

Check your mobile phone settings If the abusive person has provided your mobile phone, consider turning it off when not in use. Many phones let you to 'lock' the keys so it won't automatically answer or call if bumped. Check the settings menu for an optional location feature - which you may want to switch off/on.

Get your own mobile phone When making or receiving private calls or arranging escape plans, try not to use a shared or family mobile phone because the phone bill and the phone log might reveal your plans to an abuser. Consider using a prepaid phone card so that you won't get numbers listed on your bill.

Home phones and baby monitors If you don't want others to overhear your conversations, turn baby monitors off when not in use and use a traditional corded phone for sensitive conversations. Also, be aware that most home phones can redial the last number called.

Search for your name on the Internet Major search engines such as Google or Yahoo may have links to your contact information. Do a search for your name in quotation marks: 'Full Name'.

If you feel your Internet use is being watched or you are being stalked, save evidence and consider reporting abuse or stalking. Messages left via texts/answering machines can be saved as evidence of stalking or abuse. Keep a record of all suspicious incidents. You can report abuse, violence, threats, stalking or cyber-stalking to police and the abuser can be charged with a criminal offence, or police can assist with applying for an Intervention Order.

Why would someone do this to me?

A stalker is often possessive of their girlfriend/ boyfriend or ex partner, and thinks, "You're mine - you do as I say and don't dare leave me!"

Just like 'real-life' stalking and harassment, cyber-stalking and cyber-bullying are often symptoms of someone's need to control another person's life. They don't care about their boyfriend's or girlfriend's right to freedom, privacy and independence. They often want to have power over their BF/GF or ex or want to punish them for breaking up. They might like the power of making their partner feel like they're being watched. Remember that behaviour which makes you feel scared, unsafe or uncomfortable is never OK - even if the person says that they love you or that they're 'doing it because they love you'.

Dealing with violence, abuse and stalking is difficult and dangerous. Domestic violence services and the police can discuss options and help you in your safety planning.

Also see our brochures:

- *How to Apply for an Intervention Order*
- *Unwanted Contact by Stalking*

Information in this brochure provided by
Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria
www.dvrcv.org.au



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Abuse by Cyber Stalking

April 2012

what it is & what you can do



- Internet ● email ●
- mobile phones ●
- computer use ●



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Abuse and family violence doesn't always come in the form of physical threats or violence.

Online behavior by a partner, family member or someone else can also be abusive if it makes you feel scared or unsafe.

Cyber-harassment or cyber-bullying

Abusive online behaviour can include:

- Checking your email without permission
- Tracking your internet use
- Hacking into your online accounts
- Impersonating you or another person
- Spreading rumours about you
- Posting embarrassing, fake or intimate videos, photos or comments about you without your consent.
- Constantly messaging, emailing or texting you in a way that makes you feel intimidated or scared, or
- Harassing you on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace or dating/chat/games sites.

If anyone – including a family member, boy/girlfriend or partner – is doing this to you, remember: you don't have to put up with it.

Cyber-harassment is not just about being teased – it's repeated behaviour is designed to humiliate, control or scare the person being targeted. It's not legal, and it's not OK.

What is cyber-stalking?

Stalking someone online is against the law. It includes contacting you on Facebook or any kind of online site, following you around or leaving messages on your phone or online, and deliberately trying to make you feel scared. You should contact the police and get their advice. Save any messages or emails to show the police if necessary.

Stalking can also involve threats or sexual comments. The stalker often tries make the person they're stalking feel intimidated and scared. Stalking a girlfriend, boyfriend or ex, or someone else, is against the law in Victoria.

1. Tell them to stop, then, if you can, block and report it.

- Tell the person you do not want them to contact you.
- You don't have to say why and you only have to do it once.
- Ignore any more messages you get from them, but don't delete them.

2. Save everything

- Don't delete creepy or harassing messages. Save email, chat logs, Facebook messages, twitter DMs, anything.
- Take screenshots of comments, messages or photos on MS Messenger or mySpace by pressing "Prt Scn" on your keyboard; open your 'Word' or 'Paint' program, then Edit >Paste to view it, then SAVE.

3. Report it

Block them and report it if it's on Facebook, mySpace etc. If it's a dating site, an online game or any other website, contact the site and report it.

If you think you are in danger

Trust your instincts. If you suspect the abusive person knows too much, it is possible that your phone, computer, email, car use or other activities are being monitored. Abusers and stalkers can act in incredibly persistent and creative ways to maintain power and control.

Use a safer computer If the abusive person has access to your computer, they might be monitoring your activities. Easily available 'Spyware' programs can track your on-line movements without you knowing and it is impossible to delete or clear all 'tracks' of your computer activities. It may be safest to use a computer at a public library, community centre, or Internet café when you look for help, a new place to live, etc..

Create a new email account If you suspect someone abusive can access your email, consider creating an additional account on a safer computer. Do not create or check this new email from a computer your abuser could access, in case it is monitored. Use an anonymous name and account. Look for free web-based email accounts and do not provide detailed information about yourself.

Change passwords and pin numbers

Some abusers use a victim's email and other accounts to impersonate and cause harm. If the abuser knows or can guess your passwords for any password protected accounts - online banking, voicemail, etc., change them quickly and frequently. Always use a safer computer to access your accounts.