



Supporting Victims of Stalking in Our Faith Communities

Help for Faith Leaders and Congregations



Pieces of a Bigger Picture

Faith Communities and Service Providers Working Together
to Support Victims of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Hearing the Voices of Survivors

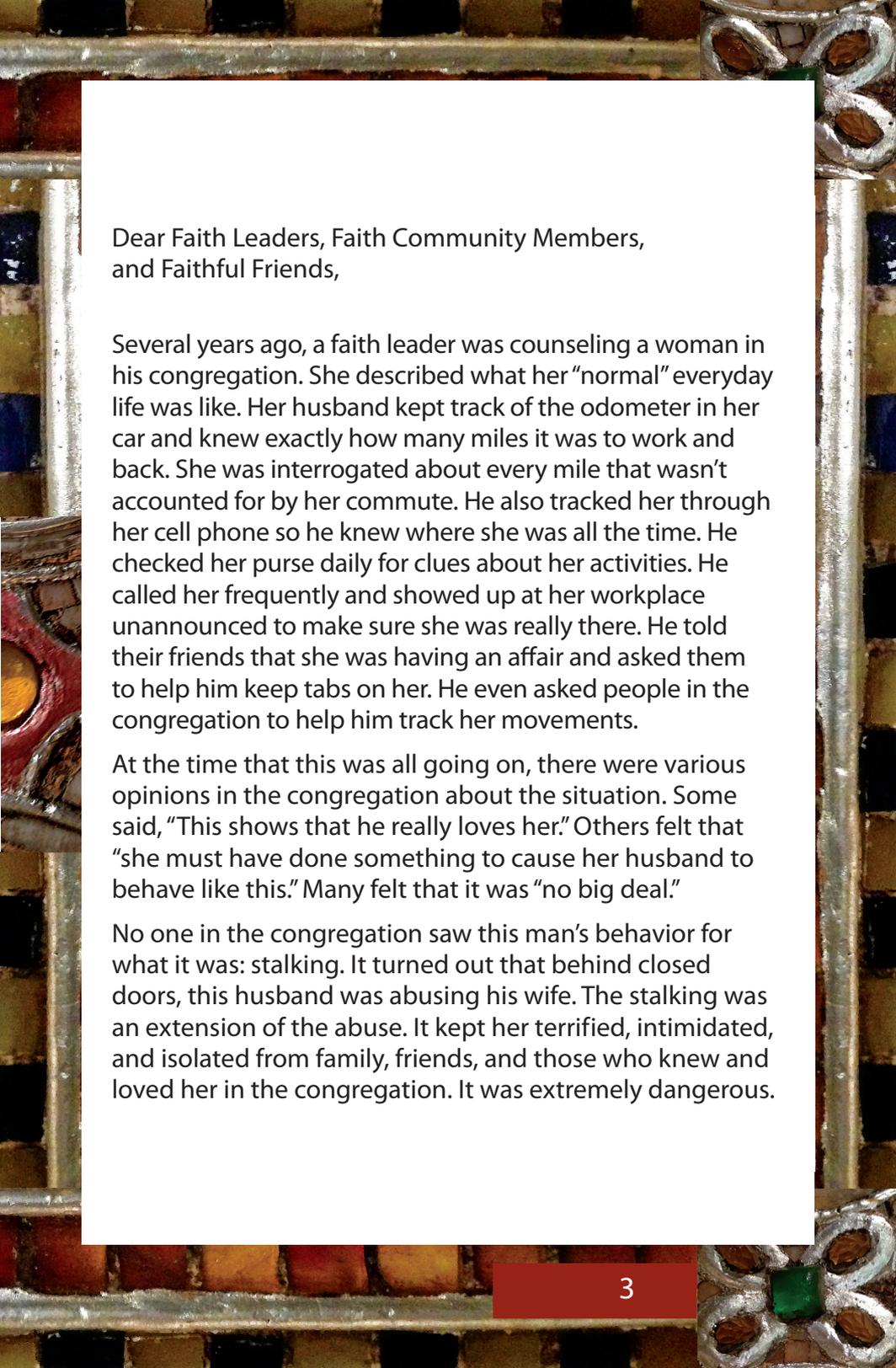
“I wish so much I would have had the courage to talk to someone about what was happening to me. I kept it all inside and it just ate away at my soul.”

“You need to be aware all of the time — and that’s where the trauma comes in. Your body just can’t be alert all the time.”

**“It has taken me a long time to realize that I did not ask for him to torment me
It was all his doing.”**

“I had to realize this person was broken and there was nothing I could do to put him back together — nothing I could do to fix him.”

These quotes from stalking survivors are taken from Emily Spence-Diehl, [Stalking: A Handbook for Victims](#), Learning Publications, Inc., Holmes Beach, FL 1999, pp. 42, 36, 39, & 52 (respectively). We are so grateful for their courage and strength, and we hope that this resource will help others.

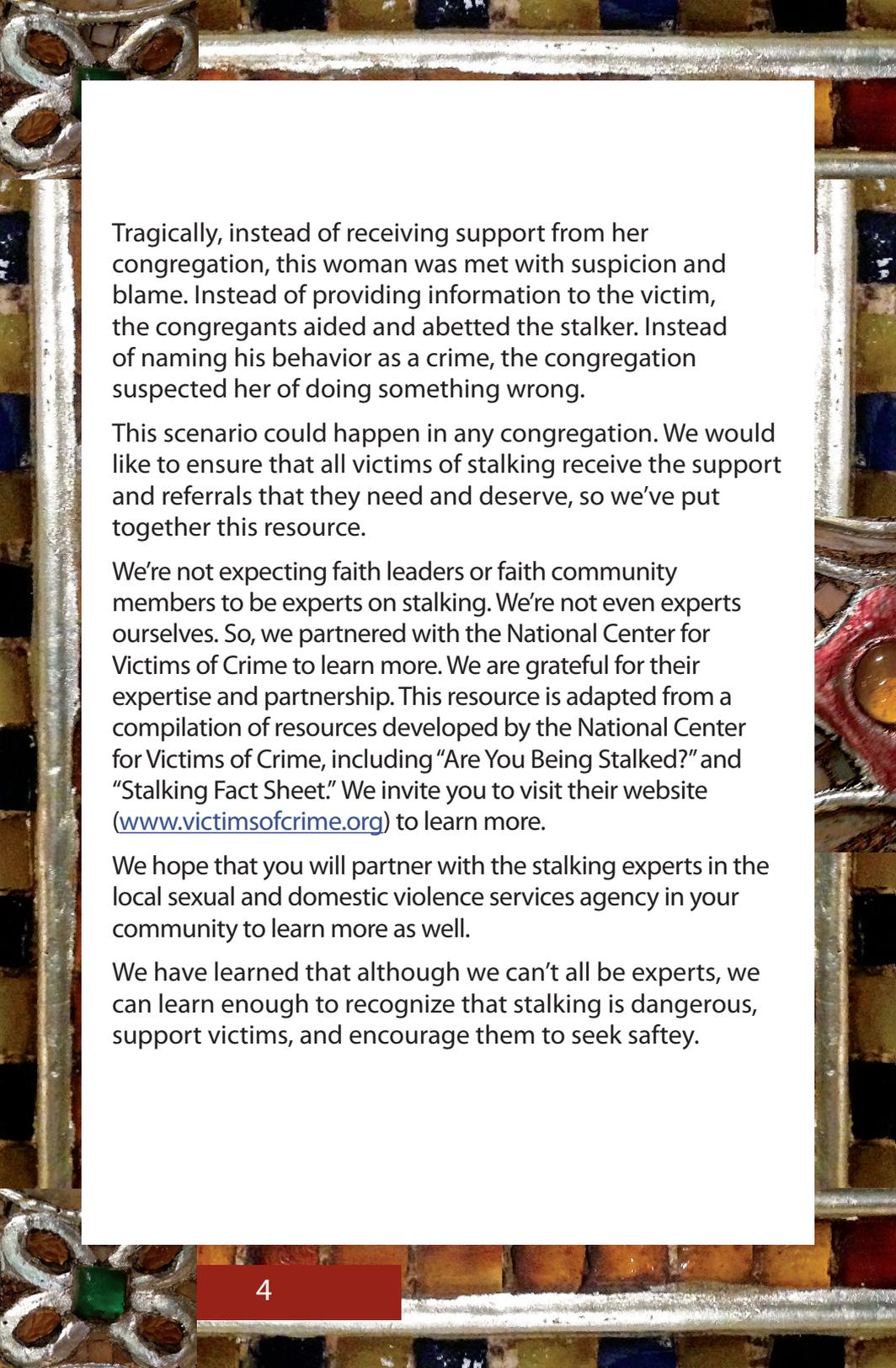


Dear Faith Leaders, Faith Community Members,
and Faithful Friends,

Several years ago, a faith leader was counseling a woman in his congregation. She described what her “normal” everyday life was like. Her husband kept track of the odometer in her car and knew exactly how many miles it was to work and back. She was interrogated about every mile that wasn’t accounted for by her commute. He also tracked her through her cell phone so he knew where she was all the time. He checked her purse daily for clues about her activities. He called her frequently and showed up at her workplace unannounced to make sure she was really there. He told their friends that she was having an affair and asked them to help him keep tabs on her. He even asked people in the congregation to help him track her movements.

At the time that this was all going on, there were various opinions in the congregation about the situation. Some said, “This shows that he really loves her.” Others felt that “she must have done something to cause her husband to behave like this.” Many felt that it was “no big deal.”

No one in the congregation saw this man’s behavior for what it was: stalking. It turned out that behind closed doors, this husband was abusing his wife. The stalking was an extension of the abuse. It kept her terrified, intimidated, and isolated from family, friends, and those who knew and loved her in the congregation. It was extremely dangerous.



Tragically, instead of receiving support from her congregation, this woman was met with suspicion and blame. Instead of providing information to the victim, the congregants aided and abetted the stalker. Instead of naming his behavior as a crime, the congregation suspected her of doing something wrong.

This scenario could happen in any congregation. We would like to ensure that all victims of stalking receive the support and referrals that they need and deserve, so we've put together this resource.

We're not expecting faith leaders or faith community members to be experts on stalking. We're not even experts ourselves. So, we partnered with the National Center for Victims of Crime to learn more. We are grateful for their expertise and partnership. This resource is adapted from a compilation of resources developed by the National Center for Victims of Crime, including "Are You Being Stalked?" and "Stalking Fact Sheet." We invite you to visit their website (www.victimsofcrime.org) to learn more.

We hope that you will partner with the stalking experts in the local sexual and domestic violence services agency in your community to learn more as well.

We have learned that although we can't all be experts, we can learn enough to recognize that stalking is dangerous, support victims, and encourage them to seek safety.

We can refer victims to a local sexual or domestic violence services agency and other resources (see p. 18) for help.

We pray that this booklet will provide you with information that empowers you to reach out to someone you may know in your family, congregation, or community with the support and referrals they need to stay safe. It's just one more way that people in faith communities can look out for, support, and love one another.

Sincerely,



Rev. Dr. Anne Marie Hunter
Director, Safe Havens



Alyson Morse Katzman, MPA
Associate Director, Safe Havens



We are deeply grateful to the Office on Violence Against Women of the U.S. Department of Justice for their guidance and support of this groundbreaking work. It is an honor to share the journey with you.

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For additional copies of this resource, please contact:

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You can download this and other resources for free at
www.interfaithpartners.org.

Stalking: Definition and Basic Information

What comes to your mind when someone says, “stalking”? Perhaps a creepy movie? Or a scary spy thriller novel?

Stalking might sound exotic and far away, like something that happens only in movies. But it’s actually happening in congregations and communities just like yours quite often. In fact, 7.5 million people are stalked in the U.S. every year. That’s 1 in every 6 women and 1 in every 17 men. There are celebrity cases in which the victim does not know the stalker, but most of the time the victim and stalker have been in an intimate relationship of some kind.

Although we don’t usually talk about stalking, it affects people in our congregations. It’s important that faith leaders and congregants learn more, help to break the silence, and provide education in our congregations and communities.

If the word “stalking” brought the words “creepy” or “scary” to mind, you were right on target. Think, for example, of the lyrics to Sting’s iconic song, “Every Breath You Take.” Stalking is a pattern (two or more) of actions directed at a specific person that makes that person feel anxious, fearful, or in danger. Different stalkers take different approaches, and 78% of stalkers use more than one approach. Every situation is different, but some of the most common approaches include:

- ❖ repeated calls, including hang-ups or repeated voice messages,
- ❖ following the victim, showing up wherever the victim is, hanging out at the victim’s home, faith community, school, or work, and showing up unexpectedly and/or uninvited,
- ❖ sending unwanted gifts, letters, texts, or emails,

- ❖ asking congregational members, friends, or family to send the victim letters, texts, or emails on the stalker's behalf,
- ❖ damaging home, car, or other property,
- ❖ threatening or harming animals or pets,
- ❖ filming without consent,
- ❖ spreading rumors,
- ❖ hacking accounts and using social media to harm the victim,
- ❖ monitoring the victim's calls or computer use,
- ❖ spying on or tracking the victim using technology, like hidden cameras, listening devices, or global positioning systems (GPS),
- ❖ threatening to hurt the victim, their family, friends, or people in their faith community,
- ❖ using public records, online search services, or private investigators to find the victim,
- ❖ going through the victim's belongings, their purse or backpack, or even their garbage,
- ❖ contacting family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or people in their faith community, and/or
- ❖ taking other actions that control, track, or frighten the victim.

“ *Stalking is a crime that can paralyze an otherwise productive person with fear.* ”

– Lisa Madigan

How Many People Are Affected by Stalking?

- ❖ 7.5 million people are stalked each year in the U.S.
- ❖ Stalking can affect people of any gender, age, race, faith community, class, sexual orientation, and culture in rural, urban, and suburban communities. No one is immune.

What Do We Know about Stalkers?

- ❖ Stalkers can be a person of any profession, faith, age, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation, or race.
- ❖ A stalker can be someone the victim knows well or not at all.
- ❖ Most stalkers have dated or been involved with the people they stalk.
- ❖ Stalkers can be aggressive and their dangerous behaviors can escalate quickly.
- ❖ Stalkers may be motivated for a number of reasons, including actual or perceived rejection by a current or former intimate partner, a desire to control, fear of abandonment, romantic obsession, fantasy, retaliation, anger, a sense of entitlement, and/or narcissism.
- ❖ Many stalkers suffer from various forms of mental illness, which may include depression, emotional instability, substance abuse, and/or personality disorders.

What Stalking Is NOT!

Stalking is NOT “romantic.”

Mary Carr said, “The opposite of love is fear.” Stalking creates fear and anxiety. Stalking is surveillance, life invasion, intimidation, and interference. Of all stalking victims, 46% are fearful because they don’t know what’s going to happen next, while 29% fear that the stalking will never stop. In 1 of every 5 cases, a gun is used to harm or threaten the victim. Many victims of stalking fear for their lives.

Stalking is NOT “no big deal.”

Stalking can be lethal. Every year in the U.S., nearly 1,000 women are killed by their current or former intimate partners. Of the women who were murdered by an intimate partner, 76% of them had been stalked by that partner. In fact, women are more likely to be murdered by someone they know than they are to be killed by a stranger. Of the women who reported stalking to the police, 54% were subsequently killed by their stalkers. About 2/3 of the people who stalk pursue their victims at least once per week. Many pursue their victims daily.

Stalking is NOT harmless.

Stalking is a risk factor for injury and homicide. The prevalence of anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression is much higher among stalking victims than in the general population, especially if the victim is being followed.* In addition, 1 in 8 stalking victims loses time from work, and half of those lose 5 days or more. One in 7 stalking victims has to move as a result of their victimization.

*Eric Blauuw et al., “The Toll of Stalking,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 17, No.1 (2002):50-63.

Surprising Facts

- ❖ Women are stalked at a rate two times higher than men.
- ❖ Stalking is a crime in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Territories, the U.S. military, and on tribal lands.
- ❖ Most stalking cases involve men stalking women, but men do stalk men, women do stalk women, and women do stalk men.
- ❖ Almost half of all stalking victims are contacted at least one time each week.
- ❖ About 10% of all stalking victims have been stalked for 5 years or more.

“What are you going to do? Are you going to live in the dark, locked in here? Afraid to look out, answer the door, leave?”

– Rachel Caine, *Fall of Night*

Warning Signs and Red Flags for Community Members

Within our congregations and communities, we can all be alert for signs of stalking. Do you know someone who is being followed? Does someone show up uninvited and unwanted at their home, work, school or congregation? Do they get repeated and unwanted calls, voicemails, texts, or emails? Is their property damaged by someone they know? Is someone spreading rumors about them? These are all indications stalking may be occurring.

In addition, we can look out for . . .

- ❖ any intersection between stalking and other crimes, such as domestic violence, property crimes, and/or sexual assault,
- ❖ anxiety, insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression, as these symptoms are often much higher among stalking victims,
- ❖ evasion, fear, or erratic behavior when someone interacts with, is approached by, or talks about a particular individual (usually a current or former intimate partner),
- ❖ signs of physical injury, such as bruising, cuts, or bleeding from hitting, punching, kicking, shoving, strangling, or slapping,
- ❖ signs of emotional or psychological trauma, such as memory loss, diminished interest or participation, problems concentrating, reckless behavior, and/or persistent negative feelings or beliefs, and

- ✦ events, conduct, or behaviors in the stalker's life that may indicate a high safety risk for the victim, such as:
 - ❖ long periods of separation between the victim and stalker,
 - ❖ job loss or other major events in the stalker's life,
 - ❖ increased contact with the victim,
 - ❖ possession of a weapon or fascination with weapons,
 - ❖ tendency toward emotional outbursts and rage,
 - ❖ violations of court-issued protection orders.

Many stalking behaviors may not violate criminal law and may even be intended by the stalker to elicit a positive response from the victim. Stalking victims need and deserve support.

“ *Stalkers have an obsessive over-identification with their unwilling target . . . if they can't possess the person totally, they will destroy the victim's qualities that they can never have.* ”

– Stewart Stafford

If You Think You Are Being Stalked

You may be feeling any of the following:

- ❖ fear of the stalker and what the stalker will do,
- ❖ unsafe, vulnerable, or not sure whom to trust,
- ❖ anxious, irritable, impatient, or on edge,
- ❖ depressed, hopeless, overwhelmed, tearful, or angry,
- ❖ stressed, unable to sleep, unable to concentrate,
- ❖ confused, frustrated, or isolated,
- ❖ eating problems such as appetite loss, forgetting to eat, or overeating,
- ❖ flashbacks, and/or
- ❖ disturbing thoughts, feelings, or memories.

Every situation is different, but stalking is always unpredictable and dangerous. If you are being stalked, please consider these steps, which may increase your safety.

- ❖ Call 911 if you are in immediate danger.
- ❖ Trust your instincts. If you feel you are in danger, you probably are.
- ❖ Take threats seriously, especially if the stalker talks about suicide or murder. Remember, danger escalates when a victim ends or tries to end a relationship.
- ❖ Contact a domestic violence or sexual violence agency hotline. They can help you develop a safety plan, inform you about local laws, refer you to other services, and weigh options such as seeking an order of protection.

- ❖ Develop a safety plan. You may want to change your routine, arrange a place to stay, or have a friend or relative go places with you. Think now about what to do if the stalker shows up at your home, work, school, faith community, or somewhere else. Tell people how they can help.
- ❖ Don't communicate with the stalker or respond to attempts to contact you.
- ❖ Keep evidence of the stalking. When the stalker contacts you, document the place, time, and date. Keep emails, phone messages, letters, or notes. Photograph anything the stalker damages and any injuries the stalker causes. Ask witnesses to write down what they saw.

“ *I bet all stalkers believe they're being romantic.
'I did it for love, officer.'* ”

– Laini Taylor, *Night of Cake and Puppets*

I'm Part of a Faith Community, How Can I Help?

If someone you know in your family, congregation, or community is being stalked, you can help.

- ❖ Listen respectfully and show your support. Understand that victims may minimize incidents or conversations with their stalkers out of fear of judgment or criticism.
- ❖ Prioritize the victim's safety. Look for warning signs or red flags (see pp. 12 and 13) that may indicate a high risk to victim safety.
- ❖ Don't blame the victim for the crime. Instead, use language that makes the victim feel safe and respected.
- ❖ Suggest choices based on the information in this booklet and allow victims to make their own informed decisions. Support those decisions.
- ❖ Understand that some stalking victims may maintain contact with their stalker to keep themselves (or their loved ones) safe.
- ❖ Recognize that victims may not know that they are experiencing a pattern of behavior that could be considered stalking and may represent a threat to their safety. If necessary, help the victim understand this using respectful and empowering language.
- ❖ Encourage the victim to preserve evidence, including text messages, voicemails, emails, photographs, etc. Suggest logging stalking-related incidents. Refer the person experiencing stalking to a local domestic or sexual violence agency for support, safety planning, and other services.
- ❖ Take steps to ensure your own safety.

If You Are in Immediate Danger

Call 911.

Contact your local police department to report stalking and stalking-related incidents and/or threats.

If You Are Not in Immediate Danger but Need Immediate Help

Please call one of the following hotlines or visit one of the following websites.

National Center for Victims of Crime
Victim Connect Resource Center
1 (855) 4-VICTIM (484-2846) | www.victimconnect.org

Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN)
National Sexual Assault Hotline
1 (800) 656-4673 | hotline.rainn.org/online/

National Domestic Violence Hotline
1 (800) 799-7233 | www.thehotline.org

Office on Violence Against Women Local Resources Map
www.justice.gov/ovw/local-resources

“ I was afraid to tell anyone. I thought, ‘Who would believe me?’ It’s not easy to describe the fear you have when you see the stalker everywhere you go. I thought people might think I was crazy . . . or making it all up. ”

– Stalking Survivor, quoted in Emily Spence-Diehl, *Stalking: A Handbook for Victims*, Learning Publications, Inc., Holmes Beach, FL 1999, p. 35.

For More Information and Resources

National Center for Victims of Crime
Stalking Resource Center

www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
1 (800) 537-2238 | www.nrcdv.org

Office for Victims of Crime Resource Center
1 (800) 851-3420 | www.ovc.gov/resourcecenter/

National Institute of Justice
www.nij.gov/topics/crime/stalking/Pages/welcome.aspx

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/features/prevent-stalking/index.html

“ Sometimes I would unlock my car and find a rose on the seat - no note, just the flower. I knew he somehow got into my car and left it there; it was all he needed to do to terrorize me. ”

– Stalking Survivor, quoted in Emily Spence-Diehl, *Stalking: A Handbook for Victims*, Learning Publications, Inc., Holmes Beach, FL 1999, p. 7.

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Hearing the Voices of Survivors

“There are so many phases you go through: anger, hurt, denial, being withdrawn and depressed, paranoid, second-guessing yourself, and then all the way back to anger again.”

“I used to believe that there was always something good or decent you can find in anyone. This whole experience has unfortunately made me a more skeptical and cynical person. I hate him for that”

“The first thing I had to do was acknowledge that it wasn’t my fault.”

“I lost my ability to trust. I’m suspicious of everybody now.”

These quotes from stalking survivors are taken from Emily Spence-Diehl, [Stalking: A Handbook for Victims](#), Learning Publications, Inc., Holmes Beach, FL 1999, pp. 38, 41, 39, & 40 (respectively). We are so grateful for their courage and strength, and we hope that this resource will help others.



We chose to use mosaics in the design of "Pieces of a Bigger Picture" because they are common to many faith and artistic traditions throughout history. The mosaics you see in Safe Havens' resources are from Jewish, Muslim, Christian, and secular communities. They remind us of the diversity of people and faith communities that partner with Safe Havens and with local domestic and sexual violence agencies to end abuse.

Beautiful mosaics are made of broken pieces. For this reason, mosaics also speak to the experiences of survivors, who describe feeling "broken," or "shattered," and speak of "putting the pieces back together" as they courageously rebuild their lives after abuse. Survivors are the inspiration for these resources. One woman commented, "I am not damaged goods. I am a mosaic of everything that couldn't beat me."

We also chose mosaics because faith communities, sexual and domestic violence service providers, law enforcement, schools, hospitals, Adult Protective Services, and other allied professionals each represent an important piece of the bigger picture of safety, justice, and healing that survivors of sexual and domestic violence and stalking so richly need and deserve. Every one of us is critically important to the bigger picture. As David Crystal says, "To lose even one piece of this mosaic is a loss for all of us."

We hope you and your congregation will put yourselves into the picture, learn more about stalking, and become a piece of community-wide efforts to build a mosaic of healthy and happy families, congregations, and communities where abuse is a thing of the past.