

About stalking

**FOR VICTIMS
OF STALKING**



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About stalking

Brief explanation on stalking

We talk about stalking when someone constantly harasses you. A stalker always looks for contact and you don't want that. It is a recurrent nuisance that you experience as annoying. It might scare you too.

Anyone could become a victim of stalking. If you have to deal with stalking, this could be very distressing. It could spoil your sense of security and privacy.

About this brochure

You really want the stalking to stop, but what are the possibilities? You can read all about it in this brochure. It will give you more information about stalking, what you can do about it yourself and what the police can do to help you.

What is stalking?

Stalking is deliberately and repeatedly harassing someone. Stalking makes the victim feels restricted in their freedom and safety. For victims, the behaviour of a stalker often has a major impact. It can make someone feel insecure, angry, or scared.

Is stalking a punishable offence?

In the Netherlands stalking is a crime. That means, perpetrators of stalking are punishable. The police and judicial authorities can prosecute a perpetrator of stalking if a victim wants that.

Stalking is not a one-time incident, but a pattern of several incidents. How often it happens, the severity of the stalking and the impact on the victim, determine whether the behaviour involves a crime. Punishment for stalking varies from a community punishment order to imprisonment. A perpetrator can also have an order prohibiting contact, an area ban, or an exclusion order imposed.

The law describes stalking as 'harassment'.

File a police report of stalking

If you are a victim of stalking, you can report this. You ask the police to start up an investigation into the stalking and to prosecute the stalker.

Sometimes stalking happens jointly with other crimes such as threats, vandalism or assault. You can also file a police report of this. If a situation involves assault but you prefer not to

report this (yet), the police and judicial authorities can decide on their own accord to prosecute the perpetrator.

A cease-and-desist conversation can help

Reporting often feels like a big step for victims. Perhaps you want to try to solve it differently first. For example, with a cease-and-desist conversation. In a cease-and-desist conversation, the police have a discussion with the perpetrator. We tell the perpetrator that the behaviour is punishable and that it must stop immediately. Many stalkers stop after such a conversation.

Am I being stalked?

Are you unsure whether you are dealing with a stalker? Discuss this with someone you trust. Don't wait for it to get worse. You could also contact the police. Call 0900 - 8844 or go to your local police station. Together, we will look at what we can do to stop the stalking.

Why does someone stalk?

Stalking is triggered by the stalker's intense emotions. These could be caused by a desire or a frustration. The stalker directs those emotions towards

you and hopes this changes their own situation.

Who is the stalker?

A stalker could be an ex-partner, family member or friend. It could also be someone you know less well, like a colleague or someone who lives in the neighbourhood, or someone you do not know at all.

Is an ex-partner the stalker?

Ex-partners can sometimes be so sad or angry because of a break up that they start stalking. The one day you could get messages from the stalker declaring their love for you and another day you get an earful of abuse. The stalker tries all kinds of ways to keep in touch with you.

In serious cases, the stalker enters your home uninvited. Or, there could be threats, intimidation, and sometimes even violence. Stalking by ex-partners is often more aggressive than other kinds of stalking. Is this what you have to deal with? If so, then go to the police as soon as possible. We can help to stop the stalking and then prosecute the perpetrator.

Remember: always call 112 immediately in the event of a threatening situation.

Do you hardly know the stalker or not at all?

Someone you hardly know or don't know at all could be stalking you because they want to have a certain relationship with you. That could be a friendly or sexual relationship. These stalkers are often pushy or intrusive and have mental or psychological problems. Because of these mental

problems the stalker might sometimes have ideas about a relationship with you that are wrong. For example, the stalker thinks that there is a relationship or that there should be a relationship.

It could also be that the stalker does not want a relationship, but that they have the feeling that you have wronged them. The stalker wants recognition and attention for this.

What do stalkers do?

What stalkers do varies. The stalker usually tries to get in touch with you. But other behaviour could also be part of a stalking pattern.

For example, the stalker might say bad things about you to your family, friends, or colleagues. Or, the stalker tries to get in touch with you through acquaintances or people you know. You are pursued in the street; you get unwanted gifts; or you keep coming across the stalker because that person's following you. A stalker might often call you and send you post and emails. Stalking also happens via social media. Sometimes a stalker also hacks the victim's accounts.

A stalker may visit uninvited, they could be present near your home or work, they use or threaten to use violence, damage your property, order stuff on your account, or display other undesirable behaviour.

Every stalker is different. So, every stalker also behaves differently.

It often starts good-naturedly

Stalking does not always have a clear starting point. Sending a number of angry or compelling messages, doesn't make someone a stalker right away. If the nuisance lasts longer than two weeks or if it is vigorous and intimidating right away, you can consider it as stalking.

Stop the stalker

When the nuisance happens the first time, point out that the behaviour is unwelcome and that you want it to stop. Then stop responding to messages from the stalker. The need for contact can become an addiction for the stalker. Then the stalker wants more and more contact.

Any reaction, even if it is negative, makes the stalker want more contact. No response works best. The sooner you act, the faster and better the stalker can be stopped.

Check out the tips for an overview of what you can do if you are being stalked.

Tip 1: Be clear

Stalkers often hear what they want to hear. If you tell your ex-partner that you also feel bad that the relationship is over, then that is a reason for your ex-partner to carry on trying to make contact. It is important that you are clear, so that you don't give the stalker any reason to stay in touch.

Tip 2: Tell them to stop

Clearly tell them, once, and in no uncertain terms, that you want them to stop stalking you. You could word it this way: 'I do not want any contact with you. Stop trying to contact me. I will not

respond if you do.' After that, it is important to completely stop responding. That could nip stalking in the bud.

Tip 3: Talk to others about it

You don't have to be alone in this. Support and practical help from others could help you. Talk about stalking with someone you trust. You can always discuss your situation with the police, call 0900 - 8844. Is the stalker your ex-partner? You could also contact Veilig Thuis (Safe at Home) for help and advice at 0800 - 2000.

Tip 4: Document the stalking

Keep a logbook of contacts with the stalker. Note down the date, time, location, duration and manner of the stalking. Make a note of any witnesses at every contact attempt. These could be neighbours, friends or colleagues. Save all messages, take pictures if you can, and record telephone calls. In this way you collect evidence that can help in a criminal investigation of the stalker.

Impact of stalking

Stalking can have a major impact on you. You might experience fear, suspicion, anxiety, concentration problems, sleep problems, poor appetite, fatigue or muscle ache and headache. The longer the stalking lasts, the greater the impact it will have on your life.

Effects on children

Is the stalker your children's father or mother? Stalking can also affect children. It could be a negative influence on their development and sense of safety. Any change in behaviour at school could be a sign that

children suffer strain from the situation. Even if the stalker is your children's father or mother, it is important not to have any direct contact. Any necessary contact regarding the children can go through other people. If you want, you could discuss the options with *Veilig Thuis*. They can be reached 24/7 at telephone number 0800 - 2000. Veilig Thuis can give you advice about your safety and that of your children. They can also help to seek solutions with you on practical matters and arrange help for you and your children.

What if the stalking does not stop?

It is understandable that you are concerned, because you do not know how long the stalking will last and how serious it will be. A stalker's actions are unpredictable. However, there are signs that give cause for concern. These signs may indicate that the stalking is going to last long or might lead to aggression and violence. The more signs there are, the more worrying the situation. Are you in doubt about your safety? Contact the police at 0900 - 8844 or Veilig Thuis at 0800 - 2000. In case of immediate danger, call 112.

Signs of serious stalking

- The stalker has previously used physical violence against you or others.
- The stalking is becoming more and more frequent and getting more intense.
- The stalker is aggressive and intimidating.
- The stalker threatens to use violence.
- The stalker looks for you or enters your home uninvited.
- The stalker vandalises or damages

your belongings.

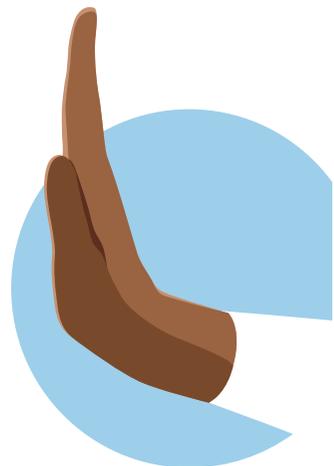
- The stalker has a firearm or weapon or has experience with weapons.
- The stalker is an ex-partner and was extremely jealous during the relationship.
- The stalker has mental problems, like stress or an addiction.
- You are afraid that the stalker will hurt or kill you.

Your own feelings are the most important signs

Your own feelings say a lot about possible danger through stalking. If you have had a relationship with the stalker, you can often estimate quite well what this person is capable of. So take your feelings seriously.

Share your concerns

Are there numerous signs in your situation? Or do you feel unsafe or threatened? Always discuss this with the police at 0900 - 8844 or Veilig Thuis at 0800 - 2000. Together, we will look at how we can improve your safety and how we can stop the stalker.



Practical tips against stalking

Is there any danger? Call 112. For example, if the stalker threatens you directly, vandalises your belongings, or tries to enter your home.

Stalking might make you feel that you are losing control of your life. The following practical tips could help you get that control back.

Think ahead

A first important step: think about what a stalker knows about you. All this knowledge can be used by the stalker. Take your time for this and ask for help from someone you trust and who knows the situation.

Together, you can draw up a list of times and places where the stalker could be. Consider what the stalker could do at every time and place. Also think about what you can do to reduce the chance of this happening.

Draw up a safety plan

Are you afraid that the stalker will use violence? Then work with the police or Veilig Thuis to draw up a safety plan. This plan includes, for example, what you can get ready and how you can prepare if you suddenly need to flee.

Example

1. The stalker knows that I have my own flower shop.
2. What can the stalker do with this knowledge?
 - They could wait there or look for me there.
 - Destroy things.
 - Post bad reviews about my business.
3. What can I do to reduce the chance of this happening?
 - Always ensure that someone else is present.
 - Inform my colleague and agree what to do when we see the stalker.
 - Ask other shopkeepers in the vicinity to be vigilant.
 - Install good cameras and secure important belongings.
 - Take out an appropriate insurance policy.
 - Draw up a plan on how to inform customers about the stalking, if needed.

Practical measures at places

Look at the following measures that you can apply at different places. Not all tips apply to all victims of stalking. Are you unsure about this? Discuss this with someone you trust or with the police at 0900 - 8844 or Veilig Thuis at 0800 - 2000.

Measures in and around your home

- Comply with the Police Residential Security Warranty (Politiekeurmerk Veilig Wonen, PKVW). This contributes to your home's intrusion prevention and fire safety.
- Always lock your house, shed and storeroom.
- Close the letterbox slot in the front door. This prevents eavesdropping, making contact or pushing in unwanted or dangerous objects.
- Select a letterbox with a security feature. This prevents theft of postal items.
- Do not throw confidential documents or post into your waste bin.
- Make use of a double lock or door chain.
- Make sure you have a sturdy front door, a full-panel door with a peephole is best. Make sure that the person standing in front of the door cannot look inside. If the door has a glass panel, then use foil or a curtain.
- Make sure the glazing in your doors and windows is strong. Glazing can be reinforced or protected with anti-intrusion film or burglar bars.
- Do not allow the stalker to look inside, for example, through blackout curtains or blinds.
- See where you can reduce possibilities of climbing inside. For example, by removing objects from the wall or below windows.
- Consider in which room in your home you are safe if the stalker arrives uninvited. Make sure this room has a sturdy inner door with a thumbturn lock or key. Make sure there is a telephone available to call 112.
- Make sure that the stalker is not able to be in your garden unseen. For example, remove tall hedges and objects that the stalker can use to hide.
- Ensure there is good exterior lighting. It is best to have lighting that automatically switches on at night and lamps that switch on when there is movement.
- If necessary, use security cameras that you can view on your smartphone.
- Make sure your garden is tidy and uncluttered. Anything lying about can be stolen, vandalised or used as a weapon by the stalker.
- Ensure that one or two telephone(s) are available in fixed places so you can always call 112.
- Put things in fixed places, especially outside. This helps you to notice immediately if something has changed.
- If necessary, use an alarm system.
- Inform the neighbours, other people in your vicinity, and people who often pass by (for example, people with dogs) about the stalking. Ask them to be vigilant if they see or hear anything suspicious.
- Keep any evidence of stalking. This is important for any police investigation. You can also give copies to someone you trust if you are afraid that the stalker might steal it.

Financial assistance from the municipality

If you want to improve your security but cannot afford the costs, the municipality may possibly be able to help you financially. Please contact your municipality to see what is possible.

Measures when travelling

- Vary the routes that you take and the times that you travel.
- Vary the type of transport that you use.
- Don't always park in the same spot. If necessary, park a little further away from your home to avoid your car being vandalised.
- Always lock the car doors while driving.
- Arrange for someone to travel with you or for someone to pick you up if possible.
- Enter your home sometimes from the front and sometimes from the back.

Measures at work

- Make sure your supervisor knows your situation.
- Inform the staff at reception so that they do not transfer calls from the stalker or do not allow the stalker further access.
- Information about your working hours and work location should be shared as little as possible.
- Enquire about internal safety procedures.
- See if you can use specific facilities temporarily. For example, the management's parking lot close to the entrance, security staff presence or always being in the presence of others.
- Vary your working days and times.

Alarm system in case of constant threat

Is there a constant and serious threat from the stalker? Then you should apply for a portable alarm system: the AWARE alarm. You can then immediately alert the police via an alarm button if danger is imminent. Most municipalities use this system.

Ask the police at 0900 - 8844 or Veilig Thuis at 0800 - 2000 for the options in your municipality.

Measures regarding devices and online

- Turn off Bluetooth on all your devices.
- Make sure that your device (telephone or computer) transmits an anonymous name.
- Select a default name for your Wi-Fi network.
- Delete your personal message recorded for your voicemail. Hearing your voice might encourage the stalker to call again.
- Use the SOS emergency feature on your telephone. This allows you to send your location and photo to a fixed contact. Arrange that this contact will immediately call the police as soon as they receive an SOS emergency message from you.
- Apply for a second telephone number and email address that you share only with people you trust. Keep your old number and email address in use so that you still receive evidence of the stalking.
- In the settings of your email account, set the stalker's messages to automatically go to a specific file.

This allows you to decide when and if you want to read the messages. This can be done using the 'Create Rule' option.

- Use a two-step authentication on all your accounts. This is a second check, like a code for each text message or your fingerprint, in addition to your password.
- If the stalker is an ex-partner, then unsubscribe from any joint accounts and subscriptions that you have.
- Make sure you have good security software on your devices.
- Do not open any email and do not click to open any files, links, or attachments that you do not know or trust.
- Disable location data when using social media.
- Create private accounts on social media or delete accounts.
- Find yourself on the internet. Try to have information about yourself deleted by the website administrator.
- Visit safetyned.org for more practical tips on online security.

Measures for people in your vicinity

- Inform people you trust about your situation and perhaps show a picture of the stalker.
- Tell family, friends and neighbours that they are not allowed to give information about you to the stalker.
- Also ask if they could contact you right away if they have spoken to or seen the stalker.
- Ask people in your vicinity not to mention your name or to tag you on social media.
- Also, ask them not to share information about activities that you might be attending.
- Make arrangements about what people should or should not tell you about the stalker. This prevents you from being unnecessarily confronted with information about the stalker.
- If necessary, arrange a fixed contact within your family or circle of friends who can support you with everything related to the stalking.



Help from the police

We can help you in several ways.

Emergency situations

If the stalker threatens you directly, vandalises your belongings, or tries to enter your home uninvited, you must call 112. We will come to you as soon as possible.

If we see that the stalker is doing something criminal at that point in time, we could take the stalker to the police station. It may also happen that when we are there, there is not (yet) enough evidence of criminal behaviour. We will then not be able to apprehend the stalker immediately. Sometimes victims get the feeling that the police are not helping, because we can only send the stalker away at that time. Discuss this with the police and ask for clarification. It is good to know that we always record the reported instance and everything we observe in the police systems. In the case of several incidents, we would be able to act against the stalker on another occasion. This also helps in criminal investigations. After the filed police report, we will work with you to see what safety precautions are possible.

No direct threat

The first time you report an instance of stalking to the police, we will conduct an intake interview with you. During this discussion you will tell your story. We also ask questions to find out as much as possible about the stalking. The more elaborate your story, the

better we can assess the situation. Together, we will look at how we can help you.

We will take the following steps together with you

Step 1 - View the problem and what is needed

Step 2 - Have a discussion with the stalker

Step 3 - File the police report for tracking down and prosecuting the stalker

Step 1 - View the problem and what is needed

In an interview we will discuss what you want and what we can do for you.

What can you do?

- You can keep a logbook of contacts with the stalker. Note down the date, time, location, duration and manner of the stalking. Make a note of any witnesses at every contact attempt. These might be neighbours, friends or colleagues.
- You must keep all messages, take pictures if possible, and record telephone calls.
- Do not contact the stalker yourself. If absolutely necessary, discuss this with us first so that we can advise you.
- You must keep us informed about changes or new developments in the stalking.

Step 2 - Have a discussion with the stalker

The police can conduct a cease-and-desist conversation with the stalker. This is possible if the stalking is not yet very harmful. The police will discuss this possibility with you. A cease-and-desist conversation is only held if you want us to do so. You will not be present at this conversation.

During a cease-and-desist conversation, the police tell the stalker that the behaviour is undesirable and that it must stop. We also explain that the stalker's behaviour is punishable and warn about the criminal consequences, for example, imprisonment.

Usually, a stalker has problems of their own which causes them to start stalking. Someone often needs help to change their behaviour. So, during a cease-and-desist conversation we also discuss what support services the stalker can get.

Half of the stalkers stop after the cease-and-desist conversation

About half of the stalkers stop stalking after a cease-and-desist conversation. If the stalker carries on anyway, they can be prosecuted under criminal law. To do so, the stalker must first be reported.

Step 3 - File the police report for tracking down and prosecuting the stalker

If the stalker continues to stalk after a cease-and-desist conversation, you

can file a police report. Sometimes we advise a victim of stalking to file a police report immediately. We do this when we think that a cease-and-desist conversation is no longer meaningful, or if the stalker has threatened you or used violence.

If you file a police report, ask the police to start up an investigation into the stalker. During this investigation we talk to witnesses, for example. We will keep you updated if you want us to do so.

You can be assigned a fixed contact at the police.

Take your logbook with you

While filing the police report we examine the pattern of stalking. It is a good idea to bring along the notes in your logbook, to discuss everything that happened.

Take your evidence with you

Evidence of stalking is also important. These could be messages, pictures, or recorded telephone calls.

Subsequent to the police investigation

A public prosecutor gets the results of the police investigation. The public prosecutor may decide that the stalker must be apprehended, possibly detained or appear before a judge. The public prosecutor can also impose an order prohibiting contact or an area ban.

If the case goes to court, a judge assesses what punishment is to be imposed on the stalker. Aside from an

order prohibiting contact or an area ban, this could also be a community punishment or imprisonment.

Compensation for damages

If you have suffered detrimental effects, you may ask the court for compensation of damages. To get this, help is available from Victim Support Netherlands (Slachtofferhulp Nederland) or a lawyer.

When the stalker is released

If the stalker has been imprisoned and is released again, then we make sure that we remain vigilant for any new signs of stalking.

If the stalker does not adhere to the terms

Call the police at 112 if the stalker does not adhere to the legally imposed terms.

Order prohibiting contact

In the event of an order prohibiting contact, the stalker may not contact you at all.

Area ban

In the event of an area ban, the stalker may not enter a certain area. This can vary from a street to an entire province.

Exclusion order

In the event that an exclusion order is imposed, the stalker may not go to a specific location where you are likely to be. For example, your home, a supermarket or your work.

Other possibilities

Civil proceedings

You might opt for civil proceedings. The aim of this is not to punish the perpetrator, but above all to stop the stalking and to compensate you for any damages. For civil proceedings, you would need a lawyer.

You pay the costs for a lawyer yourself. If you are unable to pay a lawyer, you might be able to get compensation of these costs and then claim the costs or part of it later from the stalker.

All information on civil proceedings, costs and possible compensation is available at juridischloket.nl.

A right for victims to address the court
If the case goes to court, as a victim you have a right to address the court. This means that you can share your story in court either in writing or orally. You can then tell what impact the stalking has on your life. You must decide for yourself whether you want to make use of this right. Victims of stalking often choose to make a written

statement. Counselling is available from someone at Victim Support Netherlands or from a lawyer and for possibly reading out your statement during the court proceedings.

Practical and emotional support

Stalking can have a major impact on your life. Perhaps you want help in coming to terms with the stalking or to learn how to stand up for yourself. There are several organisations where to find help. For example, if it is a former partner who is stalking, you can go to Veilig Thuis. They provide information and advice and can also arrange care for you and your children if you are not safe at home.

In addition, there are networks of specialised lawyers that can help you. Via Victim Support Netherlands you could also get in touch with other victims of stalking.

Contact details for organisations that can help you are available at the back of this brochure.

Reduce the likelihood of recurrence

If a stalker does not receive appropriate help, there is a chance that they could start stalking again in future. A stalker is able to get help through Veilig Thuis or the Dutch Probation Service (RN). This may be voluntary, but a judge could also impose an obligation on the stalker to find help.

Do you know someone who is being stalked?

Many victims of stalking think that they face the task alone and feel helpless. If you know someone who is being stalked, you can help this person. For example, by looking for help together either from the police or Veilig Thuis. You could also give this brochure to the victim.

Where can you go?

For advice, reporting, filing a police report, and in the event of imminent danger

Police

Call 0900 - 8844 or go to your local police station. In case of immediate danger, call 112. Or visit the website [politie.nl](https://www.politie.nl).

Veilig Thuis (Safe at Home)

Veilig Thuis is there for advice and support in case of domestic violence. This includes stalking by ex-partners. Veilig Thuis can be approached either by yourself or if you are concerned about someone else. Veilig Thuis can be reached 24/7 at 0800 - 2000. You can also chat with staff at [veiligthuis.nl](https://www.veiligthuis.nl)

For help and relief facilities

National and regional organisations

- Fier: [fier.nl](https://www.fier.nl) | 088 - 208 00 00
- Moviera: [moviera.nl](https://www.moviera.nl) | 088 - 374 47 44
- Blijf groep: [blijfgroep.nl](https://www.blijfgroep.nl) | 088 - 234 24 50
- Kadera: [kadera.nl](https://www.kadera.nl) | 088 - 422 24 95

Voor juridische informatie, advies en gespecialiseerde advocaten

Het Juridisch Loket (Legal Help Desk)

Information can be found about legal proceedings and the possibilities of legal aid and legal assistance. Visit the website [juridischloket.nl](https://www.juridischloket.nl) for a helpdesk counter near you or call 0900 - 8020.

LANGZS

The Dutch National network of lawyers for victims of violence and sex crimes is a network of specialised lawyers for cases of stalking, among other things. Visit the website [langzs.nl](https://www.langzs.nl) or send an email to info@langzs.nl.

Association for Women and Law

At the website [vrouwenrecht.nl](https://www.vrouwenrecht.nl) you will find lawyers who specialise in women and law in the Netherlands.

Vereniging voor Vrouw en Recht

Op [vrouwenrecht.nl](https://www.vrouwenrecht.nl) vindt u juristen die gespecialiseerd zijn in vrouw en recht in Nederland.

For practical and emotional support

Slachtofferhulp Nederland (Victim Support Netherlands)

Slachtofferhulp Nederland mainly offers practical support to victims of stalking. This could be a referral to find the right help or contact with other victims of stalking. Call 0900 - 0101 or visit the website [slachtofferhulp.nl](https://www.slachtofferhulp.nl).

For emotional support

MIND Korrelatie

MIND korrelatie offers emotional support. Call 0900 - 1450 or visit the website [mindkorrelatie.nl](https://www.mindkorrelatie.nl).

Support via telephone

Do you need to tell someone your story? Then call De Luisterlijn (The listening line) at 088 - 076 70 00 or visit the website deluisterlijn.nl.

Meer informatie

huiselijkgeweld.nl (domestic violence)
At this website of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport you will find information regarding domestic violence. This includes addresses where you can find help.



Help and information

Emergency 112

For the deaf or hard of hearing

0800 - 8112

Police (non-emergency)

0900 - 8844

For the deaf or hard of hearing

0900 - 1844

For information or to report a crime

0900 - 8844

For the deaf or hard of hearing

0900 - 1844

Criminal investigations hotline

0800 - 6070

Anonymous tips hotline

0800 - 7000

Not part of the police

politie.nl

Social media

