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https://www.losaltosonline.com/community/abuser-systematically-isolates-victim-from-supporters-confronting-domestic-violence/article_0ce5efa0-5276-5bfb-b855-a74f6c5cd35c.html

Abuser systematically isolates victim from supporters: Confronting Domestic Violence

Ruth Patrick
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This is the fourth in a six-part series on domestic violence and technological abuse. Names, professions, history and other personal identifying features have been changed to create a composite character to protect confidentiality.

After leaving her abusive husband, Beth discovers that he has been using technology to stalk, frighten, control and discredit her and then learns what to do about it. To read parts 1-3, visit losaltosonline.com.

With the help of a technology-savvy private investigator, Beth discovered that her husband, Ed, had installed key-logging spyware on her cellphone. He used it to send copies of every text and email she sent or received back to him, along with records of every website she visited and her calendar listing all of her appointments.

Hostile, threatening texts she thought her sister had been sending her and which served further to alienate her from support were actually originating from her husband as “spoof,” or counterfeit, messages. Continuing to impersonate Beth, Ed had been sending similar texts to her sister, telling her to “back off” and stop interfering. No wonder her sister had pulled away.

How was Ed able to know where Beth had gone, even when she left her cellphone at home? He had installed a GPS tracking device the size of a thumb drive on the chassis of her car to monitor her travel and destinations in real time and send the information back to him.

It had been a while since Beth had checked her Facebook page. She had been feeling so alone, so overwhelmed, believing that no one could really understand what she was going through or what had happened to her. She gradually lost touch with many of her old friends and the outside world in general. When she ran into people she hadn't seen in a while, they seemed uncomfortable around her, even cold. Why had their attitudes toward her changed so dramatically – as if somehow she were the one at fault?

Then one night she checked her Facebook page. Using her password, Ed had been logging in to it regularly, impersonating her, posting private pictures of her that she had sent him in happier days, along with lurid, made-up stories of her exploits with other men and over-the-top scathing remarks about Ed and his mother.

Using another common abuser tactic – divide and conquer – Beth's abuser was systematically cutting her off from the world, from all sources of support. He had embarked on a campaign of character assassination and was following her every move, leaving her no safe place to retreat, not even her own home.

In Part 5, we'll learn how Beth begins to take back her power and protect herself from future cyber attacks.

Ruth Patrick, M.A., was recently named director of the WomenSV program under the nonprofit Domestic Violence Intervention Collaborative. WomenSV, formerly with Family and Children Services, is a Town Crier Holiday Fund recipient. For more information, call 996-2200.