCATIONS

Stalking steals sovereignty of movement from the survivor. Some of the most critical and guarded pieces of information are their address and location. As friends, family and community members, it is imperative to safeguard the survivor's virtual and physical location at all times. For a person being stalked, places that should be safe - their homes, workplaces, schools, spiritual centers, community spaces, neighborhoods- can become sites of constant terror. A survivor's location may shift daily as they protect themselves, and they may lose their home through the process of trying to stay safe.

Never, ever store the address of a person being stalked in places that can be easily accessed. The extra steps to protect your loved one's current address is essential to their emotional and physical safety. The survivor may also have to be very limited in who they share their location with, even within their support team. If you are not given this information, or other information about the survivor, don't take it personally. You don't need to know all the details about a survivor to help them.

Being out in public spaces can be frightening and dangerous. Offer to be someone they call when they feel they may need an escort or buddy to go places. If you are able, offer to help them locate housing if they are alternating locations.

Here are a few suggestions about how to protect your loved one's location.

IRL (in real life)

During times of escalations or coping with trauma,* survivors may not feel safe to leave their location. Offer to stay with them or visit with them, and follow their guidance on the safest way to do so.

When visiting or meeting the survivor in person, ask for their permission if you have to enter the address into transportation apps such as Uber, Lyft, Waze, or Google Maps. Virtual maps and ride receipts can be an access point for stalkers, and your loved one's secure address can be easily breached through using them. If you and the survivor are departing from the same location, offer to call a cab for them if they feel that is safer than using their own phone or accounts.

When you meet a survivor in person, ask them where they'd like to meet, and plan to arrive before them. **Do not be late.** Offer to survey the scene before the survivor arrives to help increase the survivor's feelings of safety of being in public.

Be mindful of the things you may be wearing and how you show up when you are meeting a person to avoid drawing unnecessary attention to yourself. If you are in a car with a survivor, offer to sit by the window to obscure their visibility. These small acts communicate to the person that you understand the severity of what they are going through and want to support them in feeling safe.

If you visit a survivor where they are staying, ask them if they have any garbage they would like for you to throw away for them, such as shredded documents or items with their address or other identifying information on it.

Snail Mail

If you are sending packages to the survivor, ask how they want their name to be public-facing in the postal system, or if they have an alternative address or person they want packages sent to.

Event Invitations

Stalkers often surveil a survivor's movements online. Inviting them to public events can disclose their general or specific location, activities, interests or people they are currently connected to. Instead, ask the survivor directly if they are interested in an event, and how they would like to receive the event information. Offer to communicate with the event host for them, including instructing the host to keep the survivor's attendance private. If a survivor cannot attend an event digitally or online for their safety, offer to find out if there will be a recording or transcript you can share with them, or offer to take notes for them. Do not invite survivors to event pages on social media platforms or register them for events without their consent.

Accompaniment + Safe Houses

Some survivors can become afraid of going outside alone for fear of being surveilled, found or attacked. If you are able, offer to coordinate with other friends of the survivor to accompany them on errands, meetings or outside ventures.

During times when the stalker is particularly aggressive, the survivor may need help coordinating a safehouse network of confidential, temporary places where they can stay with people they trust in a safe space or without being alone. The logistics of this can become very overwhelming for a survivor while dealing with an active stalker.

If possible, offer to help coordinate the safehouse network, and work closely with the survivor to help them organize their options, lengths of stay and means of traveling between safehouses. A survivor may need to suddenly go into a safehouse without notice, which is a part of arranging crisis contingency plans. Keep the safehouse list in a secure location without information that identifies the survivor.

Moving to or between safehouses can be very emotionally difficult for a survivor. Often small gestures such as sending them meals, bringing snacks, books or self-care items can mean a great deal to them in this time.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- What is my password security to ensure protection of my open information and anyone else's information that may be stored on my devices or accounts?
- In what ways am I available and have the capacity to be present for the survivor, especially when their stalker is escalating?
- Can I offer my home or another space as a safe house?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- Do I have your permission to store your personal information, such as address or email? If so, is there a way you prefer I store it?
- How can I support you in safeguarding your location?
- Who is allowed to know your address?
- Do you have another address to receive mail or packages that you would like me to know?
- If I see an event that I would like to invite you to, how can I share that information?



STALKING-BY-PROXY







STALKING BY PROXY

Stalkers will try to get access to a survivor in endless ways. Proxy-stalking or stalking by proxy* happens when the stalker recruits other people, institutions and systems in the stalking behavior. The stalker may direct others to bully, harass, surveil, intimidate and menace the survivor.

Stalking by proxy occurs in both physical and digital spaces. This may be referred to as “trolling” or mob attacks* when it occurs online. The stalker’s abuse through third parties can compound the trauma a survivor is experiencing.

Technology can mask identities and is an easy tool for stalking by proxy*. This can look like getting weird calls (spoofing*) or messages (phishing*) that require you to click links. The stalker may create fake social media or email accounts, and use these to both target the survivor and recruit others to do so. Be mindful of communication you have with others that does not feel right.

Your Relationship with the Stalker

Stalking often occurs within the context of an intimate, familial or close community relationship. This means that both the stalker and the survivor share relationships with a constellation of individuals. If you have a close relationship with the stalker, this can create a particularly disorienting crisis as you decide whether or how to continue this relationship.

The first thing you must decide is whether or not to continue the relationship with the stalker. If you decide to do so, you must inform the survivor. Understand that this may mean that the survivor will not feel safe continuing a relationship with you. If the survivor decides to continue a relationship with you, you must be very, very clear about what your relationship to the stalker will be and fully commit to not sharing any information about the survivor. Remember that any dishonesty with the survivor about your relationship to the stalker is both a form of enabling the stalker and gaslighting* the survivor.

If you continue a relationship with the stalker, be aware of how you may be passively or actively enabling their behavior. Simply continuing a public relationship with the stalker can in and of itself be a form of passive enabling, as it may appear to minimize their harm, affirm their credibility or discredit the survivor. If you continue a relationship with the stalker, you cannot support the survivor and enable the stalker at the same time (See *Section: Consensual Community Interventions*).

Enabling can look like:

- Sharing any information about the survivor with the stalker
- Gaslighting the survivor
- Minimizing or excusing the stalker's harm
- Making public statements in support of the stalker
- Repeating lies and misinformation from the stalker to others
- Participating in stalking of the survivor, including surveillance
- Supporting the stalker with legal or law enforcement processes against the survivor
- Financially supporting the stalker

People close to the stalker are uniquely positioned to potentially disrupt their abusive behaviors. Make sure you have had a detailed conversation with the survivor about what ways they want you to intervene or interrupt.

Some ways you may intervene, interrupt or disrupt abusive behavior:

- Clearly tell the stalker that you believe the survivor
- Inform the stalker that their behavior is stalking, and that it is abuse
- Discourage the stalker from all abusive and non-consensual acts
- Encourage the stalker to get mental health or substance abuse support
- Refuse to participate in character assassination of the survivor

Stalking via Community

Stalkers may use children, family members, friends, community members or street affiliations to stalk for them. They do this by directing or fooling them to surveil, harass, intimidate, attack or menace the survivor. This can occur online and in real life. In intimate partner stalking, there is a higher incidence of community or familial overlap which places the survivor at higher risk of being stalked by others for their abuser. In incidences where children are involved, they may be used as a tool to continue tracking, monitoring and intimidating the survivor.

Stalkers often want to destroy the reputation and credibility of their targets, and recruit others to spread lies and further isolate the survivor. If you hear others in your community speaking badly of the survivor, whether it is repeating false rumors the stalker has concocted or judging the survivor's response, do not participate in this denigration and gaslighting*.

For many survivors, the trauma* of community betrayal compounds and complicates the primary trauma* of being stalked. If you believe that people in your community are supporting the stalker by helping them follow or surveil the survivor, inform the survivor so they can be aware and take any additional precautions. (*See Section: Consensual Community Interventions*).

Stalking By Powerholders

Stalkers with power from wealth, status, influence, authority and high income have endless ways to dominate and abuse their targets. Stalkers who are in close proximity to these forms of power may be protected by and able to access the same means.

These stalkers easily and readily weaponize their access to money, resources and people. This can look like hiring private investigators or public relations firms to professionalize their stalking, paying people to harass or attack the survivor, or utilizing their influence and status to ban, discredit and attempt to silence the survivor.

Stalkers who hold positions or influence within institutions of power may use this authority or its tools to stalk the survivor. For example, those who work within law enforcement, state agencies or government may use their power to surveil, harass and intimidate. Similarly, leaders of religious spaces, cultural groups or large organizations may use their power to isolate, menace or attack.

Survivors of stalking by power holders are even more likely to be deemed less credible, and the attacks on them can be insidiously well coordinated.

Stalking by proxy needs to be carefully assessed and tracked when stalkers are power holders because their access to resources can be so intensely weaponized. This type of stalking requires especially well-coordinated communication among the survivor's support team.

Swatting + False Reports

Stalkers may use emergency personnel, such as police, firefighters and emergency medical service workers to get to the survivor. Swatting* is the use of the state to enact violence, and can be deadly. When swatting*, stalkers stage fake crises to get a reaction from the survivor or to cause them direct harm by eliciting an emergency personnel response, which may place the survivor's life in jeopardy.

One example is a stalker filing false charges against the survivor, which may lead the police to issue immediate arrest. Another example is a stalker reporting false threats toward or from the survivor in order to draw multiple emergency responders to the survivor's location.

If the survivor feels the stalker may use state violence to hurt them, offer to make a safety plan with them for this specific emergency. Help walk them through how they want to handle worse case scenarios, such as being arrested, imprisoned or hospitalized due to false threats.

The stalker may also make false reports to other institutions to harm the survivor. This can include making confidential fraud allegations to professional agencies, such as the IRS, public services, disability services and unemployment. They may send anonymous letters to employers, clients or power holders to character assassinate the survivors.

Swatting* and false reporting are acts of deep violence meant to destabilize and hurt the survivor and destroy or take their life (See *Section: Tracking and Reporting*).

Stalking through the Courts

If a survivor is engaged in a court or legal process with the stalker, it is common for the stalker to manipulate this process to have continued contact with the target, or to deplete them of resources and support. This is a form of litigation abuse* that is also known as stalking through the courts*. This impacts how a survivor chooses to interact with courts, such as getting restraining orders/stay away orders, or navigating custody cases or separation/divorce proceedings. Stalkers may threaten or force a survivor into other court processes, such as immigration or deportation proceedings.

Stalking through the courts* can look like making false allegations against the survivor, filing frivolous motions and petitions, or otherwise intentionally drawing out the legal process. There are few protections for survivors experiencing this form of litigation abuse*. It can become a long and retraumatizing process, and often marks an increase in escalations and potential violence of the stalker.

Ask the survivor about their self-care plans as they prepare for court dates, as this may mean having to review, prepare and talk about their experiences of abuse over and over. Offer to help the survivor organize their materials during the preparation process for court. Offer to coordinate a support team for the survivor on court dates, including accompanying them to court, ensuring they have safe transportation to and from the court, and an aftercare plan (*See Section: Tracking and Reporting*).

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Have I inadvertently provided access to my loved one?
- Do I have the capacity to be a part of my loved one's safety plan? How do I feel about my answer?
- Do I still have a relationship or contact with the stalker or their enablers*? Should I still have a relationship with them? Does the survivor know? Could I be used as a source of information without my knowledge?
- Am I willing to help my loved one when they are interacting with lawyers, law enforcement, courts, legal systems and other authorities?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- Do you have an emergency safety plan? Would you like support in creating one?
- Are there people I should be aware of or avoiding?
- Do you want support with lawyers, law enforcement, courts, legal systems and other authorities? If so, in what ways?



TRACKING + REPORTING







TRACKING + REPORTING

Scanning for threats is a survival tool. When a person is living in fear, their brains are unable to mute this function. Being stalked means another person is tracking your life against your will. Once a person starts to understand they are being continuously surveilled, they quickly learn how to track their own behaviors to be a step ahead of the person coming after them. This may include tracking the stalker to brace for their next attack. These are essential aspects for the survivor to assess risk.

Tracking your own abuser and abuse is inherently traumatic. How each survivor does this is different for each person and situation. Yet, these areas are where loved ones may blame the survivor or begin to minimize or doubt their experience.

Survivors may vacillate between no contact or assessing for risk through contact monitoring. Contact monitoring includes the survivor still having direct or indirect communication with the stalker, which may include contact through false personas.

Common guidance is to go “no contact” or “no engagement,” as each point of contact increases the probability that the stalker will escalate. If a survivor is still maintaining some form of overt or covert interaction with their stalker, it is a survival strategy. Do not blame or shame them into feeling like they deserve this trauma*.

Monitoring Stalkers for Threat Assessment

For a survivor who feels the need to monitor their stalker’s behavior for safety, it can be very emotionally overwhelming to feel as though they are forced to participate in parallel behaviors. If you are able, offer to support the survivor with monitoring the stalkers behavior so they don’t have to, or can do so less frequently. This could be online or through real world information. Doing this for them can be protective and help decrease the amount of psychological warfare the survivor is exposed to. Doing this for the survivor can also help protect them from character assassination campaigns by the stalker, who often employ tactics such as deny, attack, reverse victim and offender (DARVO*) to discredit and control the reputation of the person they are targeting (See Section: Social Media Safety).

Tracking Logs

Maintaining detailed documentation is an imperative tool to survive stalking. These are known as Timelines, Tracking Sheets, or Incident / Behavior / Activity / Documentation Logs. The important aspect is maintaining an updated central document that contains a log of behaviors and incidents done by the stalker. It is used to keep track of the stalking in case the survivor needs it later for evidence, or to discern patterns in order to prepare for potential escalations.

Maintaining this document is exhausting. It can be retraumatizing for the survivor to constantly document their own abuse, especially if there is no justice in sight. Acknowledge the emotional toll this may be having on the survivor.

If you are able, offer some of the following things:

- Help them screenshot or save communications
- Help them get written statements from witnesses or other victims
- Consolidate and track evidence
- Problem solve where this log is kept and where the backup file will be located
- Be present with them in person or through phone calls when they are transcribing recent events into the log. Being in the presence of people who love you is a direct intervention.

As community members, it is important you communicate with the survivor how they want information shared with them about ways the stalker may be engaging in behaviors they are unaware of. **These incidents need to be included in the central log** (See Section: Social Media Safety).

These are important to establishing a pattern, which may be needed if police involvement occurs. If incidents are communicated to police or other authorities, make sure to log the name, badge number and precinct.

Law Enforcement + Legal System Involvement

Mainstream media has profited from amplifying an oversimplified narrative that represents stalking as a singular, siloed and rare phenomena. The story often goes: one man stalks one woman who rejected him; he attempts to or succeeds to kill her; he gets arrested. The man is often portrayed as “crazy,” and he also feels entitled to the woman, which is why he is stalking her. This narrative upholds heteronormativity, sexism*, ableism*, and police/state saviorism.

By virtue of the sheer repetition of this common true-crime trope, many people have internalized that the only way to stop or get justice for stalking is through the intervention of law enforcement.

This is not the only way to intervene on this abuse. Community support and intervention may provide better outcomes than the justice system.

While stalking is a crime in all 50 states, it is the survivor who should be the one to decide when to involve law enforcement. However, sometimes police are involved involuntarily due to the stalker’s escalation of violence, particularly public physical and sexual assaults.

There are many legal loopholes that fail survivors who are engaged with this system. Remember, stalking is a pattern of behavior. The stalker may engage in behaviors that are not legally considered crimes or that police aren’t interested in interrupting. The stalker may engage in illegal activity that is considered a crime before stalking is established as a charge. Law enforcement may not have the interest, understanding or capacity to investigate reports or enforce the laws that govern stalking charges. Laws are not enforced equally and can be used to criminalize those seeking safety from their abuser (*See Section: Understanding Stalking*).

Compounding this is the fact that technology provides anonymizing mechanisms that can make it more difficult to legally prove the identity of the person perpetrating violence. Stalking that takes place across state lines can impact law enforcement’s ability to address the behaviors. While there are federal laws for each, stalking and cyberstalking laws differ from state-to-state.

For many people, their lifetimes and communities have been marked with negative and/or violent interactions with the police state. For Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ people, poor people, women, people with mental health or developmental disabilities, people who have experienced homelessness, sex workers and people working in underground economies, police involvement may come with risks and present a potential danger in and of itself. While this may or may not be your own experience, encouraging and promoting police involvement as the only rational response to violence is a form of gaslighting*. Only a survivor should decide if, when and how to report to the police.

Some people consider any engagement with the police to be “snitching” or otherwise politically immoral. If this is your experience, and the survivor wants to report to the police, do not discourage them, second guess their decision, or make them feel guilt or shame. It is a very difficult decision for any survivor to make to report to the police, especially if they do not trust them or have been failed or targeted by them in the past.

Rather than judge or criticize the survivor for this decision, think about what is missing from your communities, institutions and resources that would make it possible for the survivor to have had another viable choice. Get to work with others to begin studying, imagining and **building** these systems, networks, institutions and resources. This guide intends to be a tool to help you and your community start thinking about this as well (See *Section: Consensual Community Interventions*).

If the survivor is reporting incidents to the police or local sheriff, offer to go with them if you are comfortable. Take notes, including names, ranks and badge numbers of all police and things that are said. Offer to make a care plan with them for after they interact with any law enforcement. If police have been involved due to bystander reports of public attacks, ensure that the survivor is supported through this process of police engagement.

Orders of Protection

An order of protection can be a family court order, civil or criminal court order that has a list of harms that an abuser is told to stop doing. If it is violated, the survivor can contact the police or report it to court, and the abuser *may* be arrested. Different states may have different names for these documents such as: Restraining Order, Stay Away Order, No Contact Order, Protection Orders, Temporary or Permanent Order of Protection (TOP, OOP, OP).

It is important to remember that orders of protection are ultimately just pieces of paper. Sometimes they can dissuade the stalker from more overt violence. Sometimes they increase the stalker's anger about losing power and control, leading to escalations. If the order is violated, law enforcement and the courts have the power and discretion to decide whether or not to arrest the abuser and whether or not criminal charges will be filed.

Sometimes the legal process for securing a final order of protection can be lengthy and even require a trial if the stalker is fighting it or using the courts to stalk the survivor. Stalkers are also notorious for false reports and petitioning for orders of protection against the people they are targeting.

If the survivor has a temporary or final order of protection, make sure you discuss with them what they want to do if the order is violated.

If the survivor feels strongly about securing an order of protection, support them in this. Orders of protection are just one tool for the survivor to secure their safety, and they are the ones who should decide if it is a tool they need.

Encourage the survivor to:

- Think through where they keep this document and encourage them to have electronic copies saved in secure places they can access in an emergency. This can include:
 - in their phone
 - in their emails
 - in paper copies in their wallet
 - with their emergency contacts
- Have a plan for if the stalker shows up when you are together with them. This may include:
 - getting the survivor to a safe space
 - photographing or documenting the stalker
 - getting contact information or statements of witnesses
 - calling the police

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Do I have the capacity to assist in monitoring for threats? What does my capacity for this look like?
- What are my own opinions and thoughts on law enforcement involvement?
- Can I support the survivor in their decisions related to law enforcement? How will I feel if we don't share the same views?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- How can I support you in understanding the stalker's behavior?
- Would you like support in documenting what you are experiencing?
- Do you want support when engaging with lawyers, law enforcement, courts, legal systems and other authorities? If so, in what ways?
- Under what circumstances might you consider involving the police? If you choose to do that, how do you want me to be present for you?
- If the police are involved against your will or without you initiating their involvement, who do you want to support you? How would you want them to be engaged?



**CONSENSUAL
COMMUNITY
INTERVENTIONS**







CONSENSUAL COMMUNITY INTERVENTIONS

Across the globe, there is a great deal of work being done to imagine holistic paradigms for addressing harm and creating accountability* without punishment or system-involvement. It is work that is in alignment with the legacies of Black-led abolitionism, Indigenous mediation practices, women’s and LGBTQIA+ peer safety networks and criminal punishment reform.

This work is visionary and increasingly visible as an alternative to existing justice systems or law enforcement interventions.

The key requirements of the potential success of any of these approaches are:

1. The process is initiated by the survivor
2. The person who has caused the harm must:
 - a. understand and admit that they have done harm
 - b. be genuinely committed to ending the harm, engaging authentically with the process, and be held accountable for their harmdoing

Accountability + Restorative or Transformative Justice

“Justice” means something different from survivor to survivor. There are ways that the survivor may look for answers and healing that are different from how you would look for them, including seeking justice outside of the legal system. Ask your loved one what “justice” looks like for them.

Accountability* circles or processes, restorative* and transformative justice* frameworks are some ways to seek change outside of the legal system. You may also see some of these approaches being used as alternatives within traditional legal settings.

If you are familiar with these practices, share them without pressuring a survivor to consider an accountability* process or restorative/transformative justice* circle. Do not guilt and shame the survivor if they are not interested in initiating a process.

If they are turning it down, it means they do not trust the stalker to commit to the process in good faith. They are protecting their safety, which is the most important responsibility to themselves and their community.

Stalkers who are actively stalking cannot, by definition, engage in an accountability* process because their behavior has not stopped. The abuse must stop before accountability* can be imagined.

In fact, similarly to stalking through the courts, stalkers may try to initiate or engage these processes as a further form of stalking and contact with the person they are targeting. The stalker may try to manipulate the process or the survivor, and may engage in the process purely to perform accountability* to restore their own personal standing within a community (See Section: *Stalking By Proxy*).

If the survivor is willing to consider initiating one of these processes, make sure that they are connected with vetted, seasoned, established practitioners with a verified history of mediating processes related to serious abuse with outcomes deemed successful by former survivors. As this practice is formative in many spaces, there are many emerging practitioners who may not fully understand stalking and the inherent dangers of bringing together a stalker and survivor for any kind of engagement, or who may utilize tools that are ineffective at addressing this kind of violence.

Exposing Abusers

One of the hardest things about being a survivor is having to constantly repeat the story of what is happening to you - to friends, family, community members, employers, authorities, lawyers, advocates, therapists and gatekeepers. The repetition of constant re-telling can re-traumatize the survivor and exacerbate their trauma* responses, particularly re-experiencing and flashbacks (See Section: *Understanding Trauma Responses*).

A survivor may also be fearful for their community and what the stalker has done or may do to others. This fear and internalized self blame may impact seeking help from those around them.

Ask your loved one if there are ways that you can help them decrease the stalker's access to them, or if there are people or spaces that they think should be informed or warned. Do not do anything without consent and a clear, agreed upon plan.

Some of the things you may offer to do include:

- finding ways to safely share information across networks so the survivor doesn't have to constantly recite their story
- print a photo of the stalker and talk with local spaces that may be targeted by the stalker to gain access to the survivor or others.

These spaces can include:

- family homes
- workplaces
- schools
- extended networks
- community centers
- cultural spaces
- religious spaces
- local businesses
- sharing the stalker's known digital footprint*, including images, handles and accounts, across networks so people can be aware if they show up on social media pages or as "suggested friends"

Some survivors want to be very private about their experience of abuse, and may be worried that they will be defined by the stereotypes that may accompany the worst thing that was ever done to them. Other survivors may desperately want to out their abuser in order to reclaim their experience or warn people. Some may believe that exposing their abuser is a benefit to their safety, so that if anything ever happens to them, others will know who to look to first. Others may be afraid that being exposed will cause a stalker to escalate and retaliate by committing violence, further character assassinations, initiating mob attacks* or even suing or beginning a legal process against the survivor.

Talk with the survivor, in detail, about exactly what they are and are not comfortable sharing. Check in on these boundaries regularly, as these can change over time.

Protecting Communities

In many digital spaces, “call outs*” or “call ins*” are increasingly common as a way to name or expose harm and harm doers. Never, ever name your loved one’s stalker online or call them out on social media without the initiation, direction of and planning with the survivor. If the survivor wants this to happen, it is best done with an actively engaged, well-coordinated, reliable, committed, and broad support team that is prepared to persist over time and amidst escalations. This may include a legal strategy.

There is a long tradition of oppressed communities, particularly women and LGBTQIA+ people, creating whisper networks* to inform one another of abusers. In a whisper network*, an abuser is exposed exclusively via word of mouth between trusted and intimate community members, spreading broadly over time.

Some groups of survivors who have been targeted by the same serial abuser have found safety in numbers. Some of these groups have exposed their abuser publicly, as an anonymous group or taken collective legal action. If you know multiple survivors of the same abuser or abuse, ask if they would want to be connected to other survivors. Never connect them without speaking to them and confirming everyone’s consent first.

Securing Community Spaces

Stalkers often target locations and communities that they know are important in the survivor’s life (*See Section: Stalking By Proxy*). These can be physical or digital spaces. They may do this to intimidate or follow the survivor, gain information about them, or send them a message. They may also do this to establish a public persona or presence in a community to discredit or character assassinate the survivor, or to disprove allegations of violence. The stalker may attend or lead events, become a regular, or otherwise infiltrate a space as a form of power and control.

Some of these spaces include:

- Schools
- Community Spaces
- Religious Centers
- Music, Art or Cultural Venues
- Gyms and Health Centers
- Local Businesses
- Online Communities or Message Boards

For safety, survivors often have to “disappear” from their communities due to the stalker infiltrating spaces. This can contribute to the isolation of a survivor and negative emotional health and safety outcomes.

Community spaces play a critical role in shaping culture and shifting the passive acceptance of violence that is endemic to our society. No space can ever truly promise to be a “safe” space, especially for survivors of stalking. However, there are things that a space can do to improve their accessibility for survivors and help to build a new world.

Have a public policy and practice to address community safety.

- Be transparent about how privacy is held, maintained and safeguarded in real time. This includes how personal information is stored, located and shared.
- Have a publicly advertised “safeword” that people can use to tell staff if they are unsafe in the space. Have a secure space a person can be moved to if necessary, and a plan for how to deal with emergency interventions.
- Be explicit about police presence, including when, how, or ever they get called to the space.
- Make your policy public online, in your employee manuals, and train your staff in deescalation skills. Normalize addressing safety as a community practice and not as a response to fear.
- Address accountability for when these practices and policies are not upheld

Have a camera consent policy.

- Have an internal policy addressing image based communication methods.
- When organizing an event that will be filmed, photographed or otherwise recorded, ask each person as they arrive whether or not they consent to being recorded. You can have a separate section for people who do not want to be recorded, or you can provide stickers or lanyards everyone can wear so those recording know who to avoid.
- Have a clear set of instructions about how a person can have their image removed from your materials, including a direct contact person (See Section: Communicating Safely).

Center survivors and grow survivor leadership.

- Honor survivors as whole people. Reject tokenization and fetishization of all survivors of violence by refusing to participate in patronizing and pathologizing behaviors.
- Actively hire survivors of violence as leadership, staff and consultants and ensure abundant economic compensation.
- Consult with survivors in the community regularly and create an engaged and active feedback loop.
- Implement suggestions, guidance and direction of survivors. When organizing focus groups or surveys, take the suggested actions necessary to activate new systems.

Do not give platforms to known abusers.

- Vet people or groups who you are publicly promoting. Not all abusers have been exposed, but if they have been exposed, assume allegations are true. Have a no-tolerance policy about providing a platform for people known to cause violence or harm to others, or who participate in hate speech. This is not the same as providing a platform for people with controversial views or respecting freedom of expression.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- What is my own definition of “justice”?
- Am I willing to be visible to the community as a supporter by warning or informing others? If so, do I have a plan in place in case I’m targeted?
- If the stalker is someone I know or have cared for, how do I intend to interact with them now that I know about their abuse? Will the way I intend to interact with them now impact my ability to support the survivor?
- If the survivor is considering exposing the abuser, am I prepared to be there to support them? What would I need to do so?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- If you ever choose to begin an accountability* process, do you need help researching reputable practitioners?
- Do you want to inform or warn any people or spaces? If so, how would you want to do that?
- If you want me to help do that for you, I want to understand exactly what you would like me to say and to whom.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE





ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Stalking is not only emotionally taxing; it can be financially devastating. A survivor's ability to obtain or maintain employment may be jeopardized due to the stalking and resulting trauma symptoms (See Section: *Understanding Trauma Responses*). This, combined with the sheer cost of trying to protect oneself from stalking, can compromise the survivor's financial stability. Being stalked can disrupt and dismantle every part of a survivor's life for years, including:

- housing
- employment
- access to healthcare
- community and family connection
- custody of children
- credit
- access to public services
- professional support

It is expensive and exhausting to keep personal information "off the grid". There are often unexpected costs, such as:

- purchasing devices or tools for safety
- buying new phones, computers, or burner devices
- replacing belongings stolen or destroyed by the stalker
- transportation
- relocation and emergency housing
- having to pay back debt and bills the stalker has put in the survivor's name
- legal fees
- professional fees
- paying for privacy services to have personal information removed from internet
- paying for scrubbing services to remove content from the internet, such as non-consensual photos and videos that have been circulated or defamatory content

Stalkers may use coerced debt* practices, such as opening up accounts and/or obtaining loans with the survivor's information, locking them out of their own financial accounts, decimating their credit and erasing their identity. Financial abuse can look different with stalking, but remember that access to money is essential for survival.

In both the public and private sector, the few resources that exist to support a survivor with the financial cost of this abuse can be bureaucratic, difficult to get and easy to lose. If the survivor expresses interest in applying for public benefits or one of the rare private sector grants available, offer to help them with the process of applying. Many of these opportunities require the survivor to retell or exploit their trauma* story, which can be a deeply retraumatizing and dehumanizing process.

Opening new financial accounts, creating budgets, and finding alternate ways to access, store and hide money are supportive opportunities where loved ones' help can be needed. Helping a survivor create a budget can be a helpful offer, but it may feel pointless or like a judgment if they do not have enough resources for stability to begin with. Remember that being the target of stalking means anything can happen at any time, so economic solutions need to allow for immediate access and flexibility.

It can be very difficult for a survivor of stalking to ask for financial support, but it is more than likely one of the things they most need. It may also not be safe for a survivor to be public about their need for financial support. Be mindful of how money, finances and costs are discussed, as the survivor may feel shame around this topic.

It is important to remember that the burden of public shame, blame and judgment is most often unjustly directed at the survivor, rather than on the abuser where it belongs. If the survivor is expressing guilt, shame, embarrassment or humiliation at receiving financial support, remind them that this is not charity - it is an act of solidarity and mutual aid. Remind the survivor that the only people who contribute to fundraisers are those who are able to, and who choose to do so freely. Encourage them to work on accepting and receiving support, especially considering all that has been wrongfully taken from them at no fault of their own.

Financially supporting a survivor is an act of economic justice. It is a critical space of intervention for you as a supporter.

Gifts of Money

There are many ways you can support a survivor financially. If you have access to money and resources and feel comfortable gifting, offer them to the survivor with no strings attached. Accepting loans can be difficult for survivors, as they have good reason to feel uncertainty about their future and may not be able to commit to paying anything back. You can also offer to send meals or groceries, pay for transportation, bills, therapy or utilities. If the survivor offers goods or services, ask them for permission to promote their work and send clients their way when they feel ready. If you have access to supplies that may help them with their business, offer to safely send them or purchase them.

Giving Circles

You can start a private giving circle for the survivor by recruiting community members, with the survivor's knowledge and consent, for routine donations within a set period of time. When doing this, make sure that everyone who is invited to the giving circle is approved by the survivor, and that giving circle members understand this does not grant them any other kind of increased access or information about the survivor. If the survivor wants the giving circle to be private, make sure all members know not to discuss their contribution with anyone.

Public Fundraising + Crowdfunding

Sometimes survivors will create public fundraising campaigns. It can be very frightening to do this as public campaigns, especially on social media or crowdfunding* platforms, are an access point for stalkers to surveil and harass. When a survivor publicly fundraises, they are putting themselves in a very vulnerable position in terms of safety and public judgment. Making the choice to do this is most often a last resort out of desperation.

If a survivor decides they want to do a public fundraiser on social media or a crowdfunding* platform, assemble a small support team approved by the survivor to manage this. This includes putting the fundraiser under the public management of someone else or an anonymous group. Make sure the survivor approves of all language related to the fundraiser. Ask the survivor how frequently and where they want to receive donations as they may have safety considerations around their bank accounts.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Do I have capacity to support the work of fundraising?
- Do I have access to any financial or material resources that I can offer to the survivor?
- If so, am I prepared to offer these resources without expectations and judgment towards how the survivor utilizes them?
- If not, do I know anyone who does, and would I be willing to talk to both them and the survivor to coordinate possible support?
- Am I aware of any other grants or programs that I can share with the survivor or nominate them for with their consent?
- Am I comfortable being publicly identified as a financial supporter of the survivor?
- What is my relationship to giving and receiving money?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- What are your direct financial needs that you need most support around?
- What are the material needs you need support accessing?
- Do you need any support around budgeting or money management?
- What are some ways that you would be comfortable fundraising?
- Do you want fundraising to be public or private?
- If we fundraise, would you like us to share any updates, information or organize a thank you to supporters?



BUILDING A SUPPORT TEAM







BUILDING A SUPPORT TEAM

Much of this guide is written as a care tool for individuals supporting a survivor of stalking. However, supporting a survivor is always best done by a team of people. A support team is an informal network of people that the survivor trusts and who can commit to working with others to be present for the survivor. They should be prepared to coordinate with each other and be available for crisis response.

A team alleviates the responsibility on any one individual, allowing for healthier self-care practices and establishing a greater likelihood of being able to adequately support the survivor through the long haul.

Squad Up

When a survivor first learns that they are being stalked, they may respond by isolating, reaching out to close friends, or a broader community. The survivor should identify the people they most trust to be on their support team. The people on the support team may shift over time, with some people leaving or new people joining. When new people join, they should be welcomed by the rest of the team. Ask the survivor if they already have people in mind for a support team.

Building Trust and Relationships within the Support Team

Support team members may or may not know one another already and have their own unique relationships between themselves. It is a good idea to have a “Support Team Only” message thread on an end-to-end encrypted app where the team can communicate with one another without the survivor in the conversation. Having this thread can help with navigating rapid responses or emergencies, planning logistics, coordinating capacities, processing emotional responses, and building trust and relationships between support team members.

Make sure the survivor knows that you are doing this and that you follow their boundaries on things that should not be discussed on this thread without them. Communication that happens without the survivor but is about them can potentially be triggering*.

It is also a good idea to schedule periodic check-ins in person or via an encrypted or password protected video conference platform. This helps the support team get to know one another, and is particularly good for conversations that require a deeper level of consideration or coordination.

Make room for levity and community building within support team meetings and communications when possible. This can look like sharing brief individual check-ins, or short small group activities such as drawing or writing together. This helps to grow trust and comfort within the support team, so that if members themselves need support down the line, the connections within the team are strong and genuine.

Here are some check-in prompts for support teams to help build community:

- What is giving you hope lately?
- Share something beautiful you have experienced this week
- What's the last thing that made you laugh really hard?
- Is there something you'd like the support team to help you with?

Identifying Roles

Roles within the support team may shift and change depending on the practical or emotional capacity of each member, as well as the needs of the survivor. Never pressure anyone to take on something that they are uncomfortable with or are hesitant to commit to for any reason. It can also be a good idea to sometimes split certain roles between more than one person, such as having regular check-ins with the survivor. Identifying your own strengths and talents will help to establish what role you choose.

Some of the support team roles that may emerge from the needs of the survivor include:

- **Safehouse Network Coordinator**
 - Safely identifying and organizing possible emergency safe houses, or movement of the survivor between safehouses
- **Monitors**
 - Keeping track of threats or suspicious behavior of the stalker online or within community
- **Incident Log Maintenance**
 - Documenting updates on attacks, escalations, threats, harassment or other incidents in a central document that are reported by the survivor or other community members
- **Legal Liaison**
 - Supporting the survivor with legal matters, including preparation for court dates and organizing a group to escort a survivor to legal proceedings. The legal liaison may also communicate directly with a survivor's lawyer to report escalations or updates. This will require signing paperwork with a survivor's lawyer.
- **Fundraising Coordinator**
 - Manages crowd-funding, giving circles and other fundraising efforts to support the survivor financially
- **Crisis Facilitator**
 - Is aware of and confident to execute all safety plans (including emergency contacts, safehouses, and professional supports). The person the survivor contacts first to initiate these safety plans in times of crisis. Coordinates with other support systems when crisis occurs. Notifies others of pertinent information when needed.
- **Professionals + Specialists**
 - Provides concrete support within their professional or specialized scope as necessary. Is aware of which other support team members will be in communication with them and how communications are to safely take place

Support Team Safety

Some roles in the support team may be more visible than others, such as those who join the survivor at court dates or publicly manage fundraising campaigns. This can increase the likelihood that a stalker will also target this member of the support team. Discuss safety planning within the support team for everyone, and especially those who will be most visible.

If a member of the support team is targeted by the stalker, the resources in this guide are also applicable to them.

Remember that even within the support team, information about the survivor, such as current location, is on a need-to-know basis. The more people who know protected information, the less secure that information is, even within the support team. Survivors should determine who they feel comfortable knowing about protected information. It likely has much less to do with how much the survivor trusts you, and more about a combination of securing the information and reducing the number of people responsible to safeguard it.

Endurance

Experiences of stalking can last for a very long time, and include periods of dormancy. Especially during periods of dormancy, it can be easy to disconnect or become complacent (*See Section: Emotional Support for the Survivor and Yourself*). It is still a good idea to have short regular check-ins during a period of dormancy to keep the lines of communication and relationship building active. That way, if escalations strike, there will be a smoother transition to crisis response. Caring for yourself and one another, as well as the survivor, is critical to the effectiveness and solidity of the support team over the long-term.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Do I want to be an active member of my loved one's support team?
- If so, what role would I feel comfortable and confident in?

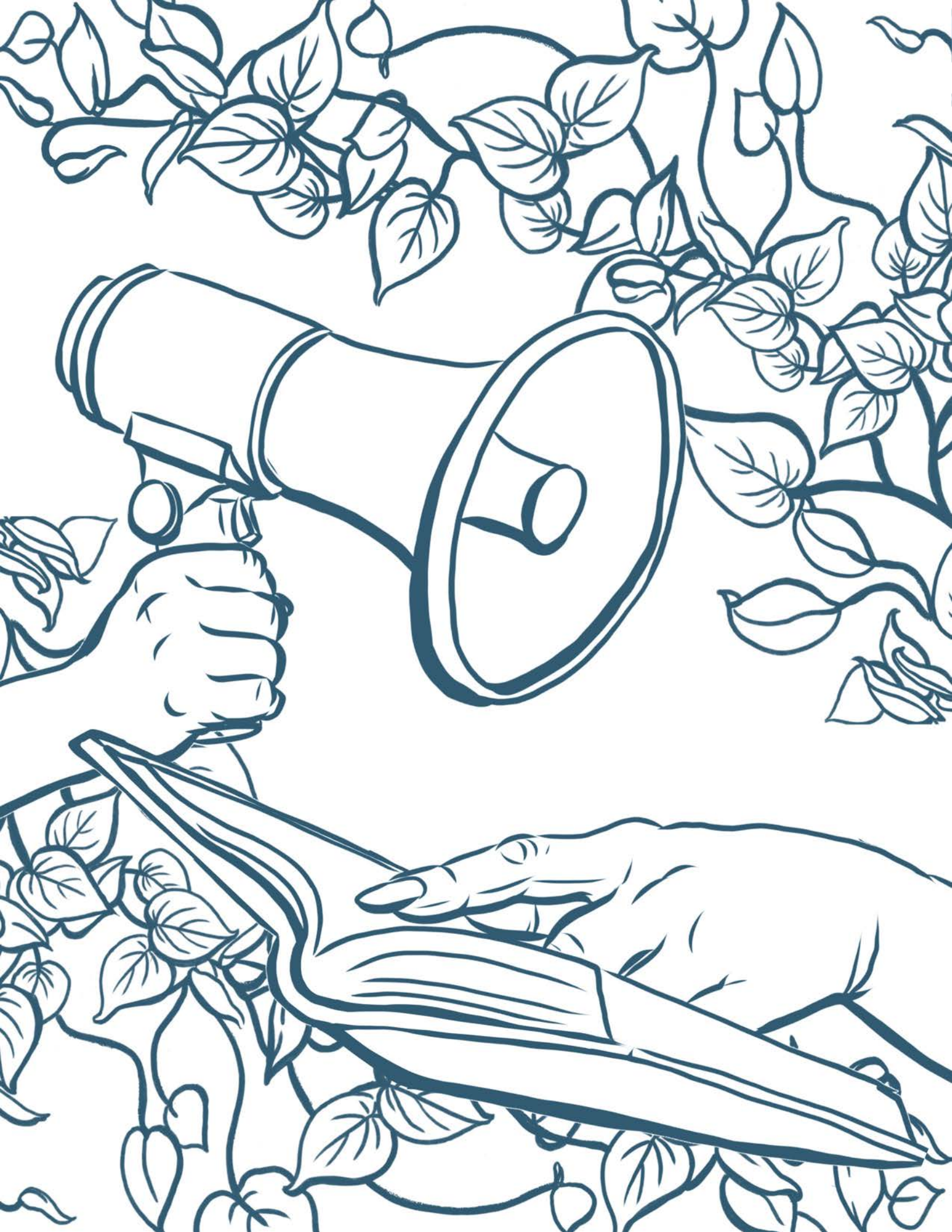
Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- Do you want to have an active support team?
- If so, who would you want to talk to about being on this team? Do you have any ideas about what roles you might want people to take on?



**BEAN
UPSTANDER**







BE AN UPSTANDER

Being an upstander* means to be proactively engaged in interrupting violence and abuse. Early intervention and identification of stalking behaviors can prevent trauma* and violence. Be mindful of things that you observe that may be out of the ordinary, both on and offline, such as if someone knows a lot of information about you or the survivor that you haven't shared with them. If you feel like something is off, listen to your internal signals and share this information forward (*See Section: Emotional Support for the Survivor and Yourself*). Upstanding creates safe and supportive spaces where harm will not be accepted.

Intentional Language

Try to help reduce the normalization of fear culture by not using the terms "stalking" or "obsessive" to casually describe average behaviors (such as looking at a crush's social media profile) or by using the term "trauma" to describe common discomfort or upset.

Using these words out of context minimizes the experiences of survivors of stalking and unintentionally normalizes stalkers' behavior.

Digital Security

We all are responsible for keeping ourselves safe, which extends to our lives and interactions online. Normalize protecting your digital life in the same way you protect your physical life. Have secure passwords or passphrases that are not replicated across accounts without sharing them with others. Enable two-factor authentications. Secure your wireless network with router safety measures. Build your digital literacy and be your own security guard online. Fortifying your digital security reduces access points for people to get you, and your loved ones, personal information. Maintaining your own digital security encourages others to care for their own.

Best practices for digital security are constantly evolving. Regularly educate yourself through research and workshops.

Educating Your Community

When a survivor is being stalked, their behaviors may seem out of character or confusing to others. Often, the stalker's goal is to terrorize the survivor to elicit a reaction from them, but in just the right way so that the survivor's response will be (wrongly) perceived as an overreaction by others. Stalkers enjoy the sense of power and control that they have over the people they target, and enjoy when the survivor shows fear or has a trauma* response. If a survivor you love is acting in ways that are unusual for them, or that appear to be a trauma* response, remember to be patient and affirming.

Interrupt behaviors and language in your community that normalize or minimize stalking and abuse, or that blame or shame victims. Be open and public in your commitment to believe and support survivors everyday, and encourage others to think about how they can do the same.

You are the resource for your loved one. Building yourself up builds them up, too. Take time to educate yourself on the areas of understanding you need to support yourself and your loved one through this experience. Learn about the behaviors and tactics of stalkers, and common responses and concerns of survivors. Do not wait for others or systems to intervene to stop the stalking. Take action now.

Share resources with family, friends and community members who may not be well informed about stalking, abuse or trauma.

Sharing this guide and other resources available on survivorguides.org, thrivingthrough.com and mensenxoxo.com is a great start.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- How can I shift my language to stop normalizing a culture of fear, violence and abuse?
- Are my passwords easily guessable if a person knows me?
- What do I need to educate myself on to improve my digital security?
- What do I want to share with others to promote a safety culture?
- How can I continue to educate myself on abuse and violence, and how can I share what I learn with others?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- Do you need support reviewing your digital security methods?
- Do you need support securing devices and/or accounts?
- What do you want others to know about the experience of being stalked?



IN GRATITUDE

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide, and for sharing this resource with others. Above all, thank you for supporting survivors and working toward a new world.

Thriving Through and mensen. are in deep gratitude to all of the people who have supported us through our own experiences of abuse, and for all those who helped us create this guide.

Always remember: If a person is being stalked, believe what they tell you.

A future of justice for survivors,
and communities free of stalking, abuse and violence,
is ours for the making.

It will take all of us.





GLOSSARY

Language determines our perspectives. The terms in this glossary are working definitions and subject to evolve as ideas grow and change. Some of these terms define power relationships and bias in the hopes of dismantling those structures. Being intentional about how we choose language relates to our actions, inactions, practices and comprehension.

We hope that these terms will help you to find the language you are looking for.

- **Ableism** - The false belief that there is only one way to have a “normal,” “good” or “healthy” mind or body; The systemic exclusion of, discrimination against, social prejudice toward and oppression* of people with different abilities, disabilities or neurodivergence*; Rooted in bias that people are defined solely by their different ability or neurodivergence, and the false belief that neurotypical people with more able bodies are superior
- **Accountability** - The act of taking responsibility, admitting and addressing harms caused, and taking action to repair the consequences of harm
- **Anti-Blackness** - The white supremacist practice of ethically disregarding and devaluing Blackness and Black people while systematically oppressing or marginalizing Black people and Black experiences; Overt racism* (*See White Supremacy*)
- **Biphobia** - The prejudice, fear, hatred and discomfort against bisexual people and others who are attracted to people from more than one gender expression or beyond the gender binary
- **Burnout** - Experiencing emotional exhaustion, fatigue, feeling ineffective, dispirited, hopeless, or worn out
- **Call In** - The process of confronting injustice, harm or abuse in a private setting by directly addressing the person responsible for it in order to create dialogue for accountability*, changed behavior, reparation of harm and paradigm shifts

- **Call Out** - The process of confronting injustice, harm or abuse in a public setting to expose the person doing harm and inform others of their behavior; A form of public shaming; A way to interrupt to prevent further harm
- **Cis-Centering** - The devaluation, discrediting, dismissal or invisibilization of the lives, experiences and value of trans, nonbinary and gender expansive people; Related to the false belief that cisgender people are superior; The act of prioritizing the lives, experiences, perspectives of cisgender people; (See *Transphobia*)
- **Cisgender** - People whose gender identity corresponds with or was accurately assigned at birth related to hegemonic definitions of sex within the gender binary.
- **Classism** - The systematic oppression* of and bias against working-class, poor or low-income people rooted in the false belief of their inferiority; The assignment of characteristics, worth, value and ability based on the false belief of the superiority and moral supremacy of wealthy, rich, ruling class or middle class people; Related to the fear of downward economic mobility to empower the ruling class (See *Wealth Supremacy*)
- **Coerced Debt** - Practice of economic abuse to force the survivor into precarious financial positions through coercion and/or fraud
- **Coercive Control** - Strategic course of oppressive behaviors in a relationship to gain control; Ongoing violation of rights in the relationship so the abuser can establish dominion; Form of psychological and emotional abuse*; Some of these behaviors include isolation, intimidation, degradation, denigration, humiliation, financial restriction, aggression
- **Cognitive Processing** - Mental functions such as attention, perception, learning, problem solving; The process of taking in information and understanding it; Thought or mental processing
- **Compassion Fatigue** - The emotional, spiritual and physical distress resulting from providing care to someone who is experiencing pain and suffering; A state of exhaustion due to prolonged exposure to compassion stress*
- **Compassion Stress** - The impact of knowing about trauma* experienced by a loved one; The “costs of caring”

- **Crowdfunding** - The fundraising practice of raising small amounts of money from large groups of people, often coordinated on online platforms
- **DARVO** - Acronym for Deny the abuse, Attack the victim, Reverse Victim and Offender; A gaslighting response by those who are guilty of harm when confronted wherein the harm doer says the abuse did not happen or minimizes it, attacks the victim to blame and shame them and manipulate the focus on to a false or irrelevant allegation against the victim, thereby identifying the person who has been harmed as the antagonist; A common tactic of abusers to both deflect accountability and further harm the person being targeted
- **Depersonalization** - Excessive feelings of detachment from one's self; Recurring episodes of a loss of sense of self causing one to feel like an outside observer of one's own life (See *Dissociation*)
- **Derealization** - Feeling detached and disconnected from people, your environment, surroundings or time (See *Dissociation*)
- **Digital Footprint** - An individual's online data trail; Includes all traces of a person's online personal information and activity
- **Digital Violence** - All forms of abuse weaponized by or perpetuated through technology; Online abuse; Cyber abuse
- **Dissociation** - An involuntary escape from reality characterized by disconnection in a person's sensory experience, thoughts, identity, consciousness and memory, or detachment from waking life (See *Derealization* or *Depersonalization*)
- **Doxxing** - The public release of a person's private, sensitive and personal information
- **Elitism** - The attitudes and behaviors of a person who believes they belong to superior or elite group
- **Emotional Abuse** - Abuse intended to cause distressed feeling states in another person; Behaviors meant to undermine, devalue and harm a person through words and actions; Intended actions to cause intense harm to a person's mental health; Forms can include verbal abuse, rejection, gaslighting*; May be used interchangeably with psychological abuse*

- **Emotional Distress** - Mental distress, suffering, anguish, including depression, shame, humiliation, shock, embarrassment, grief, anxiety, or fear
- **Empathic Strain** - When being present for another's emotions becomes burdensome; When empathic concern becomes empathic distress
- **Executive Functioning** - Cognitive skills used in everyday life, such as working memory, flexibility thinking, self control; The control of complex, goal-directed behavior and tasks
- **Fat Phobia** - The systemic exclusion of, discrimination against, social prejudice toward and oppression* of people with larger, curvier bodies or visible body fat; Rooted in the bias that fat people are defined solely by their size, and the false belief that smaller bodied or thinner people are superior, healthier, more attractive, desirable or morally superior; Related to the fear of being or becoming fat to empower patriarchy and white supremacy*
- **Femicide** - The murder of cis women, trans women, gender-expansive femmes and girls; The deliberate killing of people based on their feminine gender or sex; A form of systemic gender-based and patriarchal mass homicide most commonly committed by cis gender* men to assert power and control; Femicide is genocide (*See Hate Violence*)
- **Fight, Flight or Freeze** - The involuntary response that happens in the brain when confronted with danger; Release of stress hormones to prepare the body to handle fear through fighting, running, (taking flight) or freezing; The body's internal crisis management system
- **Gaslighting** - The deliberate manipulation of a person's thoughts, feelings, perceptions and judgment to cause them to doubt and question their own reality and sanity; Done to gain power and control over another through creating confusion, disorientation, disempowerment; Emotional and psychological abuse* that can be perpetrated by individuals, groups, institutions and systems; Chronic gaslighting impacts a person's emotional reality and emotional balance
- **Gender Binary** - The false belief that there are only two genders determined by sex which is assigned at birth; The idea that these genders are opposites of one another and that sex assigned at birth determines one's relationship to masculinity, femininity or sexuality

- **Geolocating** - Using digital information to determine a person's physical location; Digital tracking of a person's movement
- **Grounding** - Practices to come back into the present moment and embodiment when a person is feeling overwhelming emotions
- **Hate Violence** - Violence against a person or group motivated by bias and oppression* for the purposes of power and control
- **Homophobia** - The systemic exclusion of, discrimination against, social prejudice, fear, mistrust and oppression* of people who are LGBTQIA+ or two-spirit; Rooted in the hegemonic bias that anything or anyone who transgresses against heteronormativity is inferior or dangerous
- **Hyperarousal** - The physiological response to stress that is characterized by vigilance, fear and hesitance; Activated during fight, flight or freeze response; Symptom of experiencing trauma
- **Hypervigilance** - A state of increased alertness and awareness, may be accompanied by behaviors to prevent danger; Heightened sensitivity to surroundings and people; Scanning for hidden dangers
- **Image Based Abuse** - Photos and/or videos taken without a person's consent; Sharing and distributing images and/or videos without a person's consent; Threatening to share or distribute images and/or videos taken consensually or nonconsensually
- **IoT / Home Automation** - "Internet of Things" are devices connected to each other; Control of electronics in the home through the internet; System that allows for remote control use of devices
- **Litigation Abuse** - Use of court systems to abuse a person; Misuse of court systems to intentionally and directly harm someone
- **Metadata** - Data that describes and defines characteristics of other data; "Information stored within a document that is not evident by just looking at the file. It is an electronic "fingerprint" that automatically adds identifying characteristics, such as the creator or author of the file, the name of individuals who have accessed or edited the file, the location from which the file was accessed, and the amount of time spent editing the file. In addition to data that is automatically added to a document, there is user-introduced metadata, such as tracked changes, versions, hidden text and embedded objects."⁶

6 <https://hls.harvard.edu/dept/its/what-is-metadata/>

- **Misogynoir** - Anti-Black racist misogyny* targeted specifically at black cis and trans women and femmes; Coined by feminist Moya Bailey⁷
- **Misogyny** - Hatred and dehumanization of cis and trans women; Manifestation of sexist ideology to enforce patriarchy
- **Mob Attacks** - Organized digital or physical attacks on an individual by a group
- **Mood and Affective Dysregulation** - Changing of mood states, such as sadness to anger or happiness to despair; Shifts in outward expression of person's inner emotions, could be done through facial expressions, body language, sounds
- **Non-binary** - People whose gender identity are beyond or not defined by the gender binary of masculine and feminine; may or may not correspond with or may or may not have been accurately assigned at birth related to hegemonic definitions of sex within the gender binary; can include gender identities and expressions of multiple genders, no genders, or fluidity between genders
- **Oppression** - Systematically subjugation of communities and individuals to political, economic, cultural, and social degradation because they belong to certain or specific groups; States and processes including psychological and political victimization where power relations produce domination and subordination; Unjust power and authority over others
- **Phishing** - The fraudulent process of trying to obtain sensitive personal information, often through spoofing*; "Phishing for your information"
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** - A diagnosable mental health condition that may develop in response to situations that cause extreme fear, helplessness and terror which activate the fight, flight or freeze response*; Characterized by re-experiencing of traumatic events (flashbacks, nightmares, anxious thoughts), emotional numbing (detached from others), hyperarousal*, hypervigilance*, avoidance, irritability, anger, and exaggerated startle responses, which cause overwhelming states of distress; Complex PTSD (C-PTSD) may develop from chronic exposure to traumatic events

7 <http://moyabailey.com>

- **Psychological Abuse** - Abuse intended to cause negative, distressed or distorted thought processes in another person; Behaviors meant to undermine, devalue, frighten, control, isolate and harm a person through words and actions; Deliberate actions to cause intense harm to person's mental health; May be used interchangeably with emotional abuse*
- **Push Notification** - A message sent to a device from an app
- **Queerphobia** - The fear of, systemic exclusion of, discrimination against, social prejudice toward and oppression* of queer people; Rooted in the hegemonic bias that anything or anyone who transgresses against the gender binary or heteronormativity is inferior or dangerous
- **Racism** - Systems of dominance, power and oppression based on socially constructed racial and ethnic hierarchies
- **Restorative Justice** - "A theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behaviour.⁸"; Approach to repairing harm when injustice occurs through engaging the victim, offender and others impacted and/or involved (See *Transformative Justice*)
- **Secondary Trauma** - Emotional distress from indirect exposure to someone else's traumatic experiences, may mimic symptoms of PTSD*; Indirect trauma that occurs when a person is continuously exposed to the trauma of other people
- **Sexism** - The dehumanization of, systemic exclusion of, discrimination against, social prejudice toward and oppression* of people based on sex; directed towards women, cis women, trans women, gender-expansive femmes, girls and intersex people; The belief system that cis gender men are superior to all and women are especially inferior, rationalizing patriarchy
- **Sex Worker Antagonism** - Hostility toward, hate, dehumanization and oppression of people who do sex work; Devaluation and discrediting of the labor of sex work and workplace safety issues
- **Software Tracking Systems** - Programs that are capable of reporting and recording location using global positioning system (GPS); Can be installed into people, places or things such as vehicles, devices, electronics, or animals

8 <http://restorativejustice.org/restorative-justice/about-restorative-justice/tutorial-intro-to-restorative-justice/>

- **Spiritual Abuse** - Deliberate abuse of the human spirit or faith for purposes of power and control; The use of spirituality or religion to abuse; Abuse by a spiritual leader or system
- **Spoofing** - Disguising a contact, such as phone numbers, accounts, email addresses, websites, IP addresses, or GPS locations, as a reputable source; Often used for phishing*
- **Stalking by Proxy** - Using third parties, such as people, places and institutions to stalk; "Proxy Stalking"
- **Stalking through the Courts** - Using court and judicial systems to contact, harass, intimidate, manipulate and cause emotional and psychological harm and distress to a person being targeted; Often a deliberate tactic to deplete the survivor of resources
- **Surveillance Capitalism** - Mining, distributing and commodifying personal data and behaviors for the purpose of profit making
- **Swatting** - Creating a hoax crisis to warrant emergency responders, such as heavily armed personnel; Invoking a SWAT Team Response from a false claim
- **Transformative Justice** - "A way of practicing alternative justice that acknowledges individual experiences and identities and works to actively resist the state's criminal injustice system⁹"; Approach to combating violence through seeking safety and accountability through transformation of the conditions that enabled harm without relying on the state (*See Restorative Justice*)
- **Transgender** - People whose gender identity does not correspond with or was not accurately assigned at birth related to hegemonic definitions of sex within the gender binary
- **Transphobia** - The systemic exclusion of, discrimination against, social prejudice, fear, mistrust and oppression* of people who are trans, nonbinary or gender expansive; Rooted in the hegemonic bias that anything or anyone who transgresses against the gender binary or heteronormativity is inferior, dangerous or dishonest.

9 <https://transformharm.org/transformative-justice/>

- **Transmisogyny** - Hatred and dehumanization of trans, nonbinary or gender expansive women and femmes; Manifestation of sexist and transphobic ideology to enforce patriarchy and the gender binary; Transphobia* + misogyny*
- **Trauma** - Any experience of distress that overwhelm a person's ability to cope in response to deeply disturbing and/or life threatening events; Emotional, psychological, or physical injury
- **Trigger** - Feelings of distress that are activated by conscious or subconscious memory recall; Activated by words, behaviors and actions of individuals, groups, institutions, systems; Can be activated through 5 senses
- **Upstander** - Person who speaks out against injustice and takes action in defense of those who are targeted by harm to create positive change
- **Vicarious Trauma** - Cognitive, emotional and/or psychological changes occurring from cumulative exposure to the traumatic experiences of others
- **Victim Blaming** - Attitude and prejudice against victims or survivors, holding them responsible for the actions of the person or institution that caused harm; Practice of questioning the victim or survivor about what they could have done differently to prevent the harm or abuse from happening, therefore placing fault on the victim or survivor rather than on the abuser, where it belongs; Allows people to believe that the harms experienced could have been prevented if the victim or survivor made different choices, therefore resulting in denial and creating the false conclusion that abuse could not happen to the person who is doing the victim-blaming
- **Victim Shaming** - An assault to the self-esteem and self-worth of a victim or survivor; Judgment or ridicule of the victim or survivor for speaking out about or against abuse; Causing someone to feel "bad," defective or inferior for the way they navigate abuse, trauma and/or and harm; Negatively evaluating how a victim manages, navigates and/or copes through abuse and trauma; A way of inappropriately placing guilt on the survivor rather than on the abuser where it belongs

- **Wealth Supremacy** - The idea that people with wealth or from higher socioeconomic status are inherently superior to all others, especially working class and poor people, and that wealthy people have earned their power and control over all others
- **Whisper Network** - Informal communication networks to share information about harm and abuse through word of mouth
- **White Supremacy** - The idea that white people are inherently superior to people from all other races and that white people should have control over people of other races; System of oppression to ensure white people have power and dominion in all aspects of life; Seen in overt and covert interactions with individuals, groups, institutions and systems
- **Xenophobia** - Fear and hatred of people or anything from another country or culture

Here are some questions you can ask yourself:

- Do any of these terms define my own experiences?
- What terms am I resistant to?
- What terms are areas I want to learn more about?
- What are action steps I want to take in my everyday life to shift my language?

Here are some questions you can ask the survivor:

- Are any of these words language you use or want to use?
- Are there any ways I can shift my language that would make you feel more supported in your life?



About the Authors

THRIVING THROUGH // thrivingthrough.com

Thriving Through is a therapeutic practice that specializes in working with those who have experienced digital violence* and intimate partner violence.

Thriving Through provides therapy for individuals and groups along with advocacy work, consulting, workshops and webinars.

Thriving Through is dedicated to ending gender-based violence by supporting those who are directly impacted.

Thriving Through Life. Thriving Through Trauma. Thriving Through Happiness.

MENSEN. // mensenxoxo.com

mensen. is a writer, public artist, designer, educator, facilitator and creative strategist.

Her public practice is rooted in illustration, muralism, poetry, hope and defiance. Through participatory storytelling and design, she collaborates with groups working on Movement and social justice campaigns, memory-keeping and collective healing and liberation.

mensen. has worked in the public arts, media, education, non-profit, advocacy and direct-service sectors. She has also worked with local and transnational grassroots initiatives by and for working-class and poor communities, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ people, women, youth and communities impacted by trauma, violence and the criminal punishment system.

mensen. believes everyone is inherently creative, art is about ideas, making is a form of alchemy that can transform relationships, and above all: hope is the antidote.





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