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Being Jealous

Jealous, from the Low Latin *zelosus* 'full of zeal,' is to feel or show envy of someone or their achievements and advantages. You can be protective or vigilant of rights and possessions, as in "Nicky is jealous of his father's authority." Or you may feel or show suspicion of someone's unfaithfulness in a relationship, as in "Kerry is a very jealous girlfriend."

Jealousy is a common emotion. Everyone experiences it to some degree at one time or another. That's why there are so many songs, books, movies, and poems about jealousy. There are even paintings of jealous lovers.

Jealousy is the strongest emotion. It's more potent than anger, lasting many times longer before losing its passion and intensity. And almost always, jealousy outlasts the attachment on which it's based. As Francois De La Rochefoucauld observed, "Jealousy is always born with love, but does not always die with it."

As an emotion, jealousy combines the negative thoughts and feelings of fear, suspicion, insecurity, anger, distrust, uncertainty, sadness, and loneliness. That's a caustic mix, any one part of which can make for a very tortured and unhappy life.

Even as undesirable as it is, jealousy is difficult to avoid. It seems there's always something to be jealous about. From your friend's awesome video game collection to your girlfriend's flirting ways, it creeps into your life. If not checked, jealousy ruins relationships and it makes you look weak and insecure.

So how can you get a grip on jealousy? The best way is to figure out why you feel jealous in the first place. It's likely because you feel something is being threatened or taken away from you. You're jealous of your girlfriend because you want reassurance she'll still be with you tomorrow. You don't want to lose her because you're not confident enough to be self-sufficient.

Even though they feel jealousy, some people turn it off before it becomes destructive. How do they do it? They accept themselves as they are, the good and the bad. And they involve themselves in healthy solid relationships with everyone in their lives. Doing these things builds self-confidence.

But, building self-confidence isn't always easy. It most often comes with age and the experience of having made good decisions along the way. Confidence in yourself is the key to keeping jealousy at arm's length. Put your life in perspective by knowing that you have things others don't, and they have things you don't. It's just the way it is.

Being Jealous Dos and Don'ts

- Think it through.
- Get control.
- Move on.

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