Cyberstalking Essay, Research Paper

CYBERSTALKING

The World Wide Web and Internet are great places to study, work, or even play. But there is an ugly side of cyberspace. Cyberspace reflects the real world and some people tend to forget that. Cyberstalking and harassment are problems that a large number of people (especially women) are realizing. (Jenson, 1996, p.1)

Just because an individual owns a computer and has an Internet account do not assume that person is considerate or respectful. There are just as many stalkers in cyberspace as anywhere else. It’s just that their methods have changed. Some stalkers might harass you by following you through live channels not being able to take no for an answer and bothering you with email messages. In some cases this harassment may become a systematic campaign against you; where your harasser bombards you with threatening messages of hate and obscenities. (1996, p.3) The stalker may even trace your home address and telephone number, causing not only emotional distress but possibly physical danger. It should come as no surprise to you that the stalkers are making use of this technology to harass people and prey on the innocent.

There have been many examples of cyberstalking crossing over in to real life stalking. And those users who have been victims of cyberstalking, tell a similar story, that no one took the harassment serious until it became real life stalking. Cyberstalking can be a devastating experience for a person online. But in cyberspace people say things like “well just turn off your computer” and “ you can’t be hurt on the Internet, it’s just words”. (Laughren, 1998, p.1) The online stalking is just as frightening and distressing as off-line stalking, and just as illegal.

Anyone can be stalked online, but statistics show that the majority of victims are women. Women are the minority of the internet population, which means their attention is generally fierce competition between male users. (Jenson, 1996, p.3) Cyberstalking and online harassment are easy to practice than real life stalking. In cyberspace, a stalker can harass their victim without ever having to leave the comfort of their own home, or have any witnesses to the crime.

Online users are vulnerable to stalking in the following three areas. Live chat rooms or IRC, this is the most common place for cyberstaking. Message boards and Newsgroups, and Email box; a user has the ability to write anything and even attach files to the email. Another common area regarding cyberstalking is at the “edu” sites, which are educational institutes, such as colleges and universities. One user might know another user personally and interacts on the internet anonymously starting the cybertalk. One student can enter the internet as easily as another student, therefor not letting his or her true identity be known.

If you are being harassed online by a cyberstalker, the chances are you are not the first person they have stalked. Cyberstakers, like other predators, are opportunists. They know what they are looking for and know how to get it. Stalking is a power crime, the stalker has the power to make you suffer and enjoys that power. (Laughren, 1998, p.4) A stalker’s self-esteem rises when they attack your self-esteem. The more pain and suffering they can cause, the better they feel about themselves. The best protection against becoming a target of stalking is not to reveal anything personal that you might have in common. Often, stalkers are mentally unstable, paranoid, delusional, and extremely jealous, and have extremely low self-esteem. Stalking is a form of obsession. The difference between a normal cyber harasser and a cyberstalker, is the harasser moves on to others and forgets you and a stalker will come back to stalk you another day. (Jenson, 1996, p.5)

The Internet enables the stalker, his powers, in most cases, merely knowledge of the technology is all that’s required to stalk another person online. Note that educated, smooth talking, responsible people can also be stalkers, appearing to be a perfect gentlemen or lady with perfect manners. A major clue to cyberstalking is when the stalker pushes for information regarding your personal life, private life, or life away from the net. A simple rule of thumb is to never give any personal information over the Internet.

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