

## **It never goes away: a personal view on impact and prevention**

*Transcript of a talk given by Clive Ruggles on 21 April 2026 at the Suzy Lamplugh Trust's on-line conference "Fatal Fixation: Understanding the Link between Stalking and Homicide" for National Stalking Awareness Week 2026*

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It was one of the most helpful things anyone said to me in the days following Alice's murder. "It never goes away." No-one, of course, knows what to say to you and they think it's comforting to say they think you'll eventually get over it, but it isn't. I didn't want to think that I'd ever forget Alice or push thoughts of her to one side. That was ten years ago, and I haven't. That's not to say I don't still spend lots of time doing my archaeological stuff at Stonehenge or in Peru and giving talks and writing books about it. And of course I spend lots and lots of time with all we do with the Alice Ruggles Trust. But Alice is always coming back in those little moments: meeting an old friend of hers; something that suddenly reminds me of something about her; something she liked, or did. Music especially. In fact, it's usually music. Some song. It never goes away.

And of course I see the lasting impact on others around me, even though everyone reacts in different ways: whether it's trying to control anger, trying to hide inner feelings and quietly move on, or trying to make a difference for others.

It never goes away.

If the right things had been done when Alice first called the police, had it been recognised as stalking rather than passed off as harassment, had it been identified as high risk and not passed off as medium risk, had Alice been assigned an advocate, had the right protections been put in place—basically had it been followed up in the right way and the risk been properly managed—then Alice might well be alive today. I firmly believe that.

But in that case would her stalker simply have moved on? I very much doubt it. Would all the worry, the fear, the psychological impact upon Alice that all stalking victims feel, would that suddenly have stopped? I doubt that too.

In the Alice Ruggles Trust we have an "Experts by Experience" group, all of whom suffered as stalking victims in their teens. As one of them recently put it really poignantly: "Stalking is either a life sentence or a death sentence". Is it any wonder that some stalking victims take their own lives in their desperation?

Either way, it never goes away.

So, what about prevention?

We can never know which cases will escalate all the way to homicide as Alice's did, or how fast that will happen (it was only 12 days between Alice's first call to the police and her murder). What we can know, through all the research that goes back to Melbourne

in the 1990s, research like Jane Monckton-Smith's and others', is the probabilities and the risk factors and hence how to manage the risk better.

We met Jane shortly after losing Alice. I'm pretty sure it was in one of those back rooms in parliament where we were all doing everything we could to help push through the Stalking Protection Bill. Jane told us about the homicide timeline model she was developing and we discovered that Alice's case fitted Jane's model like a glove. It was frightening.

Thanks to the academic research—and of course we need more of it—we know more all the time about how to manage the risk better. I say “we know”. But perhaps I should say “the knowledge is out there”. Back in 2016 we didn't have the homicide timeline but a lot of knowledge *was* out there about the control and fixation that characterises stalking; about the risk profiles. But the police who handled Alice's case didn't have that knowledge to hand.

I don't blame the call handlers and responder themselves: they were doing their level best—at least, 3 of the 4 of them were—but they were poorly trained. Training is the key.

What's unforgiveable is that while things have improved in the last ten years they haven't improved anywhere near far or fast enough.

I'm aware of the challenges and resource implications. Police turnover, other priorities.

But we have to train that call handler faced with another Alice today, not screaming down the phone, almost apologetic for ringing, but quietly saying they need a bit of help and advice; we have to train that call handler to recognise this immediately as a serious stalking case and get it straight off to the relevant specialist so that it can be followed up in the right way. And what if that other Alice goes instead to a health professional, or their case is flagged to someone in social services?

It's got to be all about training and greater general awareness.

And we have to get the message out that stalking is a serious warning sign for homicide.

Homicide cases don't focus on the stalking. Think about the news. The first documentary we did about Alice's case was a big ITV one, but it focused exclusively on the police investigation following the homicide. We had to insist that the various documentaries that followed focused instead on the stalking and how it led up to Alice's murder; what should have been done differently; what lessons need to be learned.

So that's also about general awareness and about professional training.

But there's another aspect to prevention.

We'd have less to do in preventing stalking cases escalating to homicide if we could do more to *prevent people turning into stalkers in the first place*.

That means managing unwanted behaviours before they turn into fixation. Yes, that means early intervention. But it goes right back to healthy relationships education in schools. That means the right messaging. You know the sort of thing: nearly everyone's been rejected for the first time and it's not what you *think*, it's what you *do* that matters, and if you're having trouble moving on there's help out there. This is an essential element of the stalking awareness work our own Trust does in schools.

We heard at our Alice Ruggles Trust conference last year from a very powerful speaker, a young man who is autistic and describes having stalked someone when he was a teenager, not understanding neurotypical ways of handling a failed relationship. Fortunately, instead of being victimised he was seen as someone who needed help. He got that help, and today he is a successful communicator and himself doing valuable academic research in the field.

In a nutshell:

We need to be doing everything we possibly can to prevent the escalation of stalking to homicide and suicide. That's about research and training.

But we also need to do everything we possibly can to stop people turning into stalkers in the first place. And that's all about education.

The two go together.

We won't change things overnight, but we have to work together.

And we are all in this for the long term.

The Alice Ruggles Trust's strapline is "putting an end to stalking". Despite myself, I have to face up to the fact that stalking is *itself* something that will never go away. But we *can* reduce it; and we *will* reduce it, and the homicides it all-too-often leads to, by working together.

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*If you have read this, please go on to read Sue and Clive's personal message on the Alice Ruggles Trust website ([alicerugglestrust.org/ten-years-on/](http://alicerugglestrust.org/ten-years-on/)) and consider making a donation to ensure that the Trust can continue and expand its prevention work now and into the future. Thank you!*