

HOW TO OVERCOME JEALOUSY

By

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Jealousy is a feeling that most of us have experienced. For the majority of us, these feelings pass quickly and without any real harm. However, when jealousy gets out of hand it can destroy relationships.

There may have been a time as a child when you felt jealous because you believed your best friend wanted to spend more time with someone else.

Perhaps in later life you experienced a pang of jealousy when your friend seemed to want to spend more time with her boyfriend than with you.

You may even have felt a little jealous and left out when she had children and had less time for you. It is a common phenomenon for men to feel jealous of their own children sometimes if they feel they are coming second best in their partner's emotions.

Some people believe that a little jealousy is a good thing as it shows that someone cares. Albert Ellis, one of the leading lights in cognitive psychology, has identified what he calls healthy and unhealthy negative emotions of which jealousy is deemed unhealthy but concern for your relationship healthy.

A healthy concern means you feel some emotion but do not allow it to destroy or damage either yourself or your relationship. You recognise that no one owns anyone else and fall back on your personal self-esteem to recognise that you are special. You may mention your concern to your partner but it does not take much to get you over the feeling. However, unhealthy jealousy destroys relationships and causes distress and damage to the person experiencing it as well as those at whom it is aimed.

In some instances, a jealous interchange may lead to physical violence and the breakdown of a relationship. After all, how long can someone put up with suspicion and accusations without either leaving or finding someone else who will not behave in the same way. The jealous lover may literally drive her partner into someone else's arms and then turn round and say that she knew the person could not be trusted all along. In many ways the person creates a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Now, if your partner plays mischievous games with your emotions or actually betrays you, you need to consider seriously whether you want to stay in what is essentially an unhealthy relationship. However, most types of jealousy have nothing to do with the way that others behave.

Jealousy, like envy, can refer to a desire for someone else's status or possessions. Yes – we can be jealous of what people have as much as with the people in our life. In relationships it causes someone to be doubtful of their partner by feeling threatened by their relationship with others. Jealousy detracts from your time together as you are likely to have fights because you spend time thinking up situations where you feel you are being cheated on. Before you know it, much of your relationship is spent dwelling on what might be going on rather than what is really taking place. Many partners of jealous people feel constantly on edge as they believe that any harmless insignificant action is likely to be misinterpreted and the sense of tension that accompanies these feelings becomes extremely tiring.

If you want overcome such feelings follow the seven steps that follow:

1. Own your feelings

Accept that your jealousy has *nothing* to do with your partner but *everything* to do with how you feel about yourself. If you like yourself you will realise that your partner stays with you because he loves you and wants to be with you. When you like yourself you do not mind your

partner having other friends because you realise you are a special person. Ask yourself why you think your partner should leave you? Why do you believe other people are more desirable than you? Do these feelings stem from childhood? One way to start the process is to write out a list of all the reasons why someone likes you. List all your qualities - the harder you find this exercise the more likely you are to be lacking in confidence - and a lack of confidence is an excellent breeding ground for jealous feelings.

Another important point is to stop blaming other people. It is not the fault of your partner, the girl who smiled at your man at your friend's party or the friendly barmaid at the local pub. When you feel jealous it is all down to you. No one can make you feel jealous apart from yourself. When we blame others we forget that if someone else would react differently in a situation then our own feelings are only one way of behaving.

2. Tackle your insecurity

Jealousy is a form of insecurity – talk to your partner about how you really feel - for example, "*I am feeling scared and think you'll go off with someone else*" not "*why did you talk to that woman*". When you

experience these feelings breathe slowly and deeply, telling yourself that you are a worthwhile person with whom your partner chooses to be.

Accept that your feelings of insecurity will not go away overnight. They are something you are going to have to work on. See them rather like you would see an addiction to cigarettes – you have to work at stopping.

You may have acquired your jealous feelings through negative past experiences. If you have already been cheated on, this may cause you to be more possessive and controlling because you fear the same will happen again. Even if your partner has never given you any reason to doubt him, you may become increasingly anxious to hold on to the relationship with a vice-like grip as you try to avoid potentially dangerous situations at all costs. Unfortunately, though, such behaviour is likely to prove counter-productive and may well bring about the very consequences that you feared.

For the most part, jealousy is all about our own issues with self-confidence. You may feel that you're not good enough and that your partner will soon leave as you believe that other women are better looking and you feel insecure.

3. Learn from the past and deal with what's real

Look at how your behaviour has affected past relationships negatively and use that information to help you behave better. You may soon discover that your jealous outbursts are the real cause of your troubled love life. Realize that getting upset for no reason won't help your situation. Focus on what is happening, not what you think is happening, otherwise you may end up having difficulty separating fact from fiction. Don't let your imagination go mad in constructing rivals for your partner's affections – deal with the reality.

5. Get help from your partner and friends

If you have explained your feelings to your partner you can ask him to help you. If he says he won't then he may not be the catch you think he is. For example, devise a simple code between you for when you are feeling low. Agree with your partner that when you say a certain word or make a certain movement this means you need some emotional support. It may only mean your partner putting an arm round you. Remember that

your partner can only help you. He can only reassure you up to a point.

You are the one that has to learn to deal with your feelings.

You may also find it helpful to talk to a close friend and get support in the changes you need to make from her. An outside opinion can be helpful.

Ask a friend to take note of your behaviour around your partner. It may help you to understand the extent of your actions more fully.

6. If you can talk yourself into jealousy you can talk yourself out of it

When you find yourself talking yourself into a jealous rage, stand back, take a deep breath and ask yourself what evidence you have for your thoughts. When you come up with an answer, question it to see whether your evidence is real or simply your distorted perception - for example, *"she was looking at him and he looked at her, I'm sure she wants to have a relationship with him and is trying to get him off me"* First, you ask yourself what evidence you have to support your thoughts. Then challenge your destructive thoughts with alternatives such as –*"yes, she did look at my boyfriend but then many people do and I have no evidence to suggest she wants a relationship. This is only my jealousy trying to take control – if I go on this way I will destroy the relationship we have"*

You need to challenge your thoughts regularly and if you do you will learn to talk yourself out of the thoughts that trigger your jealous feelings – which are really insecure feelings about yourself. Keep on raising your own self-esteem and you will find your thoughts and feelings becoming less negative.

7. Help yourself

You may find it helpful to read “Overcoming Jealousy” by Professor Windy Dryden, Sheldon Books, £6.99. *The Othello Response: Dealing with Jealousy, Suspicion and Rage in Your Relationship*, Kenneth Ruge & Barry Lenson, Marlowe & Company, £12.99. *Shame and Jealousy: The Hidden Turmoils*, Phil Mollon, Stylus Publishing, £9.99

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