

Do now

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How can I respond to harassment and stalking?

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1. If a person keeps surprising their partner by turning up unexpectedly, like at work or at a friend's house, it's a good sign that they really like them.

There are circumstances where, as a one off, some people might really like such a surprise. But if it happens a few times, and particularly if a person feels they've shown they weren't happy with it or it was awkward, or if there was a clear suggestion that they were not really invited to something, yet they turn up anyway, then this is an unhealthy relationship behaviour and may suggest the person has a controlling pattern of behaviour.

2. If someone buys their partner a gift for every one-month anniversary, they are going too far. That's just weird.

Different people have different expectations around anniversaries and gift-giving. This behaviour is not necessarily unhealthy, but it is worth thinking about their motivations. Is it because they genuinely enjoy giving their partner a token of their feelings and their partner feels happy about this or does it feel like they are trying to buy affection? Some people use gift-giving as a way of making a person feel like they owe something in return.

3. If someone criticises their partner's friends and family all the time, trying to suggest they shouldn't see them, I think it's an unhealthy sign.

It is common for a partner to get on better with some friends or family than others. But isolating a partner from friends and family is a key signal that a person has controlling patterns of behaviour. This can become quite a dangerous situation so this signal should not be ignored.

4. I care about the way I look, and I expect my partner to do the same. If they don't look good in what they are wearing, I'll say so and suggest something better. I just want us both to look our best.

Telling someone what to wear is a controlling behaviour and is not acceptable. It is common for someone to like it when their partner looks their best but comments which undermine a person's self-esteem or make them feel they have done something wrong for wearing what they like is unacceptable behaviour.

5. If a person is constantly checking up on you, asking where you are and who you are with in a way that makes it feel like you are being interrogated, they clearly have some issues, and you should walk away.

It is common for people to show an interest in their partner's day, but this more extreme behaviour is a sign of insecurity or unhealthy control patterns and must be taken seriously.

What is harassment?

Harassment

Stalking

Turn and talk: How might a person feel if they are the victim of either harassment or stalking?

1. Getting upset when a person says they don't want to see them again
It is common for people to have strong feelings about relationships so crying is considered an appropriate response.
2. Telling an ex they miss them when they next meet up as part of a friendship group
A one off incident is unlikely to be considered stalking but if this continues or is part of a wider pattern of repeated contact this would be stalking.
3. Sending abusive messages if someone is 'ghosted' after two dates
Abusive messages are never okay and are harassment. If repeated this shows a fixation and is likely to be considered stalking.
4. Looking at an ex's social media profiles to find out if there is any chance of getting back together
It is common for people to be curious about an ex-partner and to consider reconciliation in some circumstances but consider whether this behaviour is helpful.
5. Looking at a crush's social media profiles to find out where they are and going along hoping to 'bump into them'
If the object of their affections feels uncomfortable or the behaviour is becoming obsessive then this is a cause for concern.

6. Sending abusive messages to an ex's new partner

Abusive messages are never okay and this is likely to be considered stalking.

7. Hacking a workmate's computer to get more information about them

This behavior is illegal and can be an element of cyber-enabled stalking.

8. Turning up at work with flowers every day for a week in the hope of changing someone's mind about dating them

This behaviour would be considered stalking.

9. Going to an ex's home to talk and then switching between compliments and insults when they don't agree to try again

This behaviour is illegal and would be considered stalking.

10. Threatening to post compromising photos in revenge for ending a relationship unless they meet for coffee

It is illegal to post photographs of a person without their consent and this could be investigated by the police.

11. Ringing an ex three times using friends' phones after their ex said they did not want to hear from them and blocked their number

This behaviour is illegal and would be considered stalking.

12. Trying to apologise/win someone back by ringing them once or twice

It is common for people to consider reconciliation in some circumstances, but where it has been made clear that such contact is unwelcome, continuing to do this would be illegal.

Jayden and Soraya are part of a big friendship group. Soraya agreed to go with Jayden to the cinema as she thought he was cute, even though he had a reputation for getting angry over small things.

On the date Soraya felt uncomfortable as Jayden expected to go back to his house together afterwards but she didn't want to and wasn't interested in seeing him again. Soraya rang a friend to meet her at the end of the date so she felt safe getting home.

He shouted at her that she was a tease then slammed the door on his way out.

A few days later, she started receiving flowers and chocolates from Jayden saying that he was sorry for the way he acted and that it was only because he liked her so much. He asked her for another chance. Soraya was worried about his reaction if she said no so said she was busy but said they'd hang out when they were out with friends.

Jayden turned up every time she went out as lots of plans were made in their group chat. She did her best to avoid him and make her feelings clear but this wasn't working so she started saying 'no' to nights out in order to avoid him. He started to come into the coffee shop where she worked and tried to flirt with her. This has all been making Soraya feel really uncomfortable.

What should they do?

Turn and talk:

It is never a person's fault if someone is behaving in an unhealthy way towards them but there were times when Soraya could have made different choices.

Discuss the following questions:

1. What actions helped to diffuse the situation and/or keep Soraya safe?
2. How could Soraya have acted differently to try to stop the stalking behaviour earlier?
3. What could she do now to help keep safe and try to stop the unhealthy behaviour?
4. What could Jayden do to change his behaviour?
5. How could the friendship group help the situation, in particular what could Jayden's best friend say/do?

What actions helped to diffuse the situation and/or keep Soraya safe?

- Decision to call a friend for a ride home.
- Decision not to agree to go out with Jayden again and avoiding him (although it is not right that a person should have to avoid their friends because of someone else's behaviour)

How could Soraya have acted differently to try to stop the stalking behaviour earlier?

- Anger management issues are a potential sign that it may be best not to start a relationship unless/until you are sure it will be a safe and respectful one.
- A firmer 'no' to another date might have helped Jayden see there was no chance of a reunion.
- Getting early help from friends may have reduced the risk of things spiraling.
- Soraya could have spoken to the police or a helpline once it became clear she was feeling scared and was having to change her life due to Jayden's behaviour.

****None of this is Soraya's fault and Jayden is wholly responsible for his behaviour. However, these are some things that can help us learn from Soraya's story.*****

What could she do now to help keep safe and try to stop the unhealthy behaviour?

- Seek help from friends, specialist advice services, and the police.
- Switch to a new group chat with close friends only for a while – these friends should be told about the situation so they don't pass on information to Jayden without realising the risks.
- Change her patterns of behaviour e.g., switch exercise classes, choose a different route home.
- Soraya should temporarily try to avoid going out alone and keep to busy public places.
- Inform supervisors at work of the issue so they can take appropriate action if he visits the café.
- Have a support plan for what to do if Jayden visits her again.
- Soraya should not under any circumstances agree to meet Jayden to talk about things or respond to any messages. Stalkers are often encouraged by any contact – even if it is negative.
- Keep a note of contact received from Jayden to help the police understand the situation.

Point out that the onus should not be on the victim to change their behaviour, and it is hoped her behaviour patterns could revert to normal soon.]

How could the friendship group help the situation and what could Jayden do?

- Jayden's friends can explain that this is not appropriate behaviour and encourage him to seek help. They should only do this if they feel they can remain safe themselves.
- They can ring the police if they are worried about their friends.
- They can find out information to support their friends.
- They can provide support for Soraya and keep her plans and personal details safe.
- Jayden needs support to understand why he is engaging in such behaviours and to develop strategies to break obsessive patterns of behaviour. Even if he stops stalking Soraya, Jayden is unlikely to be able to have fulfilling long-term relationships without addressing any underlying mental wellbeing needs. His friends should therefore be mindful of the potential risks for any future partners Jayden has if he does not choose to get help to manage his feelings and behaviour.

- Cerys really likes Li so asks them out at a party but is turned down.
- Cerys sends a friend request to one of Li's friends. She wants to see Li's social media to find a way to win over Li.
- Li's profile setting don't allow non-friends to see content so Cerys sends a friend request which is not accepted.
- Cerys goes to a popular hangout hoping to meet Li. She sees them and asks them out a second time but Li says no again.
- Cerys gets angry at Li – she just wants to go on a date together. A friend says she should leave and recommends talking to someone when she is calmer.
- Cerys tries to access Li's social media profile again by using a fake profile.
- Cerys tells friends about creating the fake profile. They tell Cerys that this is a bit obsessive and she should just accept that Li isn't interested.
- The fake profile gets Cerys access to Li's social media. She hacks into Li's photos and conversations and using geolocation to find Li while they are out.
- Cerys gets angry when Li turns off geolocation and thinks Li had help to stop Cerys getting access to their account settings.
- Cerys bombards Li with messages and tries to get Li to meet by threatening to reveal private photos and screenshots she saved after hacking their social media.

Turn and talk:

- How might Li be feeling?
- Could anything have happened during the events to de-escalate the situation?

Cerys' behaviours would clearly be considered stalking.

- Repeated rejections were clear – if Cerys discussed any beliefs of ambiguity about Li's feelings with trusted friends or family, they would likely have said Li was clearly not interested.
- This has clearly become an obsession rather than romantic interest likely to result in a relationship - this should be a trigger for Cerys to stop, think, and seek help.
- There were points where friends told Cerys her behaviour was worrying – at this point Cerys could have sought help to discuss any feelings and compulsions she was experiencing.
- Cerys would likely be aware she has committed illegal actions so could self report at this stage to reduce the risk of further harm to Li.

What are the barriers to support?

Turn and talk:

Why might these assumptions be unhelpful?

What to do if you a victim of stalking?

Remember: It is never the victim's fault.

- Call the police
- Seek support
- Tell trusted people

- Be cyber secure:
 - change passwords
 - check privacy settings
 - scan for spyware
 - visit getsafeonline.org

- Avoid contact
- Vary routines
- Record all contact

IF being stalked

NHS website or your GP

www.nhs.uk

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

0800 1111

National Stalking Helpline

www.stalkinghelpline.org

08088020300

You can also:

- Speak to a member of staff at school – your Form Tutor, Head of Year or Key Worker. Any member of staff is here to help!
- Send an email to safe@castle-tmet.uk.
- Speak to an adult that you trust – this might be a sibling, a parent or grandparent. As long as this person is trustworthy then it's a good idea!