



FAMILY RENEWAL RESOURCES PROJECT

parenting forever, through whatever

HARASSMENT/STALKING

Vindictive ex harassed woman for two years (KW Record)

The above headline appeared on Feb. 8, 2022. The article described a dangerous pattern of behavior by a former intimate partner. It portrayed day-to-day terrorism for the woman who endured a life never knowing when these twisted acts would strike and envelop other caring persons in a relentless campaign of manipulation and lies.

The woman (target/victim) struggled to understand what was taking place -would it be short-lived; would it be manageable or escalate; were there steps that she could take; was she somehow at fault; what was her level of *risk*; etc. The questions were unending- the answers uncertain. Occasional periods of calm provided hope that *would soon be dashed*. The *temporary quiet became part of the reign of terror*.

Many people who have suffered a home invasion describe the long term consequences on their daily life-their home becomes part of the trauma that they carry within them.

The perpetrator in the Record case was sentenced to 6 mos. in jail and mandatory counselling for two years of terrorism that left the victim traumatized for a lifetime and as such in fear of future intimate relationships.

The conclusion of the article quotes the pursuer: "I'm a nice, normal, good person. You people don't know me. I just made a mistake".

The perpetrator's closing comment is worrisome and frightening. *His behaviors are not excusable or in the dull to normal range in a non-mutual breakup.*

In the above case, the dating relationship was one year and there were no children that necessitated separated parents to have on-going communication or personal contact.

The prison sentence of 6 months, less time served, is an inadequate deterrent, clinging to the hope of success through future therapy with a client that doesn't recognize their blame.

This case reinforces the belief/myth that males are the only offenders. This is a dangerous for the *behaviors are found in intimate partners from both sexes.*

I recommend a book by author Susan Forward *called Obsessive Love*. As a target of similar behaviors described in the Record article, the book *helped this writer* understand what was taking place in my life over 30 years ago when my marriage with 3 children was ending.

The behaviors were incomprehensible based on our twenty-five year marriage and a separation that was more or less mutually agreed to by both partners.

THIS MUST BE UNDERSTOOD!

Two important observations are made by Ms. Forward. 1. *Obsessive love knows no gender.* 2. Obsessive love has little to do with love at all-it has to do with longing. 2. *Obsessive 'lovers' are controlled by their own needs and desires, at the expense of the needs and desires of their targets.*

The behaviors triggered are intimate partner violence (IPV) and often place children in the middle and is emotional abuse by alienating children against their other parent. It can turn the judicial process into a never ending battleground (blood sport) that leads to mental health concerns for the victim (other parent), children and extended family.

In her book, Ms. Forward charts out a) behaviors common to obsessive lover; b) actions that require caring behaviors toward the obsessive person ; e.g. a potent behavior is the threat of suicide that is then leveraged to turn the targeted individual into the person who is responsible (rescuer) for the obsessive 'lover' continuing to live. In a separation with children, it is particularly effective and insidious and plays on employing the children and extended family in the obsession. It entails the *victim of obsessive love to be the rescuer* and protector of the children from the loss from a parent's suicide death.

Another aspect of obsessive love is that it often relies on manipulation of connected friends and relatives by the obsessive ex-partner. In a separation, it effectively clouds the picture - separations are complicated and raise issues about parenting and family assets. It can be confusing at best. However in Ms. Forward's book she identifies behaviors that most victims can recognize. These behaviors are dangerous and cross the line.

Unfortunately, these behaviors may be recognized for what they are only by the targeted individual- not those outside that circle.

Getting support as the targeted victim may be difficult with friends or family. They don't want to get involved and unknowingly may also be targets of manipulation by the obsessive individual. The friends by buying into a false narrative by their silence has the consequence of driving the victim/target away from their children.

In the Record case, the harassment stalking continued for close to two years. Think about the target and the long-term outcomes. In a setting with children, consider all the different scenarios that could play out.

An insidious outcome is that the recommended steps by a therapist to a target/victim is essentially to be cold and indifferent to the obsessive ex- partner- *to be what you are not*. This is intended to lower the risk (distance) and protect your children, extended family and friends. A second option is simply to flee- to move and leave your life with your children. It is a heavy burden. Neither strategy has much to recommend itself.

For a dad stalking is recognized as domestic abuse. Driving by the family home to see your children at play is going to prompt a phone call to police and a protective or no contact order. It just cannot be done! If you are a dad and behave as an obsessive lover, you are likely looking at reduced or loss of parenting time with your children and mandated enrolment in a Program. You just cannot risk such an outcome.

Find a trusted friend to support and protect you from your self. Consider professional support.

Our mission as separating parents must be to create the conditions that allow each parent to create a caring and loving home for their children. The risks factors must be recognized, understood, and steps taken. A parent should document exchanges of children that are high risk, volatile phone calls, emails that are threatening, efforts to involve you in the obsessive ex-partners life beyond the children i.e. their best friend.

Harassment and stalking are possible when the obsessive parent has a window into the other parent's life (new partner) through interrogation of children following care parenting with their other parent. A new relationship may trigger stalking and harassment behaviors. New partners may trigger an ex-partner who is having difficulty in separating or moving on with their life.

It can be a dangerous time for everyone in their circle and safety must be a high priority.

See the relevant resources.

FRRP