

**HOW TO SHIELD
YOURSELF
AGAINST
STRANGER-
STALKING
IF YOU'RE
YOUR OWN BOSS**

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Foreword

Hi there, entrepreneurial person. Did you see the pandemic coming? Were you able to predict that we'd have to change the way we do business and live our lives for over two years? Well, guess what, most women don't expect to become stalked either but it happens to many of us. It can also happen to people like you and me who have to have our contact details online and who have to be able to communicate with customers, fans, suppliers, colleagues, competitors and leads.

It happened to me. I was a migrant in a country where I didn't know anyone when I became the target of so-called sadistic or resentful stalking and it has included extensive hacking. I couldn't go to a friend's home to use his or her computer or store important documents there. I was on my own. I couldn't move back to my home country and I also never foresaw that what was going on would continue for as long as it did. Heck, as it turned out, I didn't even know who was doing it!

When it began, I'd been self-employed for over a decade. I am still really ticked off by how little practical support I received and how little emotional support there was. Some people lectured me as if I were a three-year-old or vented at me. As I was down for the count, there was little risk of it coming back to bite them, they seemed to figure.

Tips for how to keep my professional life functional would have been so welcome. Saying that money was tight is an understatement. Nobody ever offered anything along the lines of "Listen, I remember that your postal mail has gotten messed with. It's important to secure your mail. Most of those mailbox services out there are too expensive for you but I just heard about something else that may be useful to you."

The immense stress you're under and the way almost everything you do can get messed with means that you can't always think straight any longer and the resulting isolation and poverty have a tendency to cut you off from developments. You may no longer be aware of what is possible in terms of services and products. If you become stalked, friends and family members often abandon you too.

Someone was not only hacking into my equipment as well as sabotaging and controlling various aspects of my life, such as my postal mail, my electricity and broadband, but also picking my locks and carrying out crap in my flat when I was out. Someone cut into the necks of several animals just to spite me, one time even inside my flat, sometimes killing them and at other times causing immense pain. Yet nobody could be arsed to take note of how unhinged this behaviour was.

I am far from alone.

At the end of 2022, more than twenty experts and organizations who call themselves the National Stalking Consortium launched a so-called super complaint against the police in England and Wales for how the police forces deal with stalking.

Did you know that in 2017/2018, the police recorded 10,334 incidents of stalking whereas the Crime Survey for England and Wales estimates that there were over 1,000,000 self-reported victims of stalking each year for roughly the same time period? That's a whopping difference.

A little under half of these cases likely concerned strangers or vague acquaintances. Quite a few of these will have affected the professional activities or businesses of the victims.

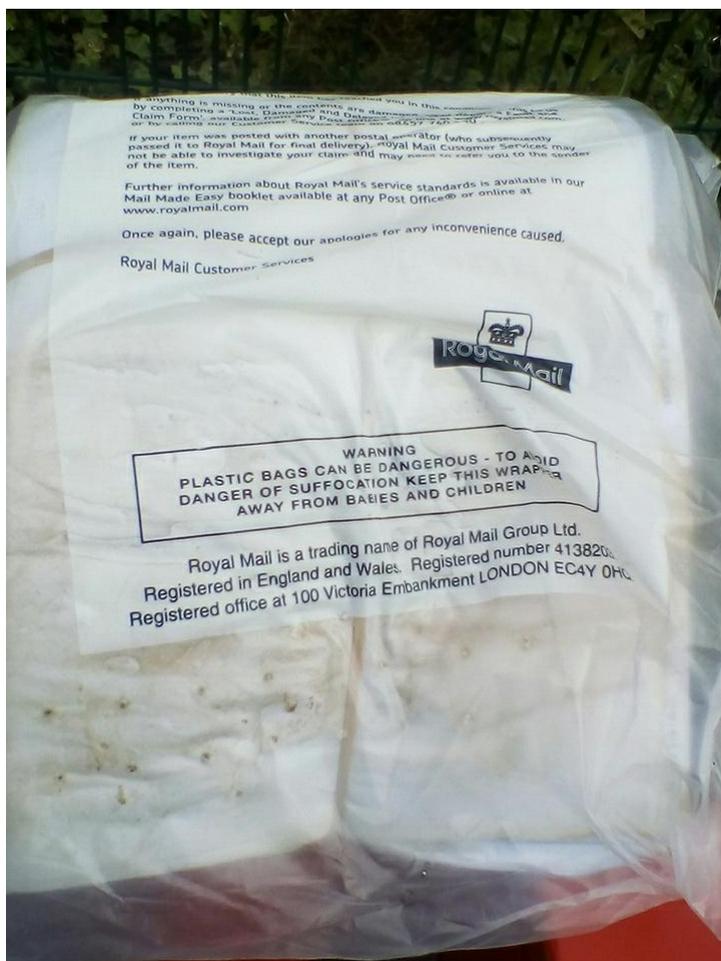
In 2017, the police forces in England and Wales had already admitted that they were failing stalking victims by default. Not much change has happened since then.

A lot of this has to do with otherization of the victims. They are mostly women. Stalking is often perceived as an “anxiety problem” that women suffer from. Is stalking really merely a figment of feeble-minded women’s overactive imagination? Of course not.

Stalking, however, actually is a public health matter and an economic issue, not something that policing can fix. That’s part of the reason why the police forces are so ineffective in this area.

In this booklet, I share a few things that I have learned the hard way. It is geared toward independent professionals, the owners of small businesses, YouTubers, bloggers and otherwise self-employed people. I hand you very simple practical tips for how to shield yourself and your loved ones and thus limit the chance that you become stalked by a stranger if you’re someone who has to have an online presence and a few pointers for how to protect yourself. It’ll be useful for others too.

I am talking simple stuff that often will only cost you a little bit of your time. Easy peasy. Better safe than sorry.



Since the start of 2011, a great deal of my postal mail went missing. This often concerned local mail; some of it arrived after a delay of nine months. This photo shows you a package of wet and muddy letters from a period of about six months, handed to me by a Royal Mail employee. This is merely one example of what can start happening in your life when someone becomes a little obsessed with you and either decides to start "looking after you" or gets annoyed when you push him away.

Stay well. Stay safe. Stay free. Stay happy.

All my best,

Angelina



1. Digital interactions

The first thing I'm going to tell you is to outsource all your email handling, your social media handling, your (incoming) phone calls, everything.

That's going to cost you a little bit, yes, but it's also going to free up a lot of your time. It's going to unburden you of potential stressors – worries – and in some cases, it can even prevent suicides such as the suicide of Lee MacMillan, a YouTuber who was trolled online and then committed suicide, tragically.

What it helps you do is create a buffer around you. It puts a filter on the stream of incoming communications. When emails come in and get filtered – screened – by another company, it puts a buffer between you and anyone who may have become obsessed with you without you realising it.

In some cases, these may be people who've merely become fascinated with you, who think you're a fascinating person and who make you their study object. That is not necessarily a bad thing, a negative thing or dangerous, but it can really make you anxious because you do not know what's going on in that person's mind.

You can prevent that a little bit by just creating a buffer between you and such a person. If that person decides to call you, he is going to end up speaking with somebody else. That's going to confuse him a little bit and throw him off a little bit and discourage him a little bit.

It won't discourage everyone – of course not – but it creates a buffer between you and the world out there. The unknown individuals who may be hanging on to every word you type and who may even see it as a personal message to them.

If you outsource your communications, you will not be the one who's talking to that person who tries to contact you. That means there is no direct impact on you, such as weird vibes after a call. The person who answers the call for you may pick up on a weird vibe but will know that it has nothing to do with him or her. That person can alert you so that you are aware and put your guard up a little.

Of course, you will have to instruct the company that screens your calls, emails and handles your social media for you very well. You need to tell them which calls are relevant for you and need to be forwarded and which ones can be dismissed straight away.

An example is that I used to get calls from companies that wanted to sell large quantities of chemicals to me because of my scientific background. I didn't need to know about such calls. I needed to know about calls from people who were interested in my services or who I was actually working with. I might be interested in calls about business services such as insurance. I would also want to know about calls from for example the tax authorities.

By outsourcing your communications, you may also prevent that somebody hacks into your systems as follows. Someone who's obsessed with you may send you spoofed email with a photo of how they're using one of your products or a PDF with prices from one of your suppliers that has custom-written computer code attached to it. That will likely not be detected by your security software.

In that case, it will also end up – and perhaps even be detected – at the bigger company that handles your social media, your emails and your calls for you.

You could make it a rule that they never send you attachments, but print and scan them for you. If they email you the scan, no custom-written computer code should be able to make it through. If it's legit, you can always call the party who sent you the file and ask them to send it again. It gives you an extra contact moment, and that's good for business. You can be creative about how you ask the person to send you the file again. Better yet, if you ask the company that handles your communications for you not to delete anything, you can also simply ask them then to send you the file, once you know it's legit.

Yes, outsourcing your communications costs a little but it's really worth it. I repeat: It's really really worth it.

As you've probably figured out, I used to do this in the past when I was simply very busy, very often in a lab where I couldn't take phone calls. It gave clients the impression that I ran a much bigger business. People would tell me things like "I already spoke with one of your colleagues." It worked very well.

If you use LinkedIn a lot, it is best to outsource LinkedIn messages as well. In the next chapter, I'll explain why.

Lee MacMillan's story:

<https://people.com/human-interest/van-life-influencer-lee-macmillan-dies-by-suicide-at-28/>



2. Protect your LinkedIn connections

The second tip I'm going to give you is not useful for everyone because not everyone uses LinkedIn. Shield your connections on LinkedIn. This used to be the golden rule of business networking when social media didn't exist yet.

All media that have message facilities are vulnerable to hacking because the chat facility often creates a direct conduit into your equipment. This is why it is good to let another company handle your LinkedIn traffic as well.

If you shield your connections, it means that anyone who connects with you who spoofs somebody else's account or who creates a profile on the basis of someone who isn't even on LinkedIn but exists in real life, will not be able to see who your other connections are. That person will not be able to contact your other connections or even pretend to be one of those other connections at some point.

Protecting your connection is solid gold. Nobody wants to be pestered by trolls and sales people who seem to be connected with you and thereby can get a foot in the door so to speak.

What happened to me one day was that I noticed that one of my oldest LinkedIn connections showed up as a very new connection, just a few weeks old. The profile image was of a very different, much younger person. I think that whoever was targeting me assumed that this person – because he was on the other side of the world, in South America – was just a chance connection. It was actually someone I had worked with, had had phone calls with, had emailed with, so I was able to tell that the profile that I was now connected with was fake. That person was part of a global company that I used to work with, but subsidiaries in other countries do not always bear the same name as the parent company. So it was really not evident to strangers that I really knew that person.

What I've also experienced is that somebody wanted to connect with me on LinkedIn who used to work at an organisation that I had often worked with. That person was now working at a similar organisation, according to the profile, so it seemed legit. I did have an odd feeling about it and as soon as I connected with her and asked her why she wanted to connect with me, she started sending me really strange messages... That made clear that this person was not the person who this LinkedIn account appeared to be. This was somebody else. These were spoofed communications.

You can't protect yourself 100% against everything, but you can protect yourself and your valuable contacts to some degree by shielding your LinkedIn connections, by not allowing your other connections to see who you've connected with.

If you become really seriously stalked, there is a big chance that that person will also start contacting your family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances (doctors, former employers, dentists, school teachers etc). If you shield your connections on LinkedIn, that person will at least not be able to contact your other LinkedIn contacts by having connected with you on LinkedIn without you realizing that there is a problem.



3. Shield your address

If you ship goods, even if it's only stickers to your fans, make sure you do not list your home address on the shipping label. That's how Devann's stalker ended up at her address one day. She's since had to relocate several times.

You can work out how to do this. You can find a solution for how to do this. You can hire a PO Box, swap addresses with another business owner or get a virtual address.

If you're a company director in the UK, then Companies House can shield your home address. You do not have to list your home address for everyone else to see. If you're a registered voter, you can also make sure that the voters register data are not accessible for everyone. Every country has its own rules. Check what you can do to shield your identity via your voters' registration too.

You should also check that your domain name registrar is not revealing your home address, private mobile number and email address to the world either. Ask your hosting company. Also check that companies like PayPal and eBay aren't revealing your home address.

Devann's story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEmKr74caY8>



4. Take care if you film your surroundings

If you make videos, make sure that your video does not show where you live. There's a YouTuber in Arizona who went outside to shoot a video and accidentally revealed where she lived. The video showed something that was recognisable to other people and somebody turned up at her home address. She was not a happy camper at all when that happened.

Of course, also make sure that you blur all vehicle registration plates etc that are visible.

Simple but effective. Take care.

My mother used to say "better safe than sorry". She said it in a way that I wasn't able to understand as young as I was when my mother was still alive, but she was right. Better safe than sorry. It's better to get caught with an umbrella in the sunshine and feel like a fool than to be without an umbrella when it's pouring. It's better have prevention in place that isn't needed than not having it in place and find out that it was needed. It will be too late to close that barn door by then.

The YouTuber I mentioned above (Prepper Princess) freaked out a little when a fan turned up at her home and asked her to go for a coffee. She had not counted on that at all. For a while, she went back to making videos inside her home. She was visibly upset that someone had shown up at her door because it made her feel vulnerable.

She had not been inviting people to come over for coffee, after all. She was sharing tips for living frugally and salting away enough money for old age or for lean times. If you want to shield yourself against potential stranger-stalking, do not reveal where exactly you live if you make videos. Someone might recognise the surroundings.



5. Own your headspace

If somebody does start to harass you, troll you, starts to annoy you and worry you, starts to concern you, that person may well only want to claim your headspace. A lot of people merely want to mess with you. That's what trolls do.

Do not let the person get into your head. Do not ruminate.

Go for a walk, use mid-theta binaural beats, do some yoga, watch a TV series, go for a coffee with a colleague or best friend or meet your partner for lunch, do anything that will relax you and take your mind of whatever is going on.

A lot of people on the internet are out there just to needle other people. Heck, you know that. It's fact of life. They will home in on vulnerability or what they think is one of your vulnerabilities and start needling you. They go after relatives of missing people, for example.

If you've outsourced your social media, however, as I talked about in the first chapter, this won't be a problem for you.

But if you haven't, for example because money is just too tight right now, and someone does go after you online, do not let the person get into your head.

Try to shrug it off as well as you can. Do not respond. They want a response from you and will likely deliberately misinterpret anything you say anyway.

Do not block the person on Twitter or other social media. When you block a person, it tells them that they're having an effect on you. These folks will easily create another account to start needling you again.

Mute them. Just mute them. Or ignore them if you can't mute them.

Don't block them. Ignore them. Ignore them completely.

Go ice-skating, dance it off, watch a hilarious film... you catch my drift. Get him out of your mind. Do anything that will take your mind off whoever is... messing with you!

You can stare into the flame of a lit candle for a minute to empty the mind.

You can retreat to what Thich Nhat Hanh calls "the island within":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wIzIlg6EYIZ4>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1un_agCuMzw

If they work for you, you can use for example mid-theta binaural beats. You listen to them over your headphones).

About binaural beats:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/theta-waves>

Generate your own mp3 files:

<https://mynoise.net/NoiseMachines/binauralBrainwaveGenerator.php>

6. Lock it up real good

Go look at your locks! The ones on your doors and windows, I mean.

Avoid anything that has remote control options. Avoid anything with video. Go for 3, 4 or 5 very different high-end mechanical locks, on each external door.

I have four locks on my front door, two of which are simple, and one of which is so easy to pick that I no longer use it. One of the other two is now a high-security lock; I had already upgraded the other lock of these two as well. My locks still get picked.

Do not necessarily rely on a locksmith because locksmiths always think “burglars”. They think “brute force”. They do not think about stalkers, persistent people who will take the time to figure out how your lock works.

While installing the locks yourself will likely save you a bundle, it has to be done right and it can be daunting to install new locks on your own. You also may find yourself needing to dash out for some tools that don't have or don't have in the right size while you're installing a new lock, which can mean that you will briefly have leave your door more or less unlocked. You can run into other unexpected hiccups. So if you do install your own locks, team up with a friend or colleague who can hold the fort for you or offer you some other form of support.

For optimal security, it is best is to rotate the high-end locks on your external doors frequently. This is because lock-picking is a skill that must be practiced and if someone is targeting you, that person is specifically targeting your specific locks. It may take him about a month to get his skills up to speed enough to pick your new high-security lock, but it may take longer to pick it with great ease. If you are away for 2, 3 hours, that will give the person a lot of time. If you only pop out to a corner shop, it doesn't. Are you starting to get the full picture?

Any lock can get picked. What differs is how much time it takes. So if you want optimal security, put a lot of different locks on your doors. Because that means that anyone who wants to pick your locks has to be able to master them all. That will delay that person a lot and it will also limit the number of people who will be able to pick your looks.

Do not rely on CCTV cameras, particularly not if you can access them remotely because that also means that they can get hacked, of course. You may want to consult with one locksmith and then consult another locksmith and see what he or she says, but again, they tend to expect brute force from burglars, they do not expect cunning individuals who are after you personally.

My locks were picked for years. I did have a feeling that something like that was going on, something strange. I had for example come home a few times to find my door unlocked, but I told myself that I must have forgotten to lock my door, even though I didn't really think so. There were other signs. A particular big puzzle was that things seemed to get hacked that couldn't really get hacked because they weren't online. A UPS for example was interfered with.

Everything changed when I came home one Friday afternoon and found that a heavy art reproduction on the wall had been moved. From that point on, objects were often taken or returned, moved, destroyed etc, notes or stickers left and all sorts of other interference took place.

5 or 6 pairs of colourful socks disappeared from my dirty laundry and were replaced by black socks. Once I came home to the door standing open. The following morning, I discovered that some weird stuff had been done in the bathroom. I've also found black dog hairs in food, my CoQ10 bottle emptied, a candy bar added to a bag and so on and so forth.

If you want to try cameras, see what kind of wildlife cameras you can find on Amazon or other places. Cameras that use a memory card and have no remote access option are worth a try too. You can find really small ones now; some look like pens or like USB chargers and may not easily get noticed. You may want to hide a few around your home and office and check from time to time for your peace of mind.

Law enforcement professionals have been warning about the dangers of certain doorbells. "Smart gadgets open door to stalking and abuse, say police" "Doorbells, fridges and even toys that can be operated remotely are being used by people to spy on their partners". Those are the headings for this article in the Times:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/smart-gadgets-open-door-to-stalking-and-abuse-say-police-5xk8n7r9m>

If you want to know more about locks and lock-picking, check out this lawyer's channel on YouTube. He has lock-picking as a hobby. Many hackers are also lock-pickers, by the way.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCm9K6rby98W8JigLoZOh6FQ>

I've been told that Bowley locks are good even though they too can get picked, of course. Any lock can get picked. The Bowley lock company is in Canada.

<https://www.bowleylockcompany.com/>

There is one highly exotic lock that would likely keep a lot of people out, but it is so exotic that it is very hard to get. It requires a flexible, snake-like key. Of course, that lock too can get picked, but not many people will be able to do that. The lock is so rare that it will also be very hard for lock-picking people to purchase it and practice on before they tackle the one on your door.

In some cases, indicating physical boundaries can work as a deterrent. I am thinking of for example stickers with a warning for trespassers or adding an extra lock as a visual reminder. Some folks may be immensely persistent, but will be put off by loud sound alarms. They can be immensely inquisitive and do things like explore closets and rummage through suitcases. Simple magnetic sound alarms won't cost you a leg and an arm. Below is a photo of a product that Amazon recommends.





June 2019: Photo of the remnants of minor vandalism in my home after lock-picking when I was away for the day. I'd already start clearing up the mess when I decided to take a photo. I'd stopped keeping a record of what was happening a decade earlier because that only drove me crazy. I emphasized how powerless I was and took up way too much time.



7. Ridiculous stuff

Here are some ridiculously simple tips that will be superfluous for most of you.

Always cover all phone cameras and webcams when they're not in use. You don't know who might be spying on you. A piece of the writeable off-white Sellotape or Scotchtape is enough to obscure the view sufficiently and is easy to remove and put back. It's also dirt-cheap.

Always verify people who call you or email you or chat with you. Look them up online and then contact the person to make sure that the person who contacted you really is the person who they claim to be. Social media profiles can be faked.

Besides what I wrote in the chapter about LinkedIn, it's also happened that a geochemist wanted to connect with me on Skype. I accepted that request because this was not out of the ordinary. That's how someone then hacked into my computer that time.

The third really stupidly simple tip is to close your curtains, your shades, whatever you're using, when you're in your office or at home at night so that nobody will be able to look in from the outside and see whether you're alone what you're doing and what you're wearing.

If you want to take it one notch up... or if you think that someone is targeting you... make sure that you have a phone that has a removable battery. If you have the battery in your phone, even if there is no SIM card in it, your phone can be tracked. Phones can also be jammed so that you can't connect to your nearest tower and make calls etc.

Another great tip may come as a surprise. Some of you may remember beepers, also called pagers. They use a very different kind of technology (RF) than mobile phones and their signal is much stronger. They don't suffer the kind of interference from tunnels, bridges, thick walls etc that phones do. Consider them. They too can be jammed.

Leaving "location" off on your phone on your phone so that you can't be tracked is tricky because location off also often means that friends and emergency services cannot find you if they want to. You may want to install what3words if you are really concerned because it can help rescuers and emergency staff pinpoint your exact location.

Go over these things with a top IT security company. These people should be able to tell you what your settings should be. If they can't, find a different company. There are many "computer companies" out there who have very little actual knowledge and even real experts sometimes mess up. Let a top-notch IT security company go over your IT security at least once a year. That means tablets, phones, computers, and routers etc. Then hire another company to do the same so that you can see what they have in common and where perhaps one of them has messed up. Do that once a year and that should also give you some added security. Always be alert and remain alert, but don't go overboard, though. Don't become paranoid. Use common sense.

Check whether your birthday is visible on social media. Shield that too.

Video can be spoofed too. If you want to check whether a video is genuine, ask the person to turn around (360 degrees). If the person cannot do that or it takes far too long, you may be dealing with a so-called deepfake.

Use one junk-type email address for people to contact you on social media, including LinkedIn, or also in general as first contact address. Once you start working with people, if you're a service professional, for example, then you can give people your real e-mail address. This can be an address for which you own the domain name but don't have a website.

Apple Air Tags can be used to track you, for example by dropping them in your bag or sticking them onto your car. There is a video on YouTube in which a police officer tells you how to deal with that.

Toronto Police Service 22 Division on Apple Air Tags:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfXyRUwvQ8Q>

New apps and gadgets such as these lost item trackers arrive on the market all the time and are subsequently flagged as a serious stalking concern. Many of these innovations may seem great, but can enable a stranger or an ex to keep tabs on you in great detail. Pay attention when you see any of those headlines and check if there is something you need to do, such as install a preventative app, tweak settings in an existing app or remove it altogether. Right now, just do an internet search on "Apple Air Tag" and "stalking". You'll see a number of articles turn up from various reputable news sources.

In the previous chapter, I already said that law enforcement professionals have also been warning the public about the dangers of smart gadgets. They open the door to stalking and abuse, police officers say. Doorbells, fridges and even toys that can be operated remotely can be used to spy on people.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/smart-gadgets-open-door-to-stalking-and-abuse-say-police-5xk8n7r9m>



8. Buddy up

Here's another tip that is really simple and that always works when you're in business for yourself, not just within a stalking context.

Buddy up with capable peers that don't get upset easily from the beginning. Find a really down-to-earth person who can help you think straight and who can help you come up with practical solutions. Someone you can count on. Whether it's a customer that annoys the crap out of you, whether you have some doubts about whether a new client will be able to pay your invoices, buddy up with others so that you can talk about this.

If stuff happens to you like what happened to David and Ina Steiner who had a bloody pig's head delivered to their house, whose neighbours received pornography magazines that were "supposed to be" for David, who got cockroaches in the mail and a book about what to do when your spouse dies, then you'll know who to call and you won't have to wrestle with this all by yourself. You'll have someone who won't tell you that it's your own fault for being a blogger or for having a Twitter account. You'll have someone who won't tell you that they no longer want to talk with you because what you are saying is too upsetting or who wonder if you're going crazy but knows you well enough to know that you're not.

By the way, it was eBay staff that did this to the Steiners, very highly paid eBay staff. Ex-eBay staff I should say. One of them was a former police officer, a captain.

Should stuff like that happen, don't bottle it up. Talk about it. Talk about it with others who are in the same boat, people who know what it's like to run a business. Connect with other stalking victims if you can.

Being stalked is immensely detrimental to your mental and physical health. You wouldn't be the first who loses her business or her home or who gets a heart attack. The stress is immense. In one case of pro-longed sadistic stalking, the stalker dug up his target's deceased husband's bones and deposited them on her doorstep. The stalker's message supposedly was "What does he have that I ain't got?" This woman did suffer a heart attack and she also spent some time in hospital to deal with the effects of the stalking. Stranger-stalking can lead to PTSD.

Again, other people, people who work 9-to-5 jobs, will often tell you to "stay off social media, blah blah blah" but if you're if you're in business for yourself, you have to be on social media, you have to be contactable, and you have to be visible online. I refer you to particularly the first chapter for how to tackle those aspects of your business.

As you've now seen, there are other things that you can do to shield yourself a little bit. You can have contact details online, but they do not have to be the contact details for your private home address.

It is really important to team up with people from the beginning, people who are on your wavelength and who understand your situation. It doesn't matter whether they're in the same kind of undertaking that you're in, whether it's a fellow YouTuber or a Twitcher or somebody who sells hats. Find somebody who will understand what sort of thing you're going through when you're going through business-related stuff.

The people who stalked Ina and David Steiner also set up a fake Twitter account that pretended to be an eBay seller's, by the way.

The Steiners' story:

<https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2021/07/lawsuit-ebay-tried-to-terrorize-stalk-and-silence-couple-that-ran-news-site/>



9. What you look like matters

Think about whether you really need to have an accurate photo of yourself online. Maybe a stylized photo would work much better.

It happens to be case that some people are really obsessed with a very specific look.

So if you often wear a hat in real life, put a photo online that does not have you wearing a hat. If you normally wear glasses, put a photo online that does not show you with glasses or the other way around.

A cartoon image of you may work really well too.

With real customers, real clients and real suppliers, that won't make a difference. People who become obsessed with you because you remind them of their mother or their first girlfriend, however, things like that, they may not even recognise you in real life if you change your appearance slightly for your online pic or if you put a stylised photo, a glamour shot or whatever online.

This again is a very simple thing that you can do that can shield you a little bit from people who may claim a lot of your time if you don't shield yourself. Simple.

This is also why some stalkers ask for photos. Some become obsessed with your kindness, not so much with the way that you look. They remember you as a kind person, not as a blond person or a person who wears blue glasses. Others become fascinated by your voice. I refer you to chapter 1 for how to avoid that.



10. Stalked? Do not talk about it online!

Should you become stalked, trolled, anything... do **not** talk about it online. Do not mention it online.

It is highly counter-intuitive because going public will offer you some protection, you think, and it will make you feel like you're standing up for yourself, but it can encourage and even enrage a stalker. Stalkers do not think the way you do. Stalkers do not think the way your relatives, friends and colleagues do.

Talk about it offline.

Do not mention it online because when you do, you're telling the other person that he is getting to you, that he is getting your attention, that he is successful. You will very likely be encouraging him, for whatever reason. Do not get angry, desperate, scared, frustrated online. Online, you have to appear to be ignoring the person completely.

Do not talk about it online. Do not talk about it online. Do not talk about it online.

Is this hard to do? Yes. Does this stop all stalkers? No.

It will, however, stop a lot of people. It will also stop a lot of trolls because they want to own you. They do not respect your boundaries and they want to see that you feel violated, hurt and vulnerable and oh so powerless. Yes, some of them very deliberately want to upset you.

Others simply don't understand that other people communicate differently and have no idea how their actions can impact other people. They think along the lines of "getting flowers is nice so sending flowers every day is nice".

I repeat, do not talk about it online.

Do talk about it with your colleagues, your friends, your family and the cat.

Don't mention the word "stalking"; it will freak them out. Warn them that something is going on and tell them that they may get calls from people posing as one of your friends, a doctor, a police officer and perhaps even from you, through voice cloning. It will make them more alert and not accidentally give out the information that you will be at that cute Italian restaurant at 7.

IP addresses, email addresses, call IDs, caller IDs, it can all be spoofed. Faked. Yes, there is software that you can use to mimic anyone's voice, from written text. You can also call people pretending to be a different gender or have a Scottish or Texan accent, what have you.

I have fallen for this too. You don't need to be stupid to fall for these things. I've been talking with someone who I thought was a journalist in the north of England, who turned out to be somebody else. At some point, the person diverged so far from reality that I realised I could not possibly be talking with a journalist up north about a case up north that had made the news and that I thought I might be able to help with. I had been contacted by someone who pretended to be a family friend. That too was spoofed.

It's also happened to me that I thought initially that I was talking with a social worker over the phone, but something about the questions she asked was off. She didn't ask obvious questions and

she seemed to have a very limited focus. She wanted to know how powerless I felt, it seemed. When I later checked the register for social workers and the register for temporary social workers, it turned out that I had been fooled.

I also found out that people I used to know in the past, sometimes decades ago, people who didn't know me very well, sometimes people who'd never met with me or who'd never even spoken with me had been contacted (and possibly been told I don't know what kind of stories about me.) In some cases, their voices had been recorded for later use in phone calls with me (voice cloning). There was a time when I couldn't make WhatsApp calls without the calls being recorded; the recordings did not end up on my equipment and did not end up on the other person's equipment either. Have these recordings been used to make calls that used my cloned voice? I may never find out.

If you are being stalked, you can't protect everyone. You can't contact literally everyone and tell them that something like this may happen. It helps to be aware that it happens often.

It certainly helps if people in your close circle, such as colleagues and relatives, are aware of this too. Tell them about the existence of voice cloning. Tell them to not for example reveal to someone calling and claiming to be your doctor, your client, a police officer or an old school friend that you will be at a certain sports club tomorrow evening or where you live these days or what your mobile phone number is. Tell them not to do that. Tell them to check with you. Tell them to ask for contact details and to write them down.

If you are already being stalked, you have to plan for the possibility that someone may be cloning *your* voice and call people you know, pretending to be you. If you've known people for a long time, there are usually memories that you share that a stranger can't possibly know about. That's how you can often verify who you're talking with but it isn't watertight.

Do your best to interact with people in real life or in live video connections only. Then you are limiting the chance that the person you are communicating with isn't who you think it is. You do not have to be stupid to fall for one of the many tech tricks that are possible these days. So many large reputable businesses and organizations have paid huge sums for products to folks who took over an ongoing email conversation, for example.



About the author

Angelina Souren used to work in the tourism & hospitality sector in Amsterdam, then had herself assessed very thoroughly at a career counselling agency, quit her job and enrolled as a full-time earth science student.

She has since served as Associate Editor for the international newsletter of the US-based Geochemical Society (1998 – 2010) and as board member for the Environmental Chemistry (and Toxicology) Section of the Royal Netherlands Chemical Society (2001 – 2005).

She also was a board member and member of several committees of the NIMF foundation for women in science and technology in the Netherlands (1988 – 1993). In 2002, she was a panel member at NIMF's 15th anniversary symposium (3rd lustrum).

She's a feminist and among many other things, a former member of Toastmasters of The Hague. She became self-employed in 1997. She's previously lived in the United States and has been based in England since the end of 2004. She wrote this booklet so that she can help you avoid a lot of what happened to her in England.

Those experiences made her dive into the topic of neurodiversity. She now focuses on bioethics and diversity topics such as inclusivity, otherisation, povertyism, personality disorders, ableism, speciesism, (neuro)diversity and the new eugenics. It includes supporting the victims of stalking but also making people aware that miscommunications between neurodivergent people can sometimes result in what neurotypicals may perceive as resentful stalking behaviours.

