WebQuest: Stalking

This WebQuest deals with the harmful phenomenon of stalking, which affects many people around the world.
Our goal is to raise awareness of this phenomenon among young people.
The WebQuest will consist of various tasks: you can complete them individually or in a group. As part of the exercise, you will play the role of a friend of a person experiencing stalking.

Exercise 1

Read Maggie's story. Maggie experiences stalking; she's a fictional character, but such situations do happen in real life. Maybe you have heard a story like this, or you have experienced something similar yourself?

Ninja Creeper

Fifteen-year-old Maggie joins a Discord server which is connected to her favourite Minecraft community. It doesn't take long for her to make a lot of friends there. Although the other members of the community come from distant parts of the country, Maggie really enjoys their company — they spend long evening hours building colourful buildings, doing quests together, and simply chatting.

One day someone new joins the community — a user by the name of Pixel Ninja. All of Maggie's Discord friends instantly warm up to him, however, Pixel Ninja is mostly drawn to Maggie, which turns out to be mutual. They like watching the same movies and TV series, they have similar taste in music, and laugh at the same memes…

Maggie soon discovers that under the silly nickname there hides a charming, intelligent, and funny sixteen-year-old boy called Peter. She finds herself spending whole nights exchanging messages with him. They have so much in common that Maggie cannot believe that someone so wonderful really exists! On top of that, he also happens to enjoy talking to her… It almost seems to be too good to be true!

A week of intense messaging passes and Peter slowly begins to suggest that it would be nice to meet in real life one day. Maggie initially laughs these suggestions off. She would totally love to meet him, but she feels that it is still too early for such big steps in their relationship.

Much to Maggie's dismay, Peter keeps on insisting — after all, Maggie lives in a city that is only 3 hours away by train from his town! His parents would let him visit if Maggie wanted to...

When Maggie gently asks him to slow down, Peter begins to suggest in a passive-aggressive way that it is clear that she doesn't care and that she is just like all the other girls. The conversation quickly turns into a fight.

The girl is disappointed, but at the same time a part of her is relieved — it's a good thing she got to know Peter's nasty side before they met face to face. After another slew of rude messages, she decides to ignore him.

At first Peter backs off, however, soon the other members of their Discord community inform Maggie that Pixel Ninja is talking behind her back. After a few hours, Peter messages her again, only now his messages are full of insults and vulgar threats.

As Maggie still doesn't respond, Peter apologises and says he'd had a few beers before writing those messages, but then he reverts to vicious insults and threats. Maggie finally decides to block him once and for all.

After a few days everything goes back to normal, although the whole situation has greatly discouraged Maggie from playing Minecraft. She needs a break from the Internet, so she goes out to the beach and posts a photo from the day trip to Instagram. After a few minutes comments begin to appear as well as private messages... from user pixelninja2008. Maggie feels extremely anxious — she did not share her social media accounts with Peter! She blocks him immediately.

An hour later she starts getting messages from him on Messenger, which scares her even more. She has no idea how Peter found out her real name.

Then... she starts getting countless notifications from WhatsApp, Snapchat as well as texts sent to her phone number — all of these messages are even more abusive and violent than what Peter had previously sent her.

Maggie is terrified.

The next day, a stranger is waiting for her at the school gates. He approaches her and says with grim satisfaction:

"Hi, Skittle Princess! It's me, Pixel Ninja! Did you really think you'd get rid of me so easily? Let's grab a coffee together and clear up a few things."

Scared for her life, Maggie runs away as fast as she can.
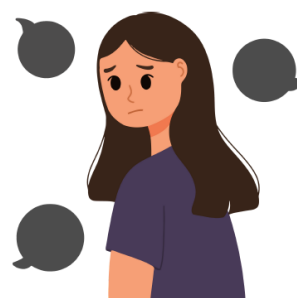
Exercise 2

When Maggie shares her story with you and your mutual friends, not everyone agrees on what to think of it.
Mark says it's all Maggie's fault, because it was clear from the beginning that Peter was some kind of creep. Adam thinks it's a compliment that someone has such a big crush on her and is so persistent. Jane strongly disagrees with both of them; she believes this sounds like stalking. She suggests that it would be worth reporting it to someone, maybe even the police.
You decide to act — you really want to help Maggie.

Search the web for information:

- **What is the legal definition of stalking?**
- **How to recognize stalking? What kind of behaviour does it entail?**
- **Look for statistics on how many people are affected by it,**
- **Find out what is the punishment for stalking in your country. Search for legal advice from experts.**
- **Think about where you draw the line between being persistent or annoying and stalking. What would be unacceptable for you in such a situation?**

People who experience such difficulties often think they are completely isolated in this, which is not true!

Exercise 3

Based on your research from exercise 2, prepare a presentation about stalking. The recipients of your presentation are young people who may not know their rights and who may not know how to protect their boundaries in such situations.
You may use Canva, Powerpoint, or any other tool you enjoy using.

Exercise 4

The more you think about it, the more you keep wondering — how is it possible that a boy from Discord managed to discover Maggie's full name, her phone number, and where she goes to school so quickly? Are we dealing with a brilliant hacker?
You start looking through Maggie's social media and — much to your dismay — you discover that she actually left a lot of clues that make it fairly easy to get all the information necessary to turn her life into a nightmare...

Pictures of the street where she lives, photos with the school building in the background, Instagram posts tagging the coffee shop where she likes to hang out...

You notice that her Discord nickname is the same as her Instagram profile, which would be okay if it weren't for the fact that her Instagram profile includes her full name which, in turn, leads to her Facebook profile…

It doesn't end there. You notice that Maggie's Facebook profile is set to public, and there it shows… her actual phone number.

All this provides so much information that you don't have to be a detective to gather enough data to stalk Maggie.

Peter is not a super hacker. He was handed everything on a silver platter.

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- **Check what apps you use: which ones have access to your data?**
- **Verify the photos and things you post on social media: would they make it easy to deduce where you live / where you like to hang out / what school you go to?**
- **Is it possible to find your full name through your online nicknames?**
- **Is your address / contact information publicly available?**
- **Remember, it's not about becoming paranoid, but about being vigilant! Creepy people unfortunately do exist…**

Exercise 5

Depending on the results of the social media check, take action:

- Remove or minimise the availability of sensitive information, especially about where you live,
- Change nicknames,
- Uninstall apps you no longer use; remember that uninstalling an app is not the same as deleting your account!
- Check if any photos or videos could cause you possible problems now or in the future. "I'll send your parents this embarrassing picture of you at a party!"

Exercise 6

Prepare an info-graphic about good practices on sharing content about yourself online. Put an emphasis on making it difficult for potential stalkers to have access to you.

Exercise 7

It's time to help Maggie!
Based on the tasks you've done so far, come up with an action plan on how you will help Maggie. If you are a minor, be sure to ask trusted adults for help!
Remember to include an explanation for parents and teachers in your plan. The digital world can still be a bit mysterious for the older generation. Once they know what you know, they will take it seriously!

How will the story end?

Based on everything you learned in this WebQuest, finish Maggie's story. You can write a short story, create a comic book, act out a scene, create a video, or a play —it's all up to you ☺ **.**
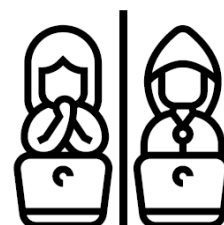
Tips

- Stalking is punishable by law — it *IS* a crime.
- Peter is also a minor, it may be worth involving his legal guardians.
- If the situation is reported to the police, you should secure the evidence: screenshots of messages and witness accounts.

Thanks a lot for your participation in the WebQuest. If you'd like to know more, we included some links to verified sources below.
Remember, in such situations, the safety and comfort of those affected by stalking are the most important factor!

Sources

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyberstalking
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stalking
- https://www.tabasco-erasmus.eu/crossmediaplatform/cyberstalking/
- https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-cyberstalking-5181466
- https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-stalking-5114376