

NVAA LEARNING ACTIVITY

CHAPTER 22.2: SPECIAL TOPICS, STALKING

INSTRUCTOR GUIDELINES

Key Concepts/Objectives to Emphasize in Instruction and Learning Activities:

1. Definition of stalking and stalking tactics reported by victims. (22.2-2 to 22.2-3)
2. Key provisions included in most anti-stalking statutes. (22.2-3 to 22.2-4)
3. Helpful responses and interventions from criminal justice and victim assistance professionals. (22.2-8 to 22.2-12)

Objectives:

1. Describe the four different types of stalking offenders.
2. List the needs of victims of each different type of stalker and how victim service providers and allied professionals can best meet their needs.

Description of Activity and Faculty Guidelines:

The instructor divides students into groups of ten, and distributes one (of four) worksheets to each group. Students will answer the two following questions in their groups:

- What are the possible effects of this type of stalking on the victim? On the victim's family?
- How can victim service providers and allied professionals help meet the needs of victims of this type of stalking?

The stalking statistics utilized in the worksheets are excerpted from Chapter 22.2 of the Academy Text citing a 1998 National Institute of Justice survey of stalking victims (Tjaden and Theonnes).

Can Be Utilized As:

____ Individual Activity X Small Group Activity ____ Large Group Activity

Anticipated Amount of Time Required: 20 Minutes

- 03 minutes for group division and distribution of worksheets.
- 02 minutes to read the worksheet.
- 15 minutes to discuss and answer the questions.

RESOURCES NEEDED *(Please check all that apply:)*

- Tear sheets and felt pens
 - VCR/monitor
 - Overhead projector and screen/LCD and laptop
 - Blank overhead transparencies and overhead pens
 - Masking tape
 - Index cards
 - Individual or group worksheets *(four different worksheets)*
 - Timer
 - Other *(please describe):*
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STUDENT WORKSHEET #1

SIMPLE OBSESSION STALKING

This category represents 60% of all stalking cases and includes all cases arising from previous personal relationships (i.e., those between husbands/wives, girlfriends/boyfriends, domestic partners, etc.) Many simple obsession cases are actually extensions of a previous pattern of domestic violence and psychological abuse. The only difference is that the abuse occurs in different surroundings and through slightly altered tactics of intimidation. Thus, the dynamics of power and control that underlie most domestic violence cases are often mirrored in simple obsession stalking cases.

Stalking behaviors observed in many domestic violence cases are motivated by the stalker's lack of self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness. Indeed, abuser/stalkers attempt to raise their own self-esteem by demeaning and demoralizing those around them. In most cases, they target their former spouses. The exercise of power and control over their victims gives stalkers a sense of power and self-esteem that they otherwise lack. In this way, the victim not only becomes the stalker's source of self-esteem but also becomes the sole source of the stalker's identity. Thus, when victims attempt to remove themselves from such controlling situations, stalkers often feel that their power and self-worth have been taken from them. In such cases, stalkers will often take drastic steps to restore personal self-esteem. It is when stalkers reach this desperate level that they may feel they have "nothing to lose" and become most volatile. This dynamic makes simple obsession stalkers dangerous, as individuals and as a group.

Simple obsession is the most likely category of stalking to result in murder. Thirty percent of all female homicides were committed by intimate partners. Domestic violence victims run a 75% higher risk of being murdered by their partners. "If I can't have you, nobody will," has become all too common a refrain in cases that escalate to violence. Many of these cases end with the murder of the victim followed by the suicide of the stalker.

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. What are the possible effects of this type of stalking on the victim? On the victim's family?
2. How can victim service providers and allied professionals help meet the needs of victims of this type of stalking?

STUDENT WORKSHEET # 2

LOVE OBSESSION STALKING

In this category, stalkers and victims are casual acquaintances (neighbors, co-workers) or even complete strangers (fan/celebrity). Stalkers in this category primarily seek to establish a personal relationship with the object of their obsession—contrary to the wishes of their victims. Love obsession stalkers tend to have low self-esteem and often target victims whom they perceive to have exceptional qualities and high social standing. These stalkers seek to raise their own self-esteem by associating with those whom they hold in high regard.

Love obsession stalkers become so focused on establishing a personal relationship with their victims that they often invent detailed fantasies of a nonexistent relationship. They literally script the relationship as if it were a stage play. When victims choose not to participate in the stalker's imagined passion-play, the stalker may try to force victims into assigned roles. Often, love obsession stalkers are so desperate to establish a relationship—*any relationship*—that they “settle” for negative relationships, explaining why some stalkers are willing to engage in destructive or violent behavior in an irrational attempt to “win the love” (more likely the attention) of their victims. Such obsessive reasoning might explain why John Hinkley believed he would win the heart of Jodi Foster by shooting President Ronald Reagan. It might also explain why a man who proclaimed himself to be John Lennon's “biggest fan” shot him dead on the sidewalk outside of his home.

While cases of “star stalking” often receive the most media attention, a greater number of love obsession stalkers develop fixations on “regular” people—noncelebrities. In one particularly tragic case, a young computer engineer developed a fixation on a new female co-worker, Laura Black. What began as seemingly friendly, even charming gestures on his part soon became excessive and threatening. Shortly after he had been fired for the relentless harassment of Ms. Black, he returned to the workplace and literally shot his way through the building. He killed several employees and wounded many more, including Ms. Black. A search of the stalker's home uncovered a scrapbook full of doctored pictures of himself and his victim on a ski trip that never took place. This fantasy ski trip was part of a scripted relationship he wanted to make a reality.

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. What are the possible effects of this type of stalking on the victim? On the victim's family?
2. How can victim service providers and allied professionals help meet the needs of victims of this type of stalking?

STUDENT WORKSHEET # 3

EROTOMANIA STALKING

By definition, erotomaniacs are delusional and consequently, virtually all suffer from mental disorders—most often schizophrenia.

Unlike “simple” and “love” obsession stalkers who seek to establish or reestablish personal relationships with their victim, erotomaniacs delude themselves into believing that such a relationship *already exists* between themselves and the objects of their obsession.

Though relatively rare (comprising fewer than 10% of all cases), erotomania stalking cases often draw public attention because the target is usually a public figure or celebrity. Like love obsession stalkers, erotomaniacs attempt to garner self-esteem and status by associating themselves with well-known individuals who hold high social status. Erotomaniacs seek fame and self-worth by basking in the celebrity of others. While the behavior of many erotomaniacs never escalates to violence, or even to threats of violence, the irrationality that accompanies their mental illness presents particularly unpredictable threats to victims.

Perhaps the best-known case of erotomania stalking involved a series of incidents perpetrated against the popular late night talk show host David Letterman. This woman, first found hiding in Mr. Letterman’s closet, believed she was his wife. On numerous other occasions she was caught trespassing on his property. With her young son in tow, she once scaled the six foot wall surrounding Letterman’s property. On another occasion, she was arrested while driving Letterman’s stolen car. When questioned by police, she confidently stated that her husband was out of town and that she was going grocery shopping so she would have dinner ready for him upon his return. Despite the treatment she received during her many involuntary stays at a mental institution, she eventually took her own life.

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. What are the possible effects of this type of stalking on the victim? On the victim’s family?
2. How can victim service providers and allied professionals help meet the needs of victims of this type of stalking?

