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EROTOMANIC STALKERS

The 'stalking' is used to describe a pattern of behavior that is intrusive, repeated and fear providing. Researchers have identified three types of stalkers: love-obsessed stalkers, simple obsession stalkers and erotomaniac stalkers.

Erotomania is delusional loving. Erotomaniac stalkers believe that they are passionately loved by their stalking victims. They most often stalk people who are of higher social stature or professional standing. They think that these people are restricted from expressing their love because of external constraints. If the object of affection is a professional the stalker may consider regulations to forbid, for instance, the relationships between a doctor and a patient and stand in the way of their happiness. Mental health professionals are at particularly high risk and a variety of surveys suggest that 11% of them have been stalked at one point in their career. This happens because the warm, supportive and accepting relationship that a professional forms with a patient as part of the treatment process can easily be misinterpreted as an indication of love.

People suffering from erotomania believe that their victim is the perfect match for them and they are destined to be together. Consequently, they will talk obsessively about their victim and attempt to make contact by whatever means possible, and even when the object will not reciprocate, this is understood by the erotomaniac stalkers as further proof of the required secrecy of their reciprocal love.

Current research shows that women generally fall into the category of erotomaniac stalkers. They are more likely than other types of stalkers to have never been married, to misuse substances, to have a history of assault and self-harming. They are often unemployed and with limited social contacts.

The behaviors of erotomaniac stalkers at first are not overtly threatening and begin more as a nuisance and then escalate. The stalker may attribute blame to the victim's family believing, for example, that if the pregnant wife were out of the way they could be together. Thus, the stalker may harass family members, attempting to convince them to free the loved person. The delusions of love are fixed and constant and despite repeated confrontation with reality the person is unable to let go of the belief. When the hopes are not realized the stalker may express resentment and anger. The stalker may become threatening and assaultive.

Although erotomania is the least common type of stalking, it should not be neglected.

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