

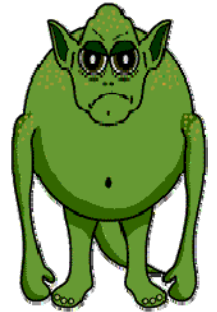
# Jealousy: Bad News or Just What the Doctor Ordered?

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## What Is Jealousy?

There appear to be two types of jealousy – romantic and possessive. Romantic jealousy is triggered when you experience the unpleasant suspicion that your man or woman is being or may be unfaithful. When other people demonstrate how attractive and desirable they find your mate, you feel it should be a compliment; but you may also suspect the presence of a rival and fear losing out.

The green eyed romantic jealousy monster is scary! We've all experienced its stomach churning power at some point in our lives. Taking the logical approach, we "discuss" our fear and anxiety with friends. We may maturely ask our partner for more attention or verbally express our anxiety about the relationship. We may also choose pride and refuse to allow ourselves to "feel stupid" over feelings of jealousy.



Possessive jealousy is the ugly stuff of murder/suicides. This type of jealousy is controlling, angry and absolutely frightening. Our experience with possessive jealousy may include stalking, being cussed and screamed at, and unwarranted suspicion about everything you do or say. Your partner feels ownership of your body, heart, mind and soul and demands loyalty and obedience. He or she manipulates things to control your behavior and thus feel more secure.

Conventional literature ties jealousy to low self esteem. Some psychologists describe it as a paranoid distrust of others or ones partner. There's nothing inherently unnatural about feeling jealous, but crazy jealousy can interfere with and even destroy your relationships. Crazy jealousy tends to develop along one of the following patterns:

- Those of you that are obsessed with your loved one;
- Those of you who constantly suspect a partner of being unfaithful with no supporting evidence; and
- Those of you who totally overreact to the slightest incident involving the opposite sex and your mate.

Unchecked jealousy is one of the leading causes of domestic violence and murder around the world. Jealousy is not fun, and even in its lightest form causes feelings of anger and frustration in your relationship. Repeatedly behaving in an out of control fashion will destroy the trust and comfort of your partner and quickly erode your relationship. If you frequently feel irrational jealousy, this one's for you!

## Is Jealousy Normal or Psychotic?

I view jealousy as a normal and necessary part of our emotional makeup as human animals - right in there with being sad, angry, happy, hopeful. Just as animals stake out their territories and fight to maintain it, so do people. You may feel that this is YOUR husband, YOUR woman - a part of your belongings, your territory, your property. So you vigilantly guard the focus of your romantic affections as if he or she is a possession.



There are some of you that LIKE your partner to exhibit jealousy. You may do things to set your partner up to try to make them jealous to gauge their reaction as an indicator of their love for you. A woman may be secretly flattered if her man exhibits signs of jealousy.

We've all heard others remark with pride "Girl, if I just talk to another man, he gets so jealous!" or "If she cared, she would show at least a little bit of jealousy."

This is a dangerous game to play that can often backfire. You may end up feeling silly, rejected and hurt when you don't get the reaction you wanted, instead receiving an icy stare from your partner as he or she exits the room and sometimes the relationship.

## Gender Jealousy

Study after study shows that while neither sex is more jealous than the other, jealousy is triggered by different factors in men and women. Female jealousy seemed to revolve around the loss of emotional commitment from a partner... a woman will experience jealousy if she feels her man talks to and shares more about himself with another woman than he does with her. This includes receiving sexual stimulation from girly magazines or pornographic images – she wants to be the sole source of his satisfaction for any perceived needs.

I have been with my boyfriend for over 5 years, and he still keeps a picture of his ex in what he calls "a night gown" (I call lingerie) in a photo album hid away in the back of his closet. Which I would have never known he had, if I wasn't such a snoop - there are not really any other photos in there. It really bothers me every time I remember that it is there, and that causes many arguments between us."

Jealous women tend to become depressed, frantic and emotional. Many women feel that without a man they are not successful in their role as a female in our society. Women tend to be more focused on relationships for their identity, relying on that relationship for their sense of who they are. It would follow then that women might be more afraid of losing love and being abandoned. Directly confronting her man is therefore highly risky; women instead choose to instead angrily confront the female she feels is a threat.

Since many males deal with their emotions by avoiding them altogether by pretending they don't have them, it would follow that men would not admit to being jealous because that would cause them to feel powerless and vulnerable and less of a man. Studies showed that male jealousy focuses more on a partner's sexual infidelity or exclusivity. The thought that their sweetheart has ever slept with another man, even in the distant past, is extremely painful for many men.

"My fiancée has quit wanting to have sex with me. Before, we were just fine and had sex pretty often. But all of a sudden, he just doesn't seem to be interested. He says it isn't my fault but what else am I to believe? He knew I wasn't a virgin when we met and that didn't seem to matter then. Now, he is constantly asking me about the first, and only other guy I was ever with. It's tearing us apart!"

Others play it cool, switching from their heart to their heads with logical analysis: "Hey, I think it would be stupid to be jealous over a woman. She was someone else's woman before I came along, and will probably be with someone else after me. What sense does that make to get myself all worked up over a woman?"

Men often deny themselves the right to feel uncertain, fearful and hurt. After all, if you never show that you have feelings, how can anyone hurt them? But don't men fall in love as deeply as women and hurt as much as we do if the relationship starts turning sour?

## Moving Past Jealousy

It's been proven that jealousy diminishes significantly by the time we are 35. Apparently, as we mature with age, we become less dependent on a relationship to prove who we are and more comfortable with ourselves and meeting our own needs.

Jealousy has driven people to murder and thus to prison. Jealousy has motivated us listen on the telephone extension, drive by his house to spy, examine her underwear, check automobile odometers, follow him when he leaves the house, call her and hang up to make sure she is at home, rummage through his drawers, pockets, closets and cell phone. You try to figure out the code to her answering machine so that you can retrieve the messages. Even when you are at work you find yourself worrying about where he is and whom he is flirting with.

You drop by unexpectedly and at odd times to see who is there. You check his body for scratches, bruises or hickies on the Q.T. You interrogate her with rapid-fire questions about where she has been, with whom, and demand to know who was on the phone after every call. You are jealous about any qualities or attributes you feel "the competition" has that you don't. Any deviation in your mate's routine makes you suspicious.

Jealousy, possessiveness and arguments kill romantic feelings faster than rat poison kills vermin. Love is like a delicate flower...it dies when it is deprived of light, water and warm breezes. Possessiveness chokes off love at the root, like a big weed kills flowers – sucking the nutrients and waters right out of the soil, leaving the flower to wither and die.

Though feeling jealous with valid reason is a natural, normal human emotion and a twinge of it here and there may actually inspire more loving behaviors from a complacent, take-you-for-granted partner, irrational out of control jealousy has caused many people to make absolute fools of themselves and indicates an unstable relationship. A partner that continually and intentionally presses your jealousy and insecurity buttons is a red flag as well.

Hopefully this article will help you do some serious thinking about why you feel insecure about your relationship, or why you lash out at your partner with accusations of cheating that you know have no basis in fact. Since love cannot exist simultaneously in an environment of distrust. Those of you that behave in a jealous, controlling way in an effort to maintain your relationship will most likely bring about the very thing you are most afraid of – losing your lover or spouse.

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