

Jealousy: When You Know They Are Not Cheating but You Can't Get It under Control

Joseph and Sarah Elizabeth Malinak, M. Div.

When it comes to jealousy, the problem and the cure can be simpler than the green-eyed monster would have you believe!

The problem:

There is a popular idea that when a person is jealous of attention his or her partner is receiving from or giving to others, he or she really wants to get rid of the partner. It is as if when you are jealous, you have a subconscious desire to break up with your partner; therefore, your jealousy will chase him or her out of your life.

We disagree. Just think about the last time you felt jealous of attention your partner was receiving from others, especially if your partner is still in your life. Did you want to get rid of him or her? Or did you, rather, feel threatened that the other person(s) would steal him or her away.

Now, there are people who are chronically jealous and use their jealousy to abuse those they claim to love. However, we are not talking about that kind of jealousy. Nor are we talking about a situation where you have clear evidence that your partner is developing (or has developed) romantic feelings for someone else. We are talking about the kind where he has a friend with whom he has enough camaraderie that it gets your attention and gets on your nerves. Or she has someone at work who regards her highly and she appreciates that regard just enough to make you feel uncertain, like you had better pay attention to this friendship.

This kind of jealousy, when confronted, results in conversations that break down because your partner doesn't get what's wrong! He or she is so convinced of the legitimacy and integrity of these friendships that your jealousy is perceived as something that just should not exist at best, annoying or insulting at worst. His or her lack of understanding, perhaps lack of compassion, makes your feelings worse instead of better.

The unwise will put his or her partner in the position of making a choice between the friend and the partner. The wise will resist putting his or her partner in that position and will continue to struggle with the issue. If told that your jealousy is a signal you desire to be free of your partner, you will likely give back an angry response! You do not want to get rid of your partner. What you desire, more than anything, is to feel secure inside your romantic relationship.

Jealousy comes down to a lack of self-worth. The resulting behavior may indeed get rid of the partner, but that is a symptom and not the problem. The problem is a lack of foundational value within the jealous person. You simply do not feel valuable enough to be secure in the knowledge of your partner's love.

This could extend to friends, parents, and children. Persons who are jealous are rarely only jealous of a single person in their lives. Jealousy is an issue that rears its monster green head over and over again. The problem isn't with the other people, it's with you not loving yourself enough.

If you are trying to get rid of your partner, you are likely trying to control when and how he leaves in an effort to both prove your sense of worthlessness as well as pretend to hold on to the dignity of at least being the one in control of the leaving. That isn't the same as wishing to be rid of your partner and choosing a neurotic way to get rid of him or her.

The cure:

In the jealous person's worldview, an ideal reality may be that all you have to say to her is, "Please stop seeing him," and she does; or all you have to say to him is, "Please reassure me every time I need to be reassured," and he does. In life, though, we need our friends and extended family as much as we need our intimate partners and immediate family. In addition, we need those people to be from a variety of age groups with both sexes represented. Life is simply fuller and healthier when we have large support systems with lots of perspectives available. Life is also fuller and healthier when our intimate partners are not only confident of our love but also experience that confidence from within.

When you are suffering from jealousy, you need to know that you belong to your partner and your partner belongs to you. How do you fill yourself with confidence that your intimate partner is still crazy in love with you and desires only you? There are a number of ways to accomplish this.

If your partner can tolerate hearing you process about the relationship that makes you jealous, do your best to keep it at a minimum. Use I-statements when you talk about it. Make the conversation be about your feelings, your experience. Refrain from making him or her wrong, but ask for support. For example, if she is willing to interrupt meals by accepting phone calls from her friend, ask her to stop. Request that she let her friend know she won't be taking phone calls during meals but will call him back when she gets the chance. Expect her friend to respect your relationship.

You are working to heal your jealousy, let your partner know you expect your process to be respected and your feelings to be cherished. You are not asking her to let go of the friendship. She needs to respect the ways the friendship impinges on your life by setting good boundaries with her friends and family.

When making love, be present. Pay attention. Be real with the fact that he only shares this with you! There may be a world of people out there who admire him and want him to be their friend, but this he does only with you. Whenever there are moments that declare you are his alone and he is yours alone, really be present with those moments!

Never process your jealousy when the two of you are being intimate. That can come across as punitive and can ruin the moment for days to come.

Let him know you desire reassurance. If he thinks that lovemaking alone should reassure you and it doesn't, be honest. Friendships are luxuries that carry a lot of responsibility. One bit of responsibility is that we not use a friendship to hurt another, whether purposefully or by accident. This is especially true when the one being hurt is our intimate partner.

Speaking of the responsibility of friendship, if you need the freedom to process your jealousy outside of the relationship, choose wisely. Choose a friend who loves your mate, someone who will refrain from judging him or her and truly assist you in processing your experience and your feelings. If such a person doesn't exist in your life, a trained professional will do. However, if that professional chooses sides, even your side, that person is no longer a wise choice.

You are not asking someone to help you drive a wedge between you and your partner. You are asking for assistance to heal the jealousy that resides in you, acknowledging that it is your responsibility. Such assistance will not come from someone who needs to choose sides.

Spend as much time as you can loving yourself! We create that which we put our attention on. The more you love yourself the more the people in your life show up to love you. More importantly, the more you love yourself, the greater your confidence grows.

If you are struggling with jealousy, you need to know beyond any doubt that you are worthy of your partner's unconditional love and positive regard. Your partner cannot give that to you. Life may not have given it to you yet. Your parents may not have had it to give. Nevertheless, you can give that worth to yourself! Love you! Love yourself as though you are crazy in love with you until it is true and then love yourself some more.

More than physical attractiveness, more than an attractive personality, confidence is sexy! Confidence will turn his head again. Confidence will make her sit up and take notice. Confidence will make you more attractive to yourself as well as to your partner. It will fan the flames of healing self-love and it will fan the flames of your romantic love.

Friendships outside of primary relationship come and go. A time will come when your partner's friend is less present in both your lives. When that starts to happen, go ahead and celebrate that fact between you and you! Let it remind you that yours is the primary relationship. Let it remind you that you belong to your partner and your partner belongs to you.

As your jealousy heals and the anger fades, celebrate the love between you and your partner. One of the problems jealousy brings with it is an ever-present sense of anger that

can require so much time and attention that you may wonder how you will get along without it! You will get along without it.

As opportunities for laughter and affection increase, as processing gives way to conversations about hopes and dreams for the future, as you continue to share experiences that bond you, your confidence in your own worth will continue to grow within yourself and within the relationship. You will find there is room for both of you to have as many friends and family members in your life as you desire. Moreover, life can be full, rich, and rewarding, as you indeed grow old together.

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