



CELEBRITY PROTECTION

# STALKERS

# Celebrity Protection: STALKERS

Celebrities and public figures face unique challenges stemming from their high-profile visibility, making them particularly vulnerable to stalking and persistent, unwanted attention that can escalate into harassment or physical threats. The prevalence of stalking has drawn attention from specialised threat management units such as the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (FTAC) in the UK, the Los Angeles Police Department Threat Management Unit, and other global dignitary protection teams. While stalking is a relatively new area of focus in psychiatry, it is deeply interconnected with phenomena such as regicides, erotomania, paranoia, and, more recently, lone-actor violence. Research suggests that behaviours like stalking, making threats, and pursuing public figures share significant overlap with patterns exhibited by workplace shooters, school shooters, and lone-actor terrorists. These individuals often develop pathological fixations driven by grievances, leading to potential acts of extreme violence.

Understanding and addressing these threats requires a multidisciplinary approach, combining mental health evaluations, behavioural threat assessments, and targeted protective strategies. Identifying consistent patterns of obsessive behaviour such as fixation, erratic communication, or physical stalking is critical for close protection operatives. Proactive measures, including enhanced security protocols, collaboration with law enforcement, and client education, play an essential role in mitigating risks and ensuring the safety of high-profile individuals. By integrating psychological insights and real-world case studies, professionals can build a comprehensive understanding of the complexities of stalking, fostering effective prevention and intervention strategies.

## The Obsessive Fan and The Stalker

The distinction between an obsessive fan and a stalker lies in their behaviour, intent, persistence, and threat level. An obsessive fan exhibits intense admiration and may repeatedly seek attention from a public figure, often believing they share a personal connection. While their actions can be intrusive, they typically remain within socially acceptable fan behaviour and do not persist once boundaries are set. In contrast, a stalker engages in unwanted, intrusive, and often escalating behavior, driven by a sense of entitlement, control, or revenge. Stalkers persist despite rejection or legal warnings and may engage in surveillance, harassment, trespassing, or even violence, posing a significant security threat. While obsessive fans may not intend harm, their actions can still create security concerns, whereas stalkers require proactive monitoring, intervention, and legal measures.

### Definition: Obsessive Fan

An obsessive fan is an individual who develops an intense, fixated, and often unhealthy attachment to a celebrity, public figure, or influencer. Their admiration crosses normal fan behaviour, leading to intrusive actions such as excessive messaging, stalking, or attempting to breach personal boundaries. Obsessive fans may feel a false sense of personal connection with the subject, sometimes exhibiting delusional beliefs (e.g., imagining a personal relationship). In extreme cases, their behaviour can escalate into harassment, threats, or attempts to gain physical proximity to the target, posing potential security risks.

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## Definition: Stalker

A stalker is an individual who repeatedly engages in unwanted, obsessive, and intrusive behaviour toward another person, causing fear, distress, or concern for safety. Stalking behaviours can include persistent following, harassment, surveillance, unwanted communication, and attempts to control or intimidate the target. Stalking can occur in person, online (cyberstalking), or through a combination of both, and is often driven by obsession, delusion, or a desire for power and control.

While obsessive fans can exhibit behaviour that appears intrusive, they generally lack the persistence, fixation, and risk of harm associated with stalkers. Stalkers, by contrast, often pose a genuine threat due to their unwillingness to respect boundaries and their potential to escalate toward violence. Differentiating between the two is essential for determining the level of intervention and protective measures required.

Celebrity stalking can escalate to deadly violence, with tragic cases demonstrating the severe risks posed by obsessed and delusional individuals. These incidents highlight the need for robust protective measures and early intervention strategies.

## Case Study - Rebecca Schaeffer - The Tragic Murder of an '80s Actress

Rebecca Schaeffer was a rising '80s actress known for her role as Patti on the TV show "My Sister Sam." Born in 1967, she had a promising career ahead of her. However, tragedy struck on July 18, 1989, when she was just 21 years old.

Robert John Bardo, a troubled individual, became obsessed with Schaeffer after seeing her on TV. He tracked her down, obtained her address through public records, and showed up at her apartment. Cold-bloodedly, he shot her at point-blank range, ending her life. This shocking event led to significant changes in privacy laws and the recognition of stalking as a crime in the United States.

In response to Schaeffer's murder, privacy protections were strengthened, and stalking was designated a crime. The LAPD established a special division called the Threat Management Unit to deal specifically with stalkers and their victims.

Robert John Bardo, one of the most notorious celebrity stalkers, exemplified the extreme dangers of obsession-driven behavior. Born on January 2, 1970, in Tucson, Arizona, Bardo grew up in a troubled family environment and struggled with mental health issues, including schizophrenia. He developed a fixation on celebrities from a young age, particularly drawn to television and movie stars. His obsession with actress Rebecca Schaeffer began after seeing her on the show *My Sister Sam*. Bardo's behaviour escalated into a relentless campaign to contact her, sending numerous letters and attempting to meet her in person. Despite Schaeffer's efforts to discourage him, his fixation only intensified, ultimately culminating in her tragic murder in 1989. This case shocked the nation and underscored the severe risks of celebrity stalking, highlighting the need for improved security measures and awareness surrounding such threats.

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On July 18, 1989, Robert John Bardo arrived at Rebecca Schaeffer's Los Angeles apartment and, after ringing the doorbell, fatally shot her in the chest with a .357 Magnum revolver. Schaeffer, just 21 years old, died shortly afterward. Bardo was apprehended and later convicted of first-degree murder, receiving a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

This high-profile case shocked the nation, drawing attention to the dangers of celebrity stalking and prompting significant legal reforms, including stronger privacy protections and anti-stalking legislation to better prevent such tragedies.

## Impact and Awareness

Rebecca Schaeffer's tragic death highlighted the need for greater awareness of stalking and better protection for public figures. Her case led to increased security measures for celebrities and raised public awareness of the serious consequences of stalking behaviour.

## Lessons Learned

The case of Robert John Bardo serves as a stark reminder of the dangers of unchecked obsession and the devastating impact of stalking behaviour. It highlights the importance of recognising the signs of stalking and implementing measures to prevent escalation and protect potential victims. Additionally, it highlights the need for mental health support and interventions for individuals who exhibit concerning behaviours related to fixation and obsession.

## Stalkers / Stalking

**A Stalker** - A stalker is someone who engages in repeated and unwanted behaviour that makes another person feel scared, distressed, or threatened.

### Definitions:

A stalker is an individual who obsessively and aggressively pursues someone to the point of harassment, often disregarding boundaries and causing significant fear or distress to the target. This behaviour, known as stalking, involves persistent and unwanted attention that can include following, monitoring, or repeatedly contacting the target. Stalking is typically fueled by an unhealthy obsession or fixation, making it a serious threat to the safety and well-being of the individual being targeted.

## Types of Stalking

**Harassment** Stalking behaviour may include bullying, cyber-stalking, antisocial behaviour, and sending unwanted messages (texts, emails, letters, etc.).

**Sexual Harassment** Unwanted sexual advances, comments, or gestures also fall under stalking. This includes sharing sexual photos, pressuring someone for sex, or using offensive language.

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**Aggressive Behaviour** Stalkers may follow, spy on, or interfere with the target's life. They might even engage in identity theft or repeatedly visit the victim's home.

**Online Stalking and Harassment** Social media platforms and chat rooms are often used for stalking and harassment. Perpetrators may gather personal information, create fake accounts, and damage reputations online.

## Warning Signs of Stalking

Remember the acronym **FOUR**:

Fixated

Obsessive

Unwanted

Repeated

## Stalking Laws

Stalking laws in the UK are stringent and aim to protect individuals from harassment and threats to their safety. Under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, stalking is recognised as a criminal offence, and penalties were enhanced by the introduction of specific stalking offences in 2012. These include stalking involving fear of violence or causing serious alarm or distress. Internationally, approaches to stalking legislation vary. Many countries, such as the United States, have robust anti-stalking laws, with each state defining and penalising stalking behaviours, often involving restraining orders and severe penalties for repeat offenders. In contrast, some countries still lack comprehensive legal frameworks to address stalking, leading to challenges in protecting victims effectively. The international inconsistency in laws often complicates matters in cases where stalking crosses borders, underscoring the need for global cooperation and harmonisation of legal protections.

## Social Media and Celebrity Stalking

Many studies on celebrity and public figure stalking predate the rise of social media, which has significantly changed how individuals interact with their audiences. Today, platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok are vital tools for self-promotion and engagement. Celebrities often address their fans in a familiar, personal tone to foster a sense of intimacy and loyalty.

However, this approach can inadvertently lead to misunderstandings among certain followers, particularly those with psychotic tendencies or delusional beliefs, who may misinterpret this tone as a personal connection.

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Social media provides stalkers with new tools to monitor, contact, and harass their targets. Stalkers can track celebrities' movements through location tags, interact with their posts obsessively, or even use fake accounts to bypass blocks and continue their harassment. In some cases, they may weaponise social media by spreading false information, making threats, or attempting to tarnish the celebrity's reputation online. This new dynamic poses unique challenges, particularly for minor celebrities who may lack access to professional security or social media guidance. General education on social media safety, privacy settings, and recognising early warning signs of cyberstalking would benefit all public figures. For high-profile individuals, integrating social media monitoring into overall security strategies is essential to mitigate risks and safeguard their well-being in the digital age.

## The Mind of a Stalker

The mind of a stalker is shaped by obsessive fixation, distorted perceptions, and an inability to respect boundaries, often rooted in unmet emotional needs or psychological instability. Motivated by diverse factors such as a desire for connection, revenge, or control. Stalkers frequently act out of deep-seated feelings of inadequacy, rejection, or delusion. They may rationalise their actions as acts of love, devotion, or moral duty, failing to acknowledge the harm they inflict. For some, mental health conditions foster delusions, such as believing in a special relationship with the target or perceiving rejection as a challenge to overcome.

Stalking behaviour often escalates, beginning with unwanted communication and progressing to physical proximity or even violence, especially when the stalker feels ignored or thwarted. Different types of stalkers including intimacy seekers, resentful individuals, rejected ex-partners, or predatory offenders demonstrate varying patterns of persistence and escalation, driven by desires for control, emotional impact, or thrill-seeking. Understanding their distorted realities and behavioural patterns is critical for assessing risk, as their persistence and potential for escalation pose significant threats. This insight is essential for developing targeted interventions and protective strategies to safeguard victims and manage stalkers' behaviours effectively.

## Motivational Typology of Stalkers Targeting Celebrities and Public Figures

Public figures often attract individuals who align with established stalking motivational typologies, each posing unique risks that require tailored intervention. Specific groups of public figures are more likely to encounter particular types of stalkers. For instance, Members of Parliament (MPs) frequently face help seekers pursuing assistance for personal grievances, while young, attractive celebrities or royalty are common targets for intimacy seekers driven by erotomania or imagined relationships. Other motivations include rejected stalkers struggling to cope with the end of a relationship, resentful individuals driven by grievances or personal agendas, and incompetent suitors—socially inept individuals attempting to initiate romantic contact.

Less common but highly concerning are predatory stalkers, who engage in covert preparations for sexual assault, and attention seekers, who leverage a public figure's status to amplify their own visibility or that of a cause. Chaotic stalkers, often severely psychotic, may present motivations that are difficult to discern but pose significant risks. Recognizing these categories helps in assessing potential threats and implementing appropriate protective measures.

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A substantial proportion of those who stalk or attack high-profile individuals exhibit symptoms of psychiatric disorders. Common conditions include delusional disorders, such as erotomania, where the stalker believes the target reciprocates their feelings; schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders, often marked by persecutory delusions or hallucinations involving the victim; mood disorders like bipolar disorder; and personality disorders, particularly those with borderline or narcissistic traits. These psychiatric conditions distort reality, amplifying feelings of entitlement, grievance, or obsession, and significantly increasing the likelihood of unwanted communication or inappropriate approaches.

Understanding both motivational typologies and psychiatric underpinnings is crucial for effective threat assessment and management, enabling protective strategies that address the specific risks posed by each individual.

## **Warning Behaviours**

Threat assessment professionals identify distinct warning behaviours that signal a progression toward potential violence in stalkers. These behaviours serve as critical indicators for evaluating risk and implementing protective measures.

### **Pathway Behaviour:**

This involves taking deliberate steps toward planning or preparing for an attack. Examples include conducting surveillance of the target, acquiring tools or weapons, rehearsing scenarios, or making logistical arrangements. These actions demonstrate a stalker's shift from fantasy to actionable intent, increasing the likelihood of violence.

### **Fixation:**

Fixation is marked by an intense and disproportionate preoccupation with the target. This behaviour often consumes the stalker's thoughts and actions, leading to a noticeable decline in other areas of their life, such as work, relationships, or self-care. This narrowing focus on the target reflects their growing obsession and potential detachment from reality.

### **Identification:**

In this behaviour, the stalker aligns themselves with a broader ideology, cause, or group, or even models their actions after previous attackers. For instance, they may idolise or attempt to emulate well-known perpetrators of similar crimes, reinforcing their justification for acting out against the target.

### **Leakage:**

Leakage occurs when the stalker shares their intentions, either directly or indirectly. This can happen through verbal statements, written messages, or posts on social media. Leakage may include threats, hints of violent plans, or comments that reflect their fixation, offering crucial clues to their mindset and potential actions.

### **Novel Aggression:**

Novel aggression involves engaging in a new act of violence that was not previously observed in their behaviour. This could range from minor incidents, such as damaging property, to more significant violent actions. The introduction of new aggression suggests an increased willingness to escalate, making it a vital warning sign.

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## **Energy Burst:**

An energy burst is characterised by a sudden spike in activity related to stalking or planning. This could involve an increase in attempts to contact the target, intensified efforts to gather information, or rapid progression in their preparatory actions. This burst of activity often signals that the individual may be nearing a critical point of escalation.

Recognising these warning behaviours is crucial in the context of celebrity protection, as they provide insight into a stalker's trajectory and potential risk level. By closely monitoring and analysing these patterns, security professionals can intervene early, implement protective measures, and mitigate the threat of violence effectively.

## **Pathological Fixation**

Pathological fixation is characterised by an abnormal, intense, and all-consuming interest in a person or cause, which comes to dominate the stalker's life. This fixation leads the stalker to believe they are entitled to a relationship with the person they are pursuing. Unlike ordinary fans, who may hope for a relationship, stalkers with a pathological fixation have a sense of "entitled reciprocity," believing that the target owes them a relationship or interaction. This entitlement and obsession set them apart from typical admirers, who do not experience this extreme and distorted sense of connection and obligation.

## **Grievance**

Grievance plays a crucial role in motivating individuals to engage in stalking and other related unwanted behaviours. Individuals who develop a pathological fixation often do so because of perceived grievances or injustices. These grievances can be personal, such as feeling wronged or rejected by the target, or ideological, where the stalker believes they are championing a cause. The sense of grievance fuels their belief in "entitled reciprocity," where they feel justified in their actions and entitled to a relationship or response from their target.

## **Serious Violence**

Serious violence is a potential outcome of stalking, particularly when the violence is specifically targeted and premeditated. This type of violence is directed at a specific person and is often planned, which contrasts with the impulsive violence commonly encountered in psychiatric settings where a highly aroused individual lashes out at whoever is nearby. The premeditated nature of targeted violence offers opportunities for earlier detection, prevention, and disruption. However, sometimes the intended target is not reached due to effective protection measures, leading the stalker to select a more accessible target instead. This can result in friends or family of the stalker becoming victims, highlighting the broader impact of stalking behaviour.

## **Loners**

While not all stalkers are loners, and not all loners are stalkers, some may exhibit characteristics of social isolation or limited social connections, which can contribute to their behaviour. Social isolation may amplify obsessive tendencies, as individuals lacking healthy relationships may fixate on a particular person to fulfil unmet emotional or psychological needs.



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However, stalking behaviour is not confined to socially isolated individuals; it can manifest across diverse backgrounds, personalities, and social dynamics. For instance, some stalkers maintain active social lives, professional connections, or even relationships while still engaging in persistent and intrusive behaviours. Understanding the nuances of social dynamics in stalking cases highlights the complexity of the behaviour, reinforcing that stalkers cannot be stereotyped based solely on isolation but must instead be assessed based on their motivations, psychological state, and behavioural patterns.

## **Social Isolation**

Social isolation is a significant factor that can contribute to or escalate stalking behaviour, although it is not a universal characteristic among stalkers. Many individuals who experience social isolation face barriers to forming and maintaining relationships due to traits such as shyness, social awkwardness, or introversion. Mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, or social anxiety disorder, often exacerbate these difficulties, deepening feelings of exclusion and disconnection. In some cases, paranoia or mistrust of others leads to withdrawal from social interactions, creating a cycle of isolation that can amplify obsessive or fixated behaviour.

For some stalkers, this isolation fosters intense fixation on a specific individual, who becomes a substitute for the meaningful connections they lack. The victim may be perceived as an emotional outlet or a source of validation and companionship, resulting in a one-sided dependency. This reliance heightens the risk of increasingly intrusive or desperate behaviours, often fueled by feelings of rejection, abandonment, or loneliness. Furthermore, the absence of a supportive network of friends, family, or community connections leaves the stalker without emotional guidance or external perspectives, intensifying their fixation. The resulting actions often further alienate the stalker from others, creating a feedback loop that deepens their obsession and escalates their behaviour.

However, stalking behaviours can also arise in individuals with varying levels of social connectedness, underscoring the complexity of this issue. The interplay between social dynamics, psychological factors, and situational triggers must be carefully assessed to evaluate the risks associated with stalking behaviour. Early intervention, psychological support, and legal protections are critical in mitigating harm and assisting both victims and perpetrators. Addressing social isolation and its underlying causes, alongside fostering healthy relationships and external influences, is pivotal in managing and preventing stalking behaviour effectively.

It's important to recognise that not all stalkers fit the stereotype of a loner or socially isolated individual; they can come from diverse backgrounds, including those with seemingly normal social lives, successful careers, or active involvement in their communities. In some cases, stalkers may even exploit their social connections or positions of authority to facilitate their behaviour, using their status to conceal their actions or intimidate victims, which can make the threat more difficult to identify and address effectively.

## **Intervention and Prevention**

Behavioural analysis involves profiling an individual's history, communications, and mental health background to provide actionable insights into their potential threat level. Risk assessment tools, such as the Stalking Risk Profile (SRP) or the Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM), systematically evaluate risk factors to aid in decision-making.

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Protective measures include increasing physical security for the potential target, conducting surveillance and monitoring of the suspect's behaviours, and implementing legal interventions such as restraining orders, though caution is necessary as these actions may escalate certain individuals.

The **Stalking Risk Profile (SRP)** is a structured risk assessment tool used by professionals in law enforcement, mental health, and threat management to evaluate and manage stalking cases. It categorises stalkers into five primary types including rejected, intimacy seekers, incompetent suitors, resentful, and predatory, each with distinct motivations and behaviours. The SRP assesses risk across key domains, including stalker characteristics (e.g., personality traits and mental health disorders), victim vulnerability, situational factors (e.g., access and stressors), and the nature of the stalking behaviour (e.g., intensity and escalation). It incorporates warning behaviours such as fixation, pathway behaviours, and leakage of intent to evaluate the likelihood of violence. The SRP provides practical recommendations, including legal actions, enhanced physical security, psychological interventions for the stalker, and victim support strategies. By offering a systematic approach and focusing on the dynamic nature of stalking, the SRP enables interdisciplinary collaboration and effective risk mitigation to ensure the safety and well-being of victims.

The **Guidelines for Stalking Assessment and Management (SAM)** is a structured professional judgment tool designed to assess and manage stalking risks by combining evidence-based criteria with professional discretion. It evaluates risks across three domains: the nature of stalking behaviour (e.g., persistence, intensity, and escalation), perpetrator risk factors (e.g., mental health issues, substance abuse, or history of violence), and victim

Effective threat management requires training and awareness for protective teams to recognise warning behaviours and understand the implications of mental health disorders in threat scenarios. Collaboration with experts, such as forensic psychologists and law enforcement specialising in threat management, can significantly enhance outcomes. Additionally, monitoring and cataloguing unwanted communications are critical for identifying patterns, tracking escalation, and facilitating timely intervention.

The high prevalence of severe mental illness, particularly psychosis, among individuals who target public figures underscores the importance of early identification and intervention. Warning behaviours, such as delusional communication, persistent attempts to make contact or inappropriate approaches, often precede acts of violence and can serve as critical red flags. Monitoring for these behaviours provides an opportunity to assess risk and engage law enforcement or mental health services before a situation escalates.

To prevent violent outcomes, it is essential to implement robust protocols for identifying and responding to warning behaviours. Security teams, mental health professionals, and law enforcement should work collaboratively to assess the intent and capacity for harm among individuals who display concerning behaviours. Education and training for close protection operatives and public figure staff on recognising early signs of escalation are equally vital. Proactive intervention strategies, informed by psychological and historical data, can significantly reduce the likelihood of attacks and ensure the safety of high-profile individuals.

The FBI's approach to profiling stalkers integrates behavioural analysis, psychological evaluation, and strategic interventions to predict, assess, and mitigate threats. Behavioural analysis identifies patterns in the stalker's actions, such as contact frequency, social media use, and signs of escalation, while threat assessment evaluates risk based on behaviours, communications, and criminal history.

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Psychological evaluation focuses on understanding motivations, including delusions, revenge, obsession, or control, alongside mental health conditions such as erotomania, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, or personality disorders. Communication analysis examines letters, emails, and social media for threats or shifts in tone, revealing potential escalation. Using typologies like rejected, resentful, intimacy-seeking, incompetent, and predatory stalkers, the FBI categorises individuals to better understand their behaviours and risks. Intervention strategies include recommending protective measures, pursuing legal actions, and suggesting psychological interventions, with collaboration between the FBI, local law enforcement, and specialised stalker task forces to manage high-risk cases involving public figures. Similarly, the US Secret Service employs a research-based approach focusing on observable behaviours, such as fixation, planning, or leakage of intent, within a multidisciplinary framework that combines law enforcement, intelligence, and mental health expertise. Proactive engagement, early intervention, and continuous monitoring are central to mitigating risks, as exemplified by insights from historical cases like the attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan.

In the UK, a victim-centred approach emphasises robust legal frameworks, such as the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and Stalking Protection Act 2019, combined with specialised policing units, risk assessment tools like the DASH checklist, and organisations like the National Stalking Helpline. This approach prioritises early identification of warning behaviours, effective prosecution, and victim support while addressing challenges like underreporting and online stalking through ongoing improvements in training, technology, and legislation. Together, these comprehensive, multidisciplinary approaches highlight the importance of collaboration, prevention, and victim safety in addressing stalking and targeted violence.

## Response and Action

Responding to stalking requires proactive measures to ensure safety and mitigate risks. It is crucial to document all incidents, including encounters, communications, or any concerning behaviour by the stalker, to provide evidence if needed. Reporting threats or suspicious actions to law enforcement is essential, and obtaining legal protections such as restraining orders can help establish boundaries. Additionally, implementing enhanced security measures, such as surveillance systems, access controls, and personal protection services, is vital to reduce the risk of harm or intrusion.

## Threat Assessment

Conducting a comprehensive threat assessment in cases involving stalking requires a thorough evaluation of the stalker's behaviour, intent, and capability to harm the victim. This process includes analysing the frequency, nature, and escalation of the stalker's actions, as well as their access to the victim. Factors such as prior threats, history of violence, and the stalker's fixation or obsession with the individual must also be assessed to determine the severity of the risk. Based on this assessment, protectors can develop tailored strategies to mitigate the threat, such as implementing surveillance detection measures, improving physical security, coordinating with law enforcement, and advising the client on behaviour and routines that reduce vulnerability. By remaining vigilant, proactive, and systematic in addressing stalking incidents, celebrity or victim protection teams can play a critical role in safeguarding their clients' physical safety, emotional well-being, and overall security.

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## Gathering Information

Gathering information begins with a thorough interview with the victim to understand the stalker's behaviour, including specific details of stalking incidents, communications, and any threats made. Additionally, a stalker profile should be compiled, focusing on their identity, history, relationship to the victim, and any known patterns of stalking or violent behaviour..

## Assess the Stalker's Behaviour

Analysing the stalker's behaviour involves examining patterns such as the frequency and intensity of stalking incidents, the level of intrusion, and any escalation in threatening or aggressive actions. Additionally, it is essential to identify risk factors linked to the stalker's behaviour, including a history of violence, mental illness, substance abuse, or an unhealthy fixation on the victim.

## Evaluate the Level of Risk

Conducting a risk assessment involves using structured tools or frameworks to evaluate the level of risk posed by the stalker, taking into account factors such as their intent, capability, and opportunity to harm the victim. Based on the assessment findings, the stalker's risk level is determined as low, moderate, or high in relation to the victim's safety.

## Develop Risk Management Strategies

Safety planning involves creating a personalised plan to mitigate the risk of harm to the victim, including measures to enhance physical security, limit access to personal information, and improve awareness of safety protocols. Legal protections, such as restraining orders or protective orders, should be pursued to restrict the stalker's access and proximity to the victim. Additionally, providing psychological support and counselling services is essential to help the victim cope with the emotional impact of stalking and develop effective strategies for managing fear and anxiety.

## Monitor and Review

Ongoing assessment involves continuously monitoring the stalker's behaviour and regularly reassessing the level of risk to the victim's safety, especially in response to any changes or escalation in stalking incidents. Strategies for risk management should be adapted as necessary to address evolving threats or challenges, ensuring that the victim's safety remains the top priority.

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## Collaborate and Coordinate

Interagency collaboration is essential for effectively managing stalking cases by coordinating with law enforcement, victim advocacy organisations, mental health professionals, and other relevant stakeholders to share information, resources, and expertise. Maintaining open communication with the victim is equally important, ensuring they are informed about the threat assessment process, available support services, and recommended safety measures. By conducting a comprehensive threat assessment and implementing proactive risk management strategies, threat assessors can empower victims of stalking to protect themselves and better navigate the challenges of living under the persistent threat posed by their stalkers.

## Celebrity Stalking Cases Involving Killings

### John Lennon

On December 8, 1980, 40-year-old Beatles legend and rock icon John Lennon who eerily predicted his own death was shot five times in the back outside his Manhattan apartment building by former Beatles fan Mark David Chapman. Why? We still don't know.

According to The Independent, Chapman has given many conflicting reasons as to why he killed Lennon, such as seeking fame, as well as his spiritual beliefs. In 2010, Chapman stated he had a hit list that included Elizabeth Taylor, Paul McCartney, and late-night legend Johnny Carson, but chose Lennon "out of convenience." He also expressed hatred of Lennon's hit "Imagine," which he believed made the iconic musician a Communist and a hypocrite: "He told us to imagine no possessions and there he was, with millions of dollars and yachts and farms and country estates, laughing at people like me who had believed the lies and bought the records and built a big part of their lives around his music."

A year after the murder, Chapman was sentenced to 20 years to life in prison and was denied parole for the 11th time in 2020 (via Rolling Stone). Ironically, Chapman's desire for fame was one of the factors behind his parole denial in 2018, with the board stating that if he was released, "someone may attempt or succeed in harming you out of anger and or revenge, or for the same reason that you killed John Lennon, to assume notoriety."

## Impact and Awareness

The murder of John Lennon had a profound global impact, highlighting the dangers of stalking and obsession while prompting significant changes in public awareness, security measures, and societal attitudes. Lennon's death at the hands of Mark David Chapman, a delusional fan who felt betrayed by the musician's public persona, underscored the vulnerability of public figures to obsessive individuals with untreated mental health issues. The tragedy led to widespread mourning and reflection on celebrity culture, emphasising the darker side of fame. It also prompted many celebrities to reevaluate their personal security, driving advancements in protective measures and home security protocols. The killing reignited debates about gun control in the United States and contributed to the eventual development of anti-stalking laws by raising awareness of the risks posed by persistent and obsessive behaviour. Extensive media coverage of the case brought attention to the importance of early intervention in addressing dangerous fixations and the need for better mental health support.

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## **Christina Grimmie**

The death of Christina Grimmie on June 10, 2016, shocked the world and highlighted the dangers posed by stalkers and obsessive individuals. Grimmie, a 22-year-old singer and former The Voice contestant was fatally shot during a meet-and-greet after a performance in Orlando, Florida, by Kevin James Loibl, an obsessed fan who had developed delusional beliefs about a romantic relationship with her.

Loibl, who had no prior criminal record, entered the venue armed with two handguns, a knife, and extra ammunition, bypassing security measures such as bag checks or metal detectors, which were not in place. After shooting Grimmie multiple times, Loibl was tackled by her brother, Marcus, before turning the gun on himself. The tragedy underscored the risks of direct public interactions for celebrities and sparked changes in event security protocols, including the implementation of bag checks and metal detectors at public venues. It also brought attention to the dangers of unchecked fan obsession and the need for early identification of potential threats. Grimmie's family later established the Christina Grimmie Foundation to support families affected by gun violence and stalking, ensuring her legacy would help others. Her death remains a stark reminder of the importance of security and threat awareness for public figures.

## **Selena Quintanilla**

The death of Selena Quintanilla on March 31, 1995, remains one of the most tragic and high-profile cases of celebrity stalking and obsession. Selena, a 23-year-old Tejano music superstar, was shot and killed by Yolanda Saldívar, the president of her fan club and a trusted associate. Saldívar had developed an unhealthy obsession with Selena and had been confronted by the singer and her family over allegations of embezzling money from Selena's fan club and boutiques. After luring Selena to a motel under the pretense of returning important financial documents, Saldívar fatally shot her. Despite Selena's attempt to escape and name her killer before collapsing, she was pronounced dead shortly after. This tragedy underscored the dangers of allowing obsessed individuals into close personal circles and highlighted the need for careful vetting of trusted associates. Selena's death devastated her fans worldwide, led to stricter security measures for public figures, and solidified her legacy as a cultural icon whose life was tragically cut short.

## **Darrell Abbott**

The death of "Dimebag" Darrell Abbott on December 8, 2004, is one of the most shocking examples of violence against a musician. Abbott, the legendary guitarist for Pantera and Damageplan, was performing with Damageplan at a nightclub in Columbus, Ohio, when he was shot and killed on stage by Nathan Gale, a disturbed former Marine and Pantera fan. Gale, who had a history of mental health issues and delusional beliefs, blamed Abbott for the breakup of Pantera and planned the attack as an act of retribution. Armed with a handgun, Gale stormed the stage, shooting Abbott multiple times and killing three others before being fatally shot by a responding police officer. The tragedy underscored the vulnerability of public figures during live events and the dangers posed by untreated mental health issues in combination with obsession and access to firearms. Abbott's death led to increased awareness of security measures at concerts and reinforced the importance of mental health intervention to prevent such tragedies.

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## Gianni Versace

The death of Gianni Versace on July 15, 1997, shocked the world and underscored the dangers faced by public figures targeted by obsessive individuals. Versace, the renowned Italian fashion designer, was shot and killed outside his Miami Beach mansion by Andrew Cunanan, a serial killer with a history of targeting high-profile individuals. Cunanan, who was already wanted for multiple murders, had developed a fixation on wealth, fame, and the glamorous world Versace represented.

The motives for Cunanan's actions remain speculative, but his fascination with Versace and obsession with celebrity culture likely played a significant role. Versace's murder highlighted the risks of unpredictable violence against public figures and the importance of vigilant personal security. The tragedy not only marked the loss of a visionary designer but also exposed the vulnerabilities of high-profile individuals in their private lives, sparking discussions about security measures for the wealthy and famous.

## Celebrity Stalking Cases Without Fatal Outcomes

### Miranda Cosgrove

Miranda Cosgrove, known for her comedic roles as Summer Hathaway in *School of Rock*, Megan Parker in *Drake & Josh*, and the titular character in *iCarly*, has faced a traumatic stalking incident that continues to impact her life. The former Nickelodeon star was targeted by a stalker who tragically set himself on fire and fatally shot himself in her garden. Before taking his own life, the man also fired at a woman who had mistakenly driven near Cosgrove's home, believing it to be hers. This chilling event left a lasting impression on the actress, highlighting the serious dangers posed by obsessive individuals.

### Catherine Zeta-Jones

Catherine Zeta-Jones faced threats from a stalker. The individual in question was Dawnette Knight, who became fixated on the actress and engaged in a campaign of harassment and threats against her.

Dawnette Knight, born in 1961 and working as a secretary, developed an intense and delusional obsession with actress Catherine Zeta-Jones after seeing her in *The Mask of Zorro*. Knight became convinced that Zeta-Jones was attempting to steal her identity and ruin her marriage. This fixation escalated into a campaign of harassment, where Knight sent threatening letters and made disturbing phone calls to Zeta-Jones and her husband, Michael Douglas. In these messages, Knight threatened to kill Zeta-Jones and herself if the actress did not leave Douglas, detailing graphic and violent acts, including threats to cut Zeta-Jones into pieces. This case highlighted the terrifying lengths to which obsessive individuals may go and the psychological toll such harassment can take on victims.

Zeta-Jones and Douglas took legal action against Knight, and she was arrested by the FBI in June 2004. Knight pleaded guilty to charges of stalking and was sentenced to three years in prison.

The case brought attention to the serious threats that celebrities face from stalkers and the need for robust legal protections and security measures. Zeta-Jones spoke publicly about the ordeal, highlighting the emotional toll it took on her and her family.



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The case of Dawnette Knight's stalking of Catherine Zeta-Jones helped raise awareness of the dangers of celebrity stalking and the importance of taking such threats seriously. It also prompted discussions about mental health issues and the need for support and intervention for individuals who exhibit obsessive or threatening behaviours.

## Michael Douglas

Michael Douglas has faced stalking incidents, most notably involving Dawnette Knight, whose obsession with Catherine Zeta-Jones extended to him as well. Knight's fixation on Zeta-Jones intertwined with her perception of Douglas as an obstacle to her delusional relationship with the actress. This led to a disturbing series of threatening letters and phone calls directed at both Douglas and Zeta-Jones, with Knight threatening to kill Zeta-Jones and herself if the actress did not leave him. The ordeal deeply affected Douglas and his family, prompting legal action that resulted in Knight's arrest and conviction on stalking charges. This case highlights how stalking behavior can impact not only the primary target but also their loved ones, underscoring the need to take such threats seriously and pursue legal measures to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone involved.

Utilising specialised units like the Fixated Threat Assessment Centre (FTAC) in the UK is crucial for identifying and managing individuals who exhibit concerning behaviours, particularly toward public figures. Improving access to mental health services is equally essential to ensure individuals with severe mental illness receive appropriate treatment, addressing underlying factors that may drive fixations. Communication monitoring systems can help detect and respond to verbal or written threats, enabling early intervention. Additionally, training security personnel and protection teams to recognise and respond to warning signs of stalking or escalating behaviours is critical in mitigating potential risks. The combination of severe mental illness and identifiable warning behaviors offers a key opportunity for preventive measures, as literature suggests these indicators often signal progression along a "pathway to violence." While applying this theoretical model requires nuance, proactive monitoring and intervention remain vital to protecting public figures and celebrities from harm.

## The Rejected

These individuals are former intimates of the public figure who struggle to accept the end of their relationship. Despite being the most common group of stalkers, they are rarely the focus of public figures or celebrity threat management units. Their origins stem from the personal life of the prominent individual rather than their public role.

## Madonna

Madonna, like many high-profile celebrities, has had her share of encounters with stalkers over the years. One particularly notable case involved Robert Dewey Hoskins, a man who fixated on Madonna and engaged in a series of alarming behaviours.



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Robert Dewey Hoskins was born in 1960. He became obsessed with Madonna in the early 1990s and began stalking her, displaying increasingly threatening behaviour. In 1995, Robert Dewey Hoskins trespassed on Madonna's Hollywood Hills estate by scaling the fence and entering her property, where he was shot by her security team but managed to escape. Prior to this, Hoskins had sent numerous letters to Madonna containing violent and threatening language. These letters professed his love, expressed a desire to marry her, and included menacing statements about harming her and her family. Madonna pursued legal action against Hoskins, leading to his arrest and a trial. In 1996, he was convicted of stalking and threatening her and was sentenced to prison.

## **Impact**

Madonna's experiences with Hoskins underscored the dangers of celebrity stalking and the need for robust security measures to protect public figures from such threats. The case received significant media attention and contributed to discussions about the risks faced by celebrities and the importance of addressing stalking behaviour.

## **Lessons Learned**

This case serves as a reminder of the serious risks associated with celebrity obsession and stalking. It highlights the importance of implementing effective security measures and legal interventions to ensure the safety and well-being of public figures and their families.

Madonna's ordeal with Hoskins also brought attention to the broader issue of stalking and the need for increased awareness, resources, and support for victims of stalking behaviour. It underscored the importance of taking stalking threats seriously and providing adequate protection for those who are targeted.

## **Britney Spears: Stalker Masahiko Shizawa**

Masahiko Shizawa's stalking behaviour towards Britney Spears began with persistent and intrusive actions. He sent numerous letters to Spears, some of which were unsettling and expressed an obsessive infatuation. These were accompanied by unsolicited gifts, escalating the discomfort and concern for Spears' safety. Despite a restraining order issued against him, Shizawa's actions intensified.

In 2002, he trespassed on Spears' property, violating the legal boundaries established to protect her. His presence on her property not only breached her sense of security but also underscored the potential danger he posed. Following this incident, Shizawa was arrested, highlighting the severity of his actions and their legal repercussions. This case exemplifies the critical need for vigilant security measures and swift legal action in addressing stalking behaviours.

## **Rihanna: Stalker Kevin McGlynn**

Kevin McGlynn's stalking of Rihanna escalated through a series of increasingly disturbing actions. In 2013, McGlynn began sending threatening letters to Rihanna's home, which contained unsettling language and posed a direct threat to her safety. His behaviour extended to social media, where he posted disturbing messages that further amplified concerns about his mental state and intentions.

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McGlynn's fixation led him to attempt direct contact by hand-delivering letters to Rihanna's apartment on multiple occasions, blatantly disregarding her privacy and security. His persistent and alarming behaviour culminated in his arrest, underscoring the serious nature of the threat he posed. This case highlights the importance of early intervention, robust security measures, and swift legal action in protecting individuals from stalkers.

## **Taylor Swift: Stalker Mohammed Jaffar**

Mohammed Jaffar's stalking of Taylor Swift in 2017 involved a series of alarming and escalating behaviours. Jaffar repeatedly attempted to gain access to Swift's New York City apartment, often lingering around her building and attempting to force his way inside. These actions not only violated her privacy but also posed a direct threat to her safety.

In addition to physical trespassing, Jaffar sent disturbing emails and social media messages to Swift and her family. The content of these communications ranged from obsessive to threatening, increasing concerns for Swift's well-being. His actions ultimately led to his arrest for stalking and burglary, demonstrating the severity of his fixation. This case underscores the importance of maintaining strong security protocols and the critical role of legal intervention in addressing such threats.

## **Selena Gomez: Stalker Thomas Brodnicki**

Thomas Brodnicki's stalking of Selena Gomez in 2011 was marked by highly concerning and threatening behaviour. Brodnicki, who had a documented history of mental health issues, made explicit threats about killing Gomez. His obsession drove him to travel from Illinois to Los Angeles with the intent of meeting her, demonstrating a deliberate and premeditated effort to make contact.

Brodnicki's actions, coupled with his history of mental instability, escalated the perceived danger, prompting swift legal action. He was arrested in 2011, and Gomez subsequently obtained a restraining order to ensure her safety. This case highlights the importance of addressing stalking behaviours in conjunction with mental health interventions to protect victims and manage risks effectively.

## **Miley Cyrus: Stalker Mark McLeod**

Mark McLeod's stalking of Miley Cyrus came to a head in 2012 when he was arrested for trespassing on her property. Prior to this, McLeod had persistently attempted to contact Cyrus through various means, displaying an obsessive and inappropriate interest in her.

In addition to his physical attempts to breach her privacy, McLeod made concerning statements about Cyrus on social media, further raising alarm about his intentions. His actions, combining both physical trespass and digital harassment, posed a significant threat to her safety and underscored the importance of proactive security measures and law enforcement intervention to address such behaviour.

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## **Ariana Grande: Stalker Timothy Normandin**

Timothy Normandin's stalking of Ariana Grande involved repeated and alarming incidents. Normandin was arrested multiple times for trespassing on Grande's property, persistently violating her privacy and disregarding legal boundaries. His obsession was further demonstrated through his consistent attempts to contact her by sending numerous unsolicited gifts and messages.

Normandin's behavior reflected a history of stalking, and his repeated actions led to court orders mandating that he stay away from Grande. Despite these legal interventions, his persistence underscored the challenges in managing chronic stalking cases and highlighted the necessity for stringent security measures and ongoing vigilance to protect individuals from such threats.

These examples highlight the pervasive nature of stalking behaviour and the challenges faced by celebrities in managing their safety and security. Stalking incidents can have profound psychological and emotional effects on victims, and many celebrities have spoken out about the need for increased awareness and legal protections for stalking victims.

## **The Resentful**

This is the group that most commonly comes to the attention of public figure threat management units and the most concerning in terms of violence risk. They are angrily pursuing a grievance or another idiosyncratic agenda, either blaming the public figure for their persecution or demanding the help of the public figure in remedying the situation. Clinically, this group contains many people with paranoid illnesses the victims of 'gang stalking' 'targeted individuals' and others complaining of mind control, secret government experiments or being controlled by 'apps', for example. These are not new phenomena, for example, the victim of 'mind control' at the hands of the 'Air Loom Gang' in the 18th century. He was committed to Bethlem Hospital in 1797 after causing a disturbance in Parliament, shouting 'Treason' at the Home Secretary, having first written to him to complain about conspiracies. Also in the resentful category are the abnormally persistent complainants - a complex and clinically difficult group. Their complaint has frequently begun with a genuine grievance, but their response has evolved, often over decades, into something highly pathological and out of all proportion to the initial insult. For some, the grievance will have assumed a delusional character requiring psychiatric management, although this is often made very difficult by their propensity to incorporate clinical staff into their pattern of complaining and litigating. For others, although they may not be delusional, their behaviour is clearly highly problematic for themselves and others around them. Complaints departments are extremely familiar with such people, even if psychiatrists are not.

## **Theresa Saldana: Stalker Arthur Richard Jackson**

In 1982, actress Theresa Saldana, best known for her role in Raging Bull, became the target of Arthur Richard Jackson, a resentful stalker who developed a fixation on her and acted out of perceived grievance and obsession. Jackson's behaviour escalated to violence when he attacked her in broad daylight. Arthur Richard Jackson, a drifter from Scotland, fixated on Saldana after watching her on screen. He became convinced that they were destined to meet and began to obsessively research her life. Jackson viewed Saldana's lack of reciprocation as a personal rejection, which fueled his anger and transformed his fixation into a desire to punish her. He managed to obtain her home address by impersonating a staff member of her management team.

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Jackson travelled to Los Angeles and ambushed Saldana outside her home, stabbing her ten times with a hunting knife in a frenzied attack. The assault occurred in public and only ended when a deliveryman intervened, likely saving Saldana's life. She was severely injured but survived after undergoing multiple surgeries.

## The Intimacy Seekers

The intimacy-seeking group comprises individuals who harbour a delusional belief that they are entitled to, or already share, a close personal relationship with a public figure. This perceived relationship may take various forms, such as believing they are a trusted advisor, a romantic or sexual partner, or connected due to a specific public or familial role. Their delusions often stem from underlying psychotic illnesses, which reinforce their conviction in these unfounded beliefs.

These individuals frequently attempt to substantiate their claims through extraordinary and intrusive means. For instance, they may send biological material, such as hair or other samples, requesting DNA testing as "proof" of a familial or kinship connection to the public figure. Their fixation can lead to increasingly invasive behaviours, as they often feel justified in their attempts to make contact or assert their perceived relationship.

Among the stalkers of celebrities, intimacy seekers are particularly prevalent. Their psychotic illnesses and delusional ideations make them more prone to targeting well-known figures, viewing them as central to their fabricated narratives. This group poses significant challenges to the safety and privacy of public figures, requiring targeted security and psychological interventions to mitigate potential risks.

Real-life cases of intimacy stalkers demonstrate the complexities and dangers associated with individuals who develop obsessive and delusional attachments to their targets. Below are some notable examples:

### Jodie Foster: Stalker John Hinckley Jr.

John Hinckley Jr. became infatuated with actress Jodie Foster after watching the film *Taxi Driver*. He believed they shared a special connection and that his actions would impress her.

Hinckley moved to New Haven, Connecticut, where Foster was attending Yale University, and attempted to contact her through letters, phone calls, and personal visits. His fixation escalated to an assassination attempt on President Ronald Reagan in 1981, believing it would prove his devotion to Foster.

Hinckley was found not guilty by reason of insanity and committed to a psychiatric facility, where he remained for decades under strict conditions.

## Females That Stalk

Stalking is not confined to any specific gender. Although male stalkers are statistically more common, female stalkers also engage in such behaviour, and their actions can be equally invasive and threatening. Female stalkers often exhibit similar patterns of obsession, fixation, and boundary violations, and their motivations may range from romantic delusions to resentment or revenge. Despite being less frequently reported, their actions can have significant psychological and emotional impacts on their targets, underscoring the importance of addressing stalking behaviours regardless of the perpetrator's gender.

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## Laura Black

Laura Black developed an intense infatuation with David Letterman, the renowned late-night talk show host, during the late 1980s. Her obsession with him escalated into a series of alarming behaviours that disrupted his life and raised significant safety concerns.

Black's stalking behaviour included multiple instances of breaking into Letterman's home, a serious invasion of his privacy and security. In one particularly brazen act, she stole his Porsche, showcasing the lengths she was willing to go in her fixation on him. These actions were part of a broader pattern of disturbing and obsessive behaviour aimed at gaining his attention.

Black's repeated intrusions and thefts led to her being arrested multiple times on charges of stalking and burglary. Her actions ultimately resulted in a criminal conviction and a prison sentence. This case highlights the dangers posed by stalkers and the necessity of legal interventions to protect public figures from obsessive and harmful behaviour.

## Angela Maria Diaz

Angela Maria Diaz developed an unhealthy obsession with a man she had briefly dated. In a calculated attempt to conceal her actions and create a plausible alibi, she later married another man, using the relationship as a cover for her manipulative and malicious behavior.

Diaz orchestrated an elaborate scheme to frame her former date for crimes he did not commit. She falsely accused him of stalking and harassment, even going as far as sending threatening messages to herself to support her claims. These actions led to significant legal and emotional distress for the man she targeted, as law enforcement initially pursued him based on her fabricated evidence.

Eventually, the truth behind Diaz's actions was uncovered, leading to her arrest and conviction for multiple felonies, including perjury and false imprisonment. Her malicious actions earned her a prison sentence and highlighted the devastating consequences of false accusations and the misuse of legal systems. This case serves as a stark reminder of the importance of thorough investigations and safeguards to protect individuals from being wrongly accused.

## Margaret Mary Ray

Margaret Mary Ray, a woman diagnosed with schizophrenia, developed a fixation on David Letterman, the famed television personality. Her mental health condition fueled delusional beliefs, including the conviction that she was Letterman's wife.

Ray's obsession led her to repeatedly trespass on Letterman's property, disregarding his privacy and security. In one of the most notable incidents, she stole Letterman's Porsche, further escalating her invasive behaviour. Her actions were driven by her delusions, which made her believe she had a rightful place in Letterman's life.

Ray was arrested numerous times for her stalking and trespassing activities. Despite repeated legal interventions, her struggles with mental illness persisted, and she faced significant personal challenges. Tragically, Ray committed suicide in 1998, underscoring the profound complexity and consequences of untreated mental health issues intertwined with stalking behaviours.

These cases highlight that while female stalkers are statistically less common, their actions can be equally concerning and harmful as those of male stalkers. Stalking behaviour, regardless of the perpetrator's gender, should be taken seriously, with victims seeking legal protection, psychological support, and enhanced security measures to ensure their safety.

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## The Incompetent Suitors

Incompetent suitors are individuals who attempt to initiate an intimate relationship with public figures, often using abnormal or overly persistent methods. Their behaviour stems from a lack of understanding of social rules and boundaries, making their approaches appear intrusive or inappropriate. These individuals are often overrepresented among those with autism spectrum disorders or intellectual disabilities, which may impair their ability to recognise the public figure's unavailability or disinterest. While their intentions are usually not malicious, their repeated and socially awkward attempts to connect can cause discomfort or concern for the public figure. Addressing these situations requires a careful balance of maintaining boundaries while considering the suitor's potential underlying difficulties in social comprehension.

## The Predatory

Predatory stalkers are those making clandestine preparations prior to a sexual attack. This is a rare group, containing high-risk sexual offenders, occasionally seen by celebrity stalking management units. Not only are they very uncommon, it is rare for them to be referred to psychiatric services as, unlike the other motivational groups, they are at pains to keep their preparations secret.

## The Attention Seekers

Attention seekers are individuals whose unusual behavior is intended to draw focus to themselves, often for reasons of self-aggrandizement or the pursuit of notoriety. This group frequently comes to the attention of threat management units due to their disruptive or attention-grabbing actions, which may include public stunts, exaggerated claims, or dramatic attempts to connect with public figures. Personality disorders, particularly those of the borderline, emotionally unstable, or histrionic types, are often overrepresented in this group. Their motivations are typically less about causing direct harm and more about satisfying a need for recognition or validation.

Managing attention seekers requires a delicate approach, as overreacting to their behaviour can reinforce their actions and encourage further attempts to gain attention. The general strategy is to avoid unnecessary escalation by minimizing the involvement of threat management units and instead focusing on de-escalating the behavior. By not rewarding their actions with the desired attention, it is often possible to extinguish the unwanted behavior effectively.

## The Chaotic

The chaotic group comprises individuals whose behavior and correspondence are so profoundly disordered due to severe psychosis that their motivations or objectives are nearly impossible to discern. These individuals often display profound thought disorders, which manifest in incomprehensible or irrational actions. Their approaches can range from bizarre to unsettling, reflecting the severity of their mental health issues. Examples include a young man who drove from Italy to Buckingham Palace to deliver a 600-page dossier to the Queen, the contents of which were incoherent, and an elderly woman who sent pieces of string, wool, tattered bank statements, and identification documents to the Prime Minister.

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Unfortunately, the prevalence of individuals in this group appears to be increasing, potentially due to cuts in mental health services, leaving vulnerable individuals without adequate support. Managing these cases requires a compassionate yet firm approach, focusing on connecting the individuals with appropriate mental health care while ensuring the safety and well-being of the intended recipients of their behavior. Their actions, while often not directly threatening, can create challenges for security and threat management units tasked with discerning their intent and mitigating potential risks.

## **Sandra Bullock: Stalker Joshua James Corbett**

Sandra Bullock faced a terrifying stalking incident involving Joshua James Corbett, a man who had developed an unhealthy obsession with her after seeing her in movies and on television. Corbett's fixation escalated to disturbing levels, ultimately culminating in a break-in at her Los Angeles home.

Prior to the break-in, Corbett had been spotted outside Bullock's home on multiple occasions, indicating a pattern of surveillance and fixation. Despite these warning signs, his obsession reached its peak on June 8, 2014, when he gained unauthorized access to Bullock's home while she was inside.

During the break-in, Bullock discovered Corbett inside her house, prompting her to take immediate action. She locked herself in a room for safety and called the police. Her quick thinking and composure in a high-stress situation likely prevented the incident from escalating further.

When police arrived at the scene, they arrested Corbett without incident. He was subsequently charged with stalking, burglary, and possession of illegal firearms, as authorities discovered a cache of weapons in his possession. This case highlights the critical importance of robust security measures and legal intervention in managing the risks posed by stalkers, particularly those who escalate to physically invasive actions.

In May 2018, Joshua James Corbett pleaded no contest to charges of stalking and breaking into Sandra Bullock's home. The court sentenced him to five years of probation and mandated that he continue receiving mental health treatment, recognizing the need to address the underlying issues behind his behavior.

## **Impact on Sandra Bullock**

The incident had a profound emotional impact on Sandra Bullock, leaving her shaken and deeply concerned for her safety and that of her family. To protect herself and her loved ones, she obtained a restraining order against Corbett, legally requiring him to stay away from her and her family members.

## **Aftermath**

In the wake of this terrifying experience, Sandra Bullock became an advocate for stronger laws to protect against stalking and invasions of privacy. She has spoken publicly about the challenges celebrities face and the need for effective legal and security measures to prevent such incidents. The break-in also prompted Bullock to significantly enhance security measures at her home, including installing advanced surveillance systems and taking additional precautions to ensure her personal safety.

This incident underscores the significant risks that public figures face from obsessed individuals. It highlights the critical importance of implementing robust security protocols, seeking legal protections, and addressing mental health concerns to mitigate threats and safeguard the well-being of those targeted.

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## Threats

Threats occupy an odd position in this work and have a complex literature. Sending correspondence which is *not* threatening is associated with a higher likelihood of approaching. There is one group of stalkers – ‘howlers’ whose aim is to cause fear and distress in their target and they therefore send very alarming and threatening correspondence but are unlikely to approach or attack as they have achieved their purpose with their writings. However, making threats is also associated with a high level of mortality in the longer term, both suicide and homicide. The absence of threatening communications should not reassure the clinician that the person does not pose a threat, and if threats are made, they should be taken seriously. One modifying factor may be the ‘intimacy effect’. Violence is much more likely in a stalking case when the two parties have formerly been intimate, and in this group, threats of violence are significantly associated with actual violence.

## Björk: Stalker Ricardo Lopez

Ricardo López, often referred to as the "Björk stalker," is a chilling example of how seemingly isolated threatening behaviours, such as letters, can escalate dangerously if left unaddressed. López was a socially isolated individual who developed an obsessive fixation on Icelandic singer Björk. His obsession began with admiration for her work but later turned into anger and resentment when he learned about her relationship with musician Goldie, whom López perceived as unworthy of her.

### Key Details of López's Behaviour:

**Threatening Letters and Communications:** López began his campaign by writing threatening letters to Björk, expressing his delusions about their connection and his growing hatred for her choices. These letters reflected his deteriorating mental state and delusional thinking.

**Video Diary:** López took his fixation a step further by recording a video diary over the course of several months. In these videos, he detailed his thoughts, plans, and grievances against Björk. The diary offered chilling insights into his mind, including his belief that his actions would somehow "punish" Björk and gain her attention.

**Escalation to Violence:** López's fixation ultimately escalated when he constructed a letter bomb filled with sulfuric acid and mailed it to Björk's London address in 1996. His goal was to harm or kill her as an act of vengeance. Fortunately, the package was intercepted by authorities before it reached her.

**Suicide and Legacy:** After mailing the bomb, López filmed his suicide, ending his life with a self-inflicted gunshot. His apartment was discovered filled with disturbing materials related to Björk, including the video diary and writings that documented his obsession and violent intentions.

### Lessons from the López Case:

**Early Indicators:** López's initial threatening letters and diary entries contained clear signs of his deteriorating mental state and dangerous intentions. Such communications should always be taken seriously as potential precursors to escalation.



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**Warning Signs:** López exhibited classic signs of a predatory and delusional stalker, including intense fixation, feelings of betrayal, and detailed planning of harmful actions.

**Intervention Opportunities:** The case underscores the importance of monitoring and addressing threatening communications early. Had López's letters or other warning signs been intercepted earlier, intervention might have prevented his escalation.

**Public Figure Vulnerability:** Björk's celebrity status made her a target, highlighting the risks public figures face from individuals with severe mental health issues or delusional fixations.

The López case serves as a stark reminder of the importance of evaluating and addressing stalking behaviours early, particularly when threatening communications are involved. It also emphasises the need for protective measures for public figures and greater awareness of the risks posed by fixated individuals.

## Unusual Clinical Features

In line with the studies, those who approach or send problematic correspondence to public figures have high levels of severe mental illness. There are also some unusual features. There are high rates of encapsulated delusional disorder (including, of course, erotomania), where the person can appear to maintain a high level of functioning and the presence of mental illness can be missed altogether by the inexperienced. We have also encountered many cases of *folie à deux* and internet-facilitated *folie à plusieurs*, where people with paranoid illnesses, particularly those featuring some form of intrusive government surveillance, can find others with the same delusional beliefs online. In particular, there are communities of people who describe themselves as 'targeted individuals' and as victims of 'gang stalking'. Their symptoms often include highly concerning horrific delusions, and several recent US mass shootings have been perpetrated by 'targeted individuals', apparently as a direct result of their psychotic experiences – Jiverley Wong in the 2009 Binghamton shootings, Aaron Alexis at the Washington Naval Yard in 2013, Myron May at Florida State University in 2014, and Gavin Long in Baton Rouge in 2016, for example. In other words, not all delusional beliefs are equal when it comes to making a clinical assessment of the patient.

Peripatetic patients are also common. People are attracted to particular public figures (especially the Queen, the US President, the Pope and certain Hollywood celebrities) from around the world, and travel internationally in pursuit of delusional quests. Sometimes people travel around the country or the world in an attempt to flee delusional persecution. Sometimes people move to evade mental health services, often with great success. This can present great difficulties for mental health services that are tied to catchment areas and legal jurisdictions.

## Nothing to Lose

When a stalker believes they have nothing to lose, the level of danger associated with their behaviour significantly increases. This mindset often leads to a heightened risk of violence, as the stalker becomes more unpredictable and aggressive, feeling emboldened to act on their obsessions without regard for the consequences. Such behaviour dramatically increases the risk of harm to their target or others. A lack of inhibition often accompanies this mindset, with the stalker disregarding restraining orders, escalating their tactics, and engaging in reckless or dangerous actions.

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The desperation and intensity of their fixation can also intensify, making their stalking behaviour more persistent and relentless. This escalation creates significant challenges for the target, who may struggle to find safety or escape the stalker's pursuit. Additionally, there is a potential for suicidal behaviour in extreme cases, where the stalker might view self-harm or harming others as a way to exert control or gain attention, particularly if they feel abandoned or rejected by their target.

This mindset poses serious challenges for law enforcement, as traditional legal consequences may fail to deter a stalker who feels they have nothing left to lose. Managing such cases often requires intensive monitoring and intervention strategies to address the heightened risk effectively. For the target, the impact is profound, with the constant fear and anxiety caused by the stalker's dangerous behaviour leading to significant disruptions in their daily life and an enduring loss of personal safety. These cases underscore the critical need for comprehensive threat management and support systems for victims.

An example of a celebrity stalker who seemingly had "nothing to lose" is Robert John Bardo, the man who murdered actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1989. Bardo exhibited many of the traits associated with high-risk stalkers, including a sense of desperation, obsessive fixation, and a lack of perceived consequences for his actions.

## Lessons and Implications:

**"Nothing to Lose" Mentality:** Bardo's actions were fueled by his lack of meaningful relationships, purpose, or fear of consequences. This mentality made him particularly dangerous, as he saw his fixation on Schaeffer as his only remaining source of emotional fulfillment.

**Importance of Addressing Threats:** Bardo's obsession was known to his family, and he exhibited clear warning signs, including prior fixations on other celebrities. Early intervention might have prevented his escalation.

**Policy Changes:** Schaeffer's murder prompted significant changes in privacy laws, including the introduction of the Driver's Privacy Protection Act (DPPA) in 1994, which restricted access to personal information from DMV records.

**Protective Measures for Celebrities:** This case underscores the importance of robust protective measures, particularly for public figures who may unknowingly become the focus of individuals with severe mental health issues or "nothing to lose" mindsets.

Robert John Bardo remains a chilling example of how desperation, obsession, and a sense of hopelessness can converge to create a deadly threat.

## Intervention and Management

Effectively managing a stalker who believes they have nothing to lose requires a multifaceted approach that prioritises the safety of the target while addressing the stalker's motivations and risks. The process begins with a comprehensive risk assessment to evaluate the potential danger posed by the stalker, considering factors such as their behavior patterns, previous actions, and any indications of escalation or violence.

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Developing a tailored safety plan is essential for the target, involving collaboration with law enforcement, security professionals, and support services. This plan should include practical measures such as securing the target's home, monitoring communications, and establishing protocols for responding to potential threats. Legal measures are also vital, including obtaining restraining orders, pursuing charges for stalking or harassment, and enforcing any violations of court orders to create legal boundaries and consequences for the stalker.

In addition to these measures, psychological support plays a critical role. The target may require counseling to address the emotional and psychological toll of the stalking, while the stalker may benefit from intervention to address underlying mental health issues or other factors driving their behavior. In some cases, mandated treatment programs can help mitigate the risk of reoffending.

Dealing with a stalker who feels they have nothing to lose demands a comprehensive and coordinated strategy that combines law enforcement, mental health intervention, and victim support. By addressing both the immediate risks and the root causes of the behavior, this approach can enhance the safety and well-being of the target while working to prevent further escalation.

## Conclusions

Celebrity stalking is a complex and multifaceted issue that poses significant risks to the safety and well-being of public figures. Stalkers often operate from a place of obsession, entitlement, or desperation, and their motivations can range from delusional beliefs to vengeful resentment. While some exhibit clear warning signs, such as threatening communications or repeated intrusions, others escalate unpredictably, highlighting the need for proactive security measures. Early identification, comprehensive threat assessments, and robust protective strategies are essential to mitigate the dangers posed by stalkers. Additionally, addressing the underlying mental health and social factors that drive such behaviours is critical to preventing escalation. By combining psychological expertise, legal protections, and tailored security practices, it is possible to enhance the safety of celebrities and reduce the prevalence of these often tragic encounters.