

MAKING PEACE WITH JEALOUSY

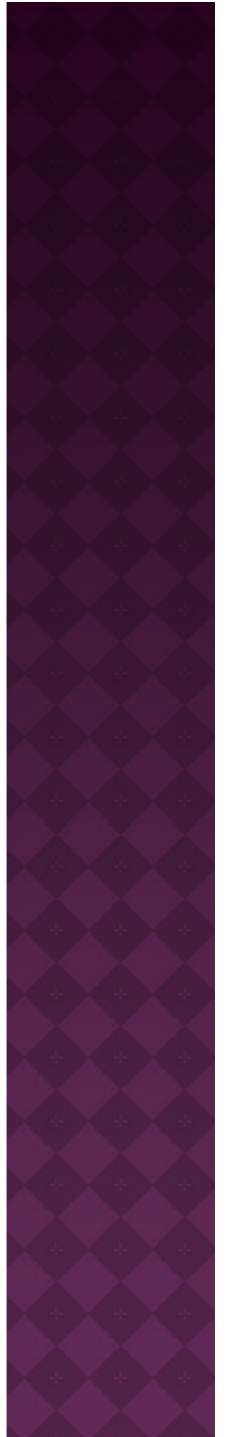
In Polyamorous Relationships

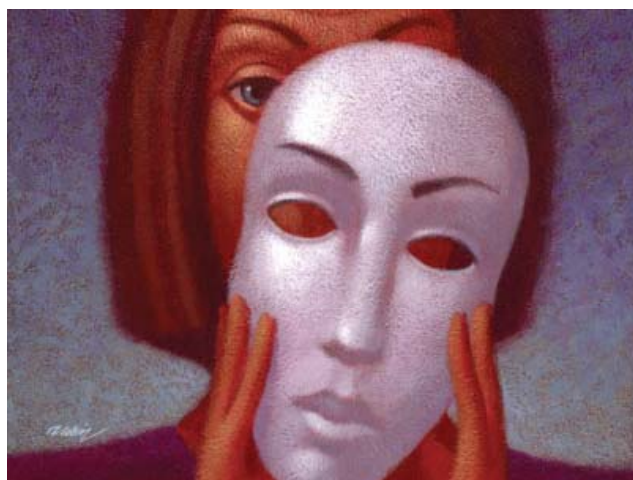
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Love withers under constraint:
its very essence is liberty:
it is compatible neither with
obedience, jealousy, nor fear:
it is there most pure, perfect, and unlimited
where its votaries live
in confidence, equality, and unreserve.

--Percy Byshe Shelley





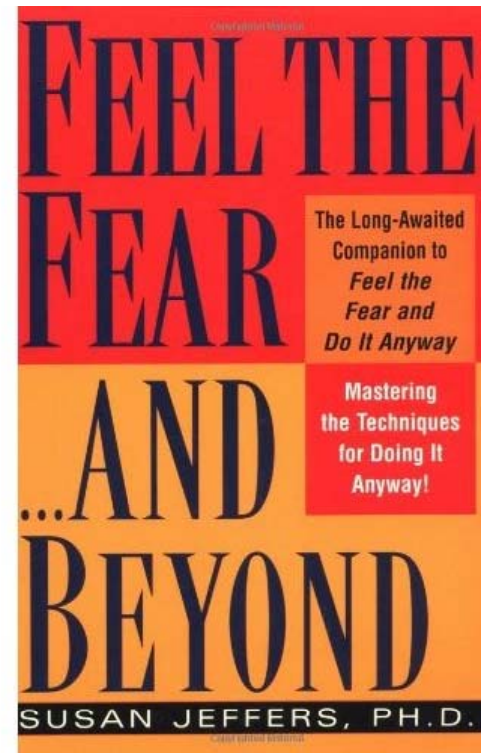
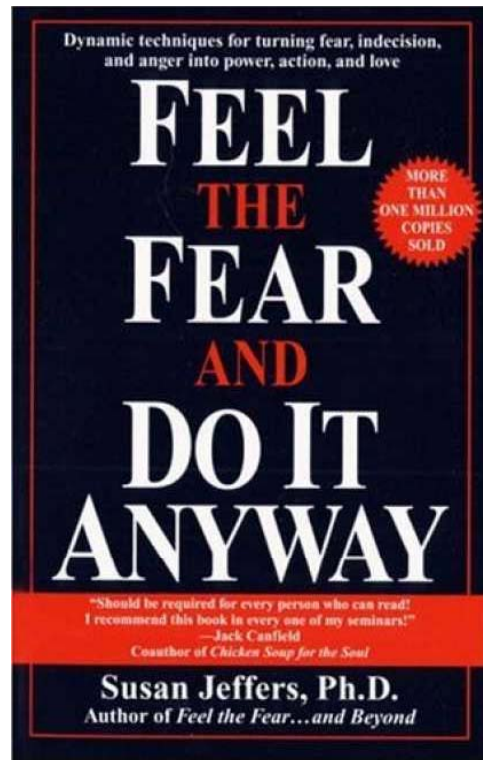
- Happy poly relationships are attainable if you know how. Without the right skills and a clear understanding of what makes them work, they can seem out of reach when jealousy gets in the way.
- It is no surprise that concerns over jealousy are the biggest obstacle to mutually satisfying open relationships.
- By unmasking jealousy and identifying the sometimes complex underlying emotions present, we can discover its cause and effectively devise a plan to take away its power.

What Jealousy is Really About - Fear

It is important to recognize what jealousy is really about – **fear**.

1. Fear of the unknown
2. Fear of change
3. Fear of losing power and control
4. Fear of scarcity
5. Fear of loss
6. Fear of abandonment





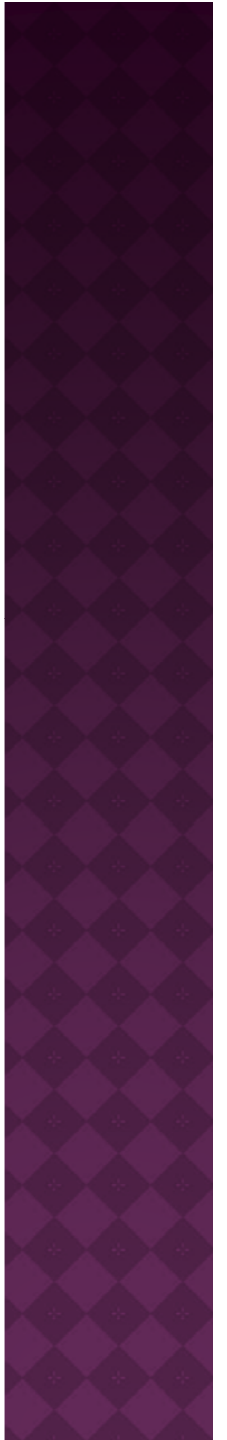
Who gets jealous???



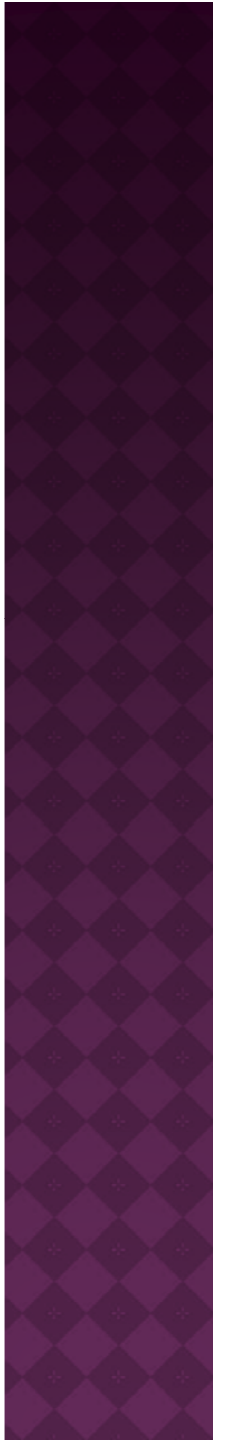
O! beware, my lord, of jealousy; It is the
green-eyed monster which doth mock the meat
it feeds on.

~William Shakespeare, *Othello*

You're never too young.



Jealousy as Teen Angst





JEALOUSY

Sometimes it's understandable



Love Letter from a Rival

A youth catches his boyfriend with a love letter from another.
Miyagawa Issho, ca. 1750 Panel from a series of ten homoerotic
scenes, on a shunga-style painted hand scroll

Who Gets Jealous?

Almost everyone except perhaps:

1. Those who are more highly evolved than the rest of us – these folks are rare due to societal conditioning that encourages jealousy and a sense of single ownership and possession of intimate partners.
2. Those pathologically not in touch with their feelings
3. Those who haven't gotten into the set of circumstances that set it off in themselves.
4. It is safe to assume you will be jealous at some point when the circumstances arise that push your particular jealousy button.

Jealousy vs. Envy – What's the difference?

Although popular culture often uses jealousy and envy as synonyms, modern philosophers and psychologists have argued for conceptual distinctions between jealousy and envy. For example, philosopher John Rawls distinguishes between jealousy and envy on the ground that jealousy involves the wish to keep what one has, and envy the wish to get what one does not have.

The common experience of jealousy for many people may involve:

- Fear of loss
- Suspicion of or anger about a perceived betrayal
- Low self-esteem and sadness over perceived loss
- Uncertainty and loneliness
- Fear of losing an important person to another
- Distrust

The experience of envy involves:

- Feelings of inferiority
- Longing
- Resentment of circumstances
- Ill will towards envied person often accompanied by guilt about these feelings
- Motivation to improve
- Desire to possess the attractive rival's qualities
- Disapproval of feelings

Common Components of Jealousy

- In every jealous moment there are more significant underlying emotions than the jealousy itself.
- Jealousy is almost always made up of more than one emotion – which ones are most common?

Anger	Fear	Hurt
Betrayal	Anxiety	Agitation
Sadness	Paranoia	Depression
Loneliness	Envy	Coveting
Feeling Powerless	Feeling Inadequate	Feeling Excluded

Societal Sanctions



- Culture justifies jealousy, romantic and otherwise, so often that we mostly fail to notice or question it. [J]ealousy is a common theme in literature, art, theatre, and film.
- Some films that portray jealousy with the target audience being young children are Cinderella, Snow White, and Toy Story. All three are Disney movies with a message of jealousy among characters.
(Wikipedia)
- Vamp vs. Were – Twilight series (competition, rivalry)
- Others?

Even When It's Clearly Wrong ...



Carrie Underwood in her video “Before He Cheats” sings:

“I dug my key into the side of his
pretty little souped up 4 wheel drive,
carved my name into his leather seats...
I took a Louisville slugger to both headlights,
slashed a hole in all 4 tires...
Maybe next time he'll think before he cheats.”



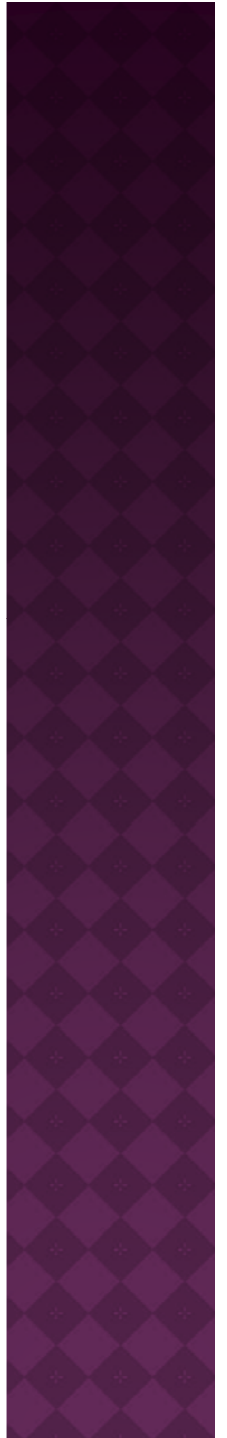
In his 2010 unpublished manuscript *Jealousy, Monogamy, and Power*, San Francisco polyamory advocate Pepper Mint says:

“People who are jealous have few limits on their actions. Because we consider jealousy to be a strong emotion, we license all sort of normally antisocial behavior to jealous people. Jealous people can furtively look through their partner's clothes or email, they can follow their partner, they can make public scenes, they can take reprisals against the third party, they can break up with their partner, and so on.

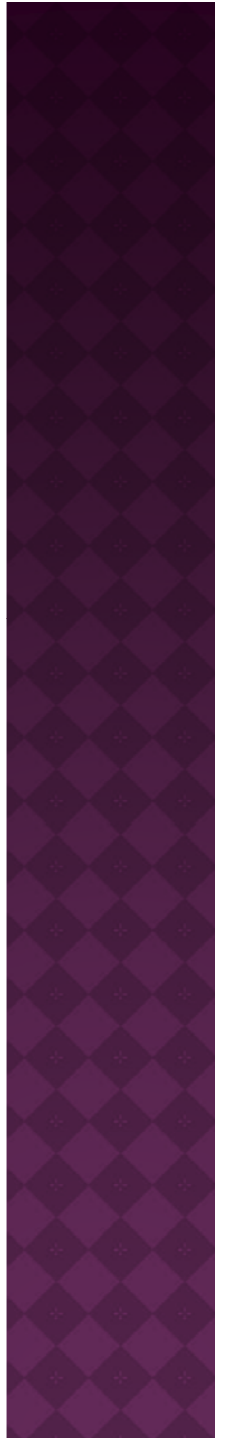
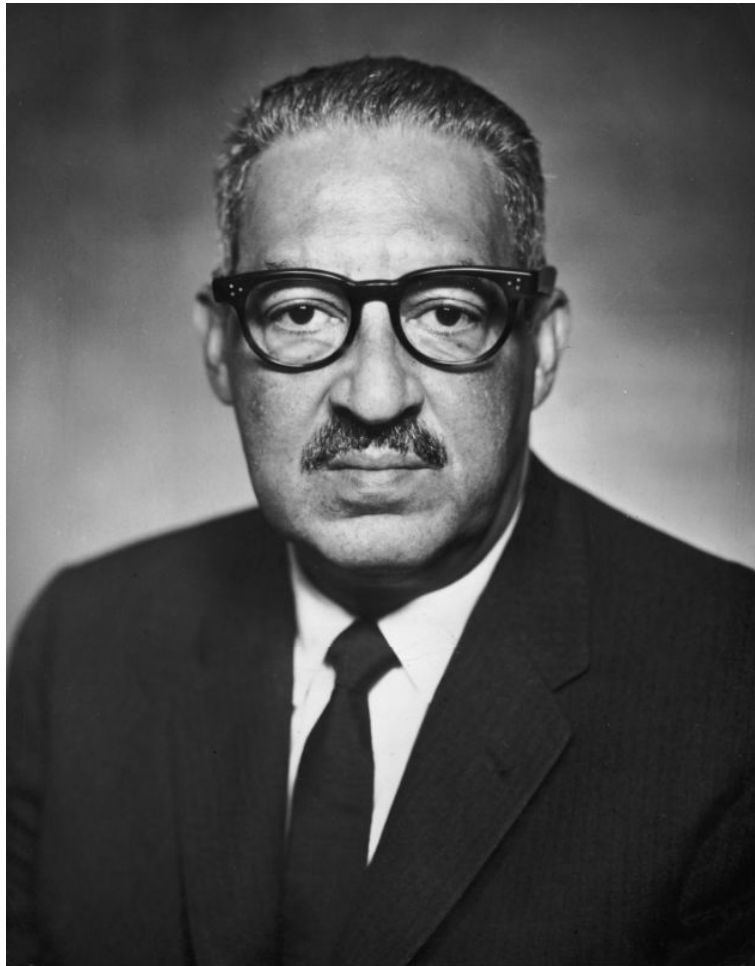
While they may be looked down on, jealous violence and other extreme jealous behaviors are conceivable... Because these behaviors are conceptually available, they are licensed to some extent, even though they may be viewed as destructive or irrational.”

Again referencing Pepper Mint:

“Indeed, jealous violence committed against one’s partner or the third party is often excused by the courts and sympathetic juries, either through acquittal or the reduction of murder to manslaughter (White and Mullen, 1989: 231-235). Due to jealousy being viewed as relationship defense, laws have been passed that excuse killing a rival: into the 1970s it was legal in Georgia and Texas for a man to kill his wife’s lover if he could catch them in the act (Miller 2002: 57-60). While these days the law might take reprisals against someone who commits violence while jealous, no one will be particularly surprised that they did it.”



"I have a lifetime appointment and I intend to serve it. I expect to die at 110, shot by a jealous husband."— Thurgood Marshall



Origins of Jealousy

- Societally Programmed Core Beliefs
 1. If my partner really loved me, they wouldn't want anyone else.
 2. If my partner were happy with me, if I were a good enough partner/lover, my partner would be satisfied with me alone.
 3. Love is scarce!
 4. It's just not possible to love more than one.
 - Note: #1 and 2 are very hard on self-esteem if believed.
- Unresolved Insecurities in Self
 1. Unloveability. Believe I got lucky. With freedom to see others, partner will see how inadequate I am and leave me for another.
 2. Vulnerability. Extraordinarily high need to feel in control.
- Unresolved Insecurities in Relationship
 1. Trust problems
 - From past indiscretions and other incidents of untruthfulness.
 - From skepticism about whether partner has courage to be honest when called for.
 2. Lack of willingness to invest enough time in relationship to keep it strong and healthy while simultaneously spending time conducting other intimate relationships.
 3. Sexual dissatisfaction due to something other than individual variations in level of desire, i.e. same sex partner exploring with others of opposite sex, desire to practice a form of sexual expression like swinging or BDSM that partner has no interest in.

Common Kinds of Jealousy

Possessive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Much more common in monogamous couples than amongst intentionally polyamorous.• Green eyed monster variety.• Occurs when a relationship is characterized by commitment without trust.• Sanctioned by society – watch for signs in commercials, popular music, TV and movies. Until the early 1970s, a man who found his wife in bed with a lover and killed them both was not guilty of murder in the State of Texas.• Jealous person says things like, “You are <u>mine</u>, and I’ll <u>make you pay</u> if I ever catch you with someone else.”
Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common in poly relationships, especially when one partner has other loves and the other does not• Triggered when one feels they are being left out or deprived of equal time and attention• Typically there is a desire to be included at all times in all activities• Jealous person says things like , “How come you have all the fun.?”

Common Kinds of Jealousy (cont'd)

Competition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common in poly• Jealous person compares themselves to another love and becomes convinced that they are inadequate. Can cause them to act out in hostile and non-loving ways.• Triggered in response to fear that whatever made the relationship “special” is being shared with or surpassed by another.• Implications surrounding need to be “most special” and concern about losing that status• Need constant reassurance, but relief is usually temporary.• Jealous person says things like, “You think I’m not good enough.”
Fear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most basic type, most common in poly• Concern that partner will leave them for someone else.• Imagines rejection, loneliness and scarcity.• Rational mind knows partner could fall in love with someone else if the relationship is an open one, but jealousy is not rational.• Part of monogamous mindset• Jealous person says things like, “What if my lover finds someone else better?”• Read “Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway” by Susan Jeffers, Ph.D. for an all-around excellent primer on fear and how to control it rather than letting it control you.

Jealousy and Compersion

- The term compersion originated at the now defunct Kerista Commune in San Francisco in the early 1990s.
- Definition of Compersion:
- Poly community leader Joreth defines compersion as "A feeling of joy when a partner invests in and takes pleasure from another romantic or sexual relationship. ... **Compersion does not specifically refer to joy regarding the sexual activity of one's partner, but refers instead to joy at the relationship with another romantic and/or sexual partner.**"
- In her book *Opening Up*, author Tristan Taormino says, "Part of achieving compersion is letting go of any perceived control we have over our partners.
- When we do this, we give our partners the freedom and support to grow and change in whatever way they need."
- According to polyamorous journalist Eric Francis, compersion can be considered a kind of fearlessness, or at least embracing the fear and not letting it drive your decisions.
- It stands to reason that the better emotional shape both we as individuals and our relationship(s) are, the less there is to fear.

Comperison, Competition and Possessiveness

- Jealousy, possessiveness and competitiveness are the roadblocks to compersion.
- Western society's cultural standard is a sense of entitlement to ownership of a monogamous partner's body and emotions. This is where many of us are coming from when we try to work with traditional, habituated emotions inside new ways of relating.
- It's understandable to have fears and competitive and possessive feelings and thoughts. By catching ourselves at them and challenging them, we can make good progress toward turning a desire to compete for and possess a partner to feelings of generosity toward our partner and their partners.
- We can do this if we have confidence that our relationship is safe no matter how our partner(s) may feel about others.

Transformation: Jealousy, Acceptance and Compersion

Dr. Deborah Anapol advises in her writings on polyamory that if you can't imagine feeling compersion instead of jealousy:

- You might begin to move in this direction by focusing on the happiness your beloved feels at the prospect of an additional love relationship rather than your own discomfort about the possibility of losing someone who is important to you.
- Just having a concept that acknowledges that you have the potential of feeling joy and expansion rather than fear and contraction in response to a loved one's sharing their love with others can go a long way toward transforming jealousy.

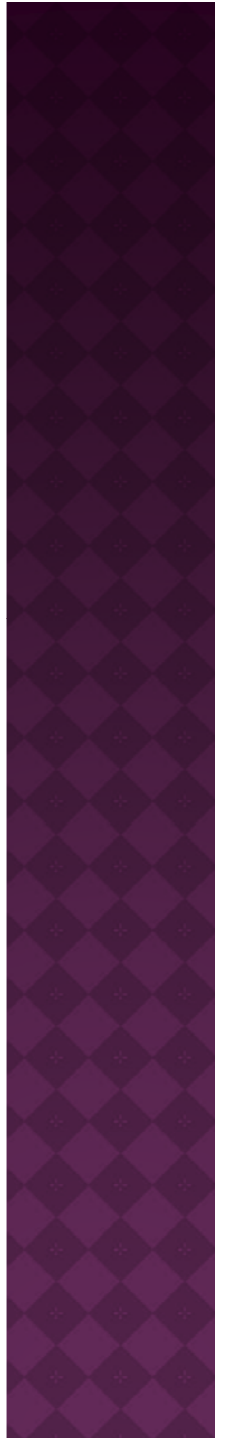
Fix ‘Em Up!

In *The Ethical Slut* 2nd Edition, authors Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy talk about the useful strategy of fixing your partner up with dates.

- Story 1 - Janet recalls meeting a new Internet acquaintance for coffee who described a pet sexual fantasy that was startlingly similar to that of Janet's existing partner. Janet set up a first date between the two who went on to have a long and intense love relationship with Janet joining in later on.
- Story 2 - Dossie was once out on a date with a longtime lover of hers when she noticed an attractive person trying to catch her eye behind her date's back. She explained the situation to her date who had a stroke of genius. He strode over to the young man in question and with great dignity announced, "My lady would like you to have her phone number." The young man looked terrified at the time, but he called the next morning. Dossie has made use of this strategy repeatedly since then and recommends it highly: they always call!

Comperision and Empathy

- Definition of empathy according to Merriam-Webster: The action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner; also : the capacity for this.
- Try to think of other situations in your life where you felt empathetic in a positive way, perhaps for a good friend or child or other relative.
- Think of a time when you had no sense of envy or jealousy, just an understanding about what they must be feeling, including pleasure, and your reciprocal pride for them and pleasure at their success.
- This is what we are talking about when we talk about compersion.



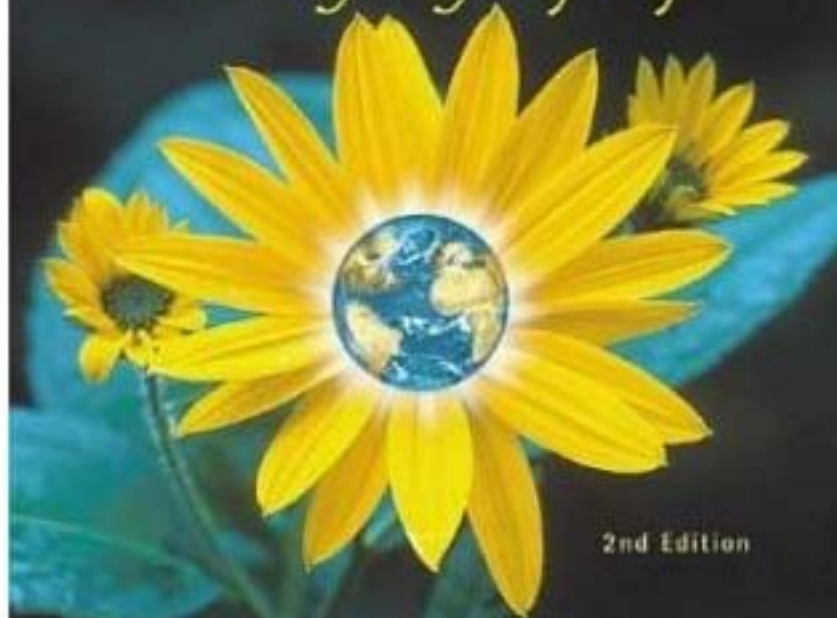
If You are the Jealous One - What to Try That Has Worked for Others

- Do your part to be sure the relationship is basically healthy and sound and that you are a competent communicator. Do not expect your relationship(s) to be happy while failing to prioritize the resolution of any troublesome issues, especially those involving trust.
- When emotions are strong and you are very upset, leaping into action makes matters worse. Take time to calm down, and remember that even if jealous feelings at times seem unbearable, they will likely pass with some time and effort, so don't despair. Reach out to the local poly community - you'll make valuable friends that way and gain support in the process. Other sources of support are partner(s), friends, and/or a poly-friendly therapist.
- Temper tantrums, guilt trips and martyrdom make things worse. Remember, the goal is to become comfortable with cheerfully accommodating of your love's other love relationships, or renegotiate your boundaries as to how much is too much if you cannot. You will want the same from them.
- Remember the "ripple effect." Emotional pain and drama that effects your partner's happiness can also create worries, resentment and stress for your partner's other love(s). If we are truly about "loving more", then we must do our part to always act with love and good will and make sure everyone "wins."
- Avoid blaming – it's counterproductive! (Does not mean you cannot calmly express the importance of your partner acknowledging responsibility for any contributions they make to the problem.)
- A good manner of communicating effectively is called non-violent communication ("NVC"). Read the book "Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Life by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D. Visit the website: <http://www.nonviolentcommunication.com>
- Identify emotions being felt and under what circumstances they arise. Diary these - it helps!
- Develop a sense of what percentage of jealousy each emotion is responsible for. Demystifying the exact components serves to help get a grip when emotions feel overwhelming.

If You are the Jealous One (cont'd.)

- To put things in perspective, visualize your jealousy triggers. Talk about triggers with your partner (s) and their other love(s) and ask for assistance in managing them.
- Jealousy will bring your darker shadow side (deep seated fears) into the light and illuminate disowned, unloved fragments of personality. Growth/resolution of these fears becomes mandatory if you are to stop feeling threatened, assuming your partner's commitment to your relationship is not in question.
- Sometimes specific reassurance from your partner about their commitment to the relationship, how they feel about you and your importance to them can make jealousy much more manageable if not resolve it. Be direct and ask for what you need from your partner to be OK with the situation.
- Consider the Phobia Model of managing jealousy, i.e. desensitization by pushing the boundary of what is tolerable in manageable increments, always checking in promptly afterward with self and partner.
- Be willing to meet all new and potential partners – with a good faith effort and a little benefit of the doubt, it becomes difficult to demonize someone who clearly means well and demonstrates respect for your relationship. (OTOH, be wary of those who don't want to meet you. This is not jealousy but healthy caution. Insist that your partner find out more about why they are opposed.)
- Remember to love yourself. If you can't, solve the problem by reading self-help books on self esteem and seeing a therapist until the issue is resolved. Likewise for other unresolved emotional issues. The drama will keep popping up otherwise, and you'll like you and be happier in the end regardless of how the relationship works out - it's an investment in the quality of your own life!.
- Have courage, be patient and forgive yourself and everyone else. Solve conflict creatively - if one method fails, try another, and yet another, until you find something that works for all concerned.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate!

Nonviolent **COMMUNICATION** *A Language of Life*



2nd Edition

Create Your Life, Your Relationships, and
Your World in Harmony with Your Values

Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.

Foreword by **Arun Gandhi**
Founder/President, M.K. Gandhi
Institute for Nonviolence

Endorsed by
William Ury co-author of *Getting To Yes*
Dr. Thomas Gordon author of
Parent Effectiveness Training

If Your Partner is the Jealous One – What to Try That Has Worked for Others

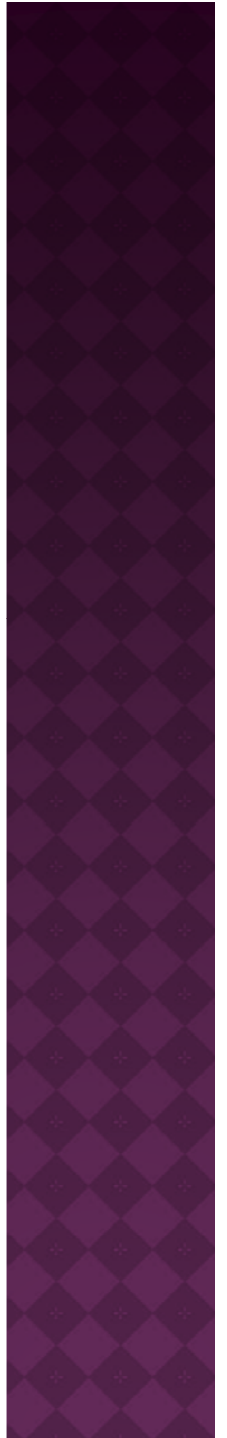
- Do your part to be sure the relationship is basically healthy and sound. Do not expect your poly relationships to be happy while failing to prioritize the resolution of any troublesome issues, especially those involving trust. See a poly-friendly therapist or consult one by telephone - many offer this service!
- If you value the relationship, DO NOT take any partner(s) for granted. Give everyone as much love and affection and attention as they desire and you can provide. Recognize them for the unique and special contributions they bring to your life and tell them what special qualities you admire about them.
- Beware of the blinding effects of NRE. DO NOT allow it to cause you to lose sight of the extra importance of being attentive to existing partners during this time. Check in with your partner about how they are feeling while you are together. Even if they seem OK, extra love and attention during this time can't hurt and can help if trouble is encountered later. Romantic gestures like asking them out on a date, bringing them flowers, giving them a sensuous massage, whatever will be a treat for them and bonding for both of you can be highly effective at avoiding and/or resolving jealousy over a new lover.
- Let your jealous partner know you're there for them. Make yourself available to listen while they express hurt. Try to validate how they feel, even if you don't agree with everything they say.
- Be generous with hugs, encouragement and affection.
- Avoid dismissing partner's feelings. Always remember that jealousy is not rational – don't tell your partner they are being silly and expect them to largely if not completely resolve their jealousy by invoking their rational mind.
- Again, learn nonviolent communication.
- If your partner is willing to learn from jealousy and grow, honor their courage.

If Your Partner is the Jealous One – (cont'd)

- Solid trust is indispensable - be reliable! Come home when say you will - this is no time to indulge in passive-aggressive controlling and/or control-resisting behaviors. If you say you won't have sex without discussing it with your love first, don't! How you demonstrate your trustworthiness is crucial and can make or break a poly relationship. Don't violate agreements - renegotiate them if you can't abide by them. Don't agree to *anything* just to appease your partner unless you are willing to stick with it. If you screw up, admit it promptly and affirm that you won't let it happen again.
- Draw the line at verbal abuse; avoid reciprocation.
- Though stalling about giving permission is understandable in the face of fear, you are entitled to set reasonable limits on any "foot dragging" your partner does.
- Take a look inside yourself. Are you pushing their buttons needlessly? Do you often affirm your partner's value in your life? Do you sufficiently prioritize the relationship over other obligations and activities? Which is more important, your relationship or the bowling league?
- Your emotional intelligence matters, too, as do your communication skills. If you have any doubts about these, start now to educate yourself. Read relationship self-help books - 75% of the skills necessary to keep a monogamous relationship healthy are essential to poly relating. See a therapist, either with your partner or on your own, if doing so seems like a good idea - it can speed up the process
- If you find yourself attracting highly jealous partners, ask yourself why? What does a partner's jealousy do for you? Does it perhaps make you feel powerful? Desirable? Secure? Do you enjoy having the upper hand? If you find you have a part in the jealousy crisis, own up to it.
- Assess potential for violence – jealous rages can be lethal. Be sure you can count on your partner's self-control. (Such folks tend to avoid poly, but there can be exceptions.)

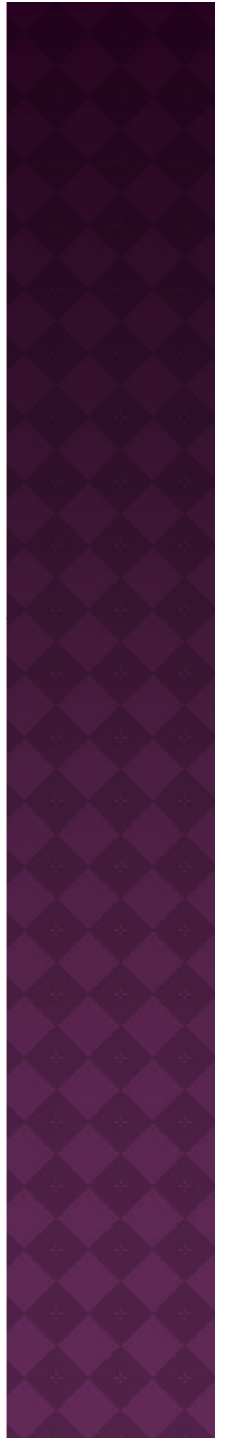
Generosity of Spirit And a Gift of Love

- I have found that the approach that makes me feel best about waving goodbye with a smile on my face when my dearly cherished sweetheart goes off on a date with someone else is to remember that I bring to our relationship an intention not to own him or compete with others for him.
- Instead I respect his autonomy as an individual and as someone who is with me because he wants to be with me, not because I have some kind of claim on him.
- I like to think of this as a generosity of spirit and a gift of love. If I want him to be happy, then I want him to find joy in whatever makes him happy. If that includes the freedom to love and be loved by others in addition to me, then I can't really imagine and greater gift (except perhaps parenthood.)
- Which leads me to what I call....



The Secret of Polyamory

- If you and your partner have a solid relationship and each is committed to and values the other no matter who else enters the picture, then giving your partner the gift of freedom to love others, too, frequently causes them to love you even more for giving them this gift.
- The abundance of love they receive as a result of your generosity is likely to secure your place in their life far better than fits of anger and jealousy ever could.
- This is how it works in my life and the lives of many, many other polyamorists I know. I feel significantly more secure in my primary relationship with T than I ever felt in either of my supposedly monogamous marriages where cheating led to a lot of heartbreak.
- I like to look at not being possessive of all of my partner's love as a gift of love to him from me that not only he deserves, but that everyone deserves.



What to Keep in Mind

- Remember that we don't get to have everything our own way, but neither do we have to grin and bear it while our partner gets everything their way. Compromise!
- Seek to maintain an environment where it is as safe to be honest with each other as possible.
- If you're having trouble communicating in a loving way, suggest calling in a neutral third party or a therapist.
- If you don't have good communications skills, make it a priority to acquire them, this is a tool it's hard to do without.
- Remember that jealousy is complicated and often is resolved only after trying various strategies and assessing the results.
- To avoid jealousy, strive to be the most emotionally healthy person you can be; confront internal insecurities and learn to love yourself if you don't already.
- Always act as lovingly as possible with everyone's best interests at heart.

Conclusion

- Closing quote: “Jealousy is all the fun you *think* they had.” - Erica Jong, *Fear of Flying*.
- Non-monogamy requires being willing to stretch, tolerate certain amounts of discomfort, risk-taking and uncertainty, especially in the beginning.
- Jealousy can feel paralyzing at the outset, usually the balance of pain and pleasure gradually shifts until the enhanced satisfaction and joy far outweighs the anxieties and insecurities.
- Remember that there is no shame in being jealous, no nobility in a lack of it. We are what we are.
- Reach out for support often. Attend community events regularly to be around people who share your points of view and avoid feeling isolated.
- Remember to let the winds of Heaven dance between you. The more self-sufficient you are in being able to be happy as an individual, the more comfortable you are likely to be with sharing a partner with others.

