

# **UGH, JEALOUSY!**

*(a pocket guide for success when you're a hot mess)*

Greetings, lovers, adventurers, pioneers!  
Welcome to the grand expedition through the daunting domain of the green-eyed monster.  
You're in excellent company here.  
Let's do this thing.

First off, the fact that you're considering tackling jealousy is a big deal.

In a truly humane and decent world, you should be held in the most loving embrace of wholehearted support.

As someone who has also ventured into (and through) this rugged territory, I want to offer you that with my words, straight from my heart:

I feel you, I honor you, I LOVE YOU for your willingness to do this.

## **What are we Dealing with here?**

Jealousy is the face of something underneath. It tends to revolve around three things:

- fear and insecurity
- ownership
- scarcity model

It particularly shows up for us in sexual and love relationships because of the limited way our culture views these things and herefore the way we grow up relating to sex and intimacy (two of the core features, by the way, of what it means to be Homo sapiens, a fundamentally social-sexual species).

The tentacles of jealousy reach far below the surface issues that trigger it, extending deep into the fibres of our humanity. Therefore, to confront jealousy is to confront some of our deepest vulnerabilities on an existential level. And, because of the depth of this fear, most people will never dare to explore this region of the self.

So, if you're reading this, it says a lot about you. You are on the brink of something really, truly great.

Now, the Good-News-Bad-News dilemma.... Let's start with the Bad News, since it's the obvious part...

## **Slings and Arrows (The Bad News)**

To achieve greatness, it is true, there must be great sacrifice. I won't lie to you. This is big stuff. It's hard. It's tough. It can feel like utter agony to endure (for me, it felt like ripping out my guts at times, or burning myself at the stake). It's a beast. But it's entirely doable, with the will and the determination to do so.

Some of the fears jealousy can highlight:

- **loss of security**
- **being alone**
- **abandonment**
- **inadequacy/not being good enough**
- **scarcity model mindsets**
- **loss of control**
- **loss of identity**

Some of the psycho-emotional issues that tend to hide under jealousy:

- **self-importance**
- **self-worth**
- **needing validation**
- **sense of entitlement**

Another aspect is mental:

- **erroneous thinking/ideas about sex and relationship**

Confronting jealousy by exposing yourself to relational and sexual exploration invites all your insecurities to the party. And party they will!

They will show up in all their true colors and make a gawdy ruckus. Each unwelcome guest will strut around and assert itself as if it's the Only Thing in Town, The End Game, and You Going Down with it. Their job, each one, is to make a zero-sum case and convince you to call it quits. That's how they run the show and create a safe haven for their fear-based existence. They're all children, essentially, without any of the cute stuff: desire and survival. Thus, dealing with jealousy is, if anything, simply about growing up.

So what it boils down to, then, is that what you will sacrifice is your own whining, tantrum-throwing inner children! I promise you, all these little rugrats just represent limitations that you will never regret leaving behind. Besides, as I'm sure you'll agree, the world desperately needs more adults.

## **Outrageous Fortune (The Good News)**

Because jealousy is indeed the face of our deepest vulnerabilities as social entities, the rewards and benefits are quite possibly immeasurable.

What's ahead of you is:

- **self awareness,**
- **emotional intelligence,**
- **emotional and psychological maturity,**
- **sexual intelligence**
- **greater understanding of sexuality and sexual psychology,**
- **compassion, connection, and growth**
- **open, honest, communicative, joyously expressive sex**

...and what comes with all these things is relational skills, sexual expansion, and the capacity for real intimacy—true love—with others. In other words, what awaits for you is a new dimension of life, fulfilling some of the most rewarding potentials of a human existence.

Make no mistake about it—by embarking on real, serious work on jealousy, you are beginning along a path that is deeply purifying, enlightening, liberating, and life affirming. It's an existential adventure that can catapult you into an exalted perspective on life, love, sex, and relationship.

So step up to the fire and hang in there.  
You can do it. And you're worth it!

## ANCHORAGE POINTS:

Diving headlong into the raging sea of jealousy has to be done smartly. You will need to establish lifelines to some critical points that will help you keep your head above water when the storm gets intense.

Following are the points that I found most essential. These things are so meaningful that they will possibly be the very things that turn this painful endeavor into an experience that will help you to, not just survive the thing, but *thrive* across many levels for the rest of your life. Due to the nature of each of these elements, they can become bouys on your entire journey through life, even beyond this endeavor.

Bear in mind that the following approach always involves *honesty*, *responsibility*, and *awareness* as the consistent, pervasive elements throughout the entire process.

### 1. Commit to a Higher Ideal

To be successful on the front lines of jealousy, you need to have a clear understanding of *why* you're doing this. You have to have some kind of a solid purpose to engage in any kind of battle, right?

I recommend committing to a *higher ideal* (and I don't mean god, I just mean something bigger than "you" or where you're at right now). What I mean by this term "higher ideal" is any sort of more expansive vision of your being, your horizons, your life (for me it was that I wanted to use it for personal growth, discovery, and sexual enlightenment).

If you can relate to the process as a means to a much more significant end, it will help you willingly endure engulfing feelings you would otherwise strive to escape or avoid. It will help you tap into your inner hero, even superhero(!), by helping you "lean into the difficulty" as I recently heard someone say.

A higher ideal helps to *elevate your perspective* which is indispensable in moments of emotional discomfort (or agony), because these feelings—although they *feel* monumental when you're in their grip—are actually very small; they shrink our worldview down to nothing but self/ego and its (typically) neurotic, self-absorbed reality.

It was also immensely helpful for me and my partner in our relationship (we both suffered intense jealousy) that he and I shared a similar goal, or higher ideal. This allowed us a solid platform to stand on for supporting each other in the clearest, most meaningful ways.

At the very least, if you're working through this together with a partner, you need to *know* each other's intent is behind the endeavor and strive to support each other mindfully to that end.

## **2. Establish Your Needs**

This is going to be a work in progress, but the next important thing to carve out for yourself is a clear (and preferably very austere) list of your true relational needs, as opposed to your wishes. (For example, with my primary partner in an open relationship, I needed *trust*, not trust that he would never do anything that upset me, but that he would be safe, honest, and responsible with a pure intent).

The very process of doing the work to gain clarity of our bottom-line needs is a spectacular moment because it requires the strictest quality of honesty with ourselves about the nature of our lives, no less!

[During the recent wildfires in the Western U.S., I had to prepare to evacuate my home. It was rather remarkable to realize that I could fit everything truly indispensable into a small backpack, even though it meant leaving behind all the other things I enjoyed, even valued, as part of a more “comfortable” life. This is a good analogy for evaluating your real needs.]

Be austere. Be honest. Be bold. There are bound to be many things you cling to for comfort that are not truly necessary to your inner welfare in a sexual relationship, and may in fact be the very things preventing you from growing.

**Caution:** Also understand that your needs may radically change as you develop and mature in this regard. You may not be able to start out with the most austere version of your needs, and that’s okay.

An important part of being honest with yourself is leveling with yourself about *where you’re really, truly at*. While you want to aim high, you don’t want to jeopardize the process by aiming too high too soon.

*Overestimating* your capacities can be problematic and set you back; *not aiming high enough* will not help you grow and progress. If you need to take baby steps in order to venture into this thing at all, that’s totally understandable. The most important thing is that you set yourself up for success, so that you can stick with it.

This will involve trial and error. Yes, error! You’ll want to make sure you give yourself the time and space to step back, lick your wounds if necessary, re-evaluate your needs, positions, agreements, etc., so that you are getting the necessary nurturing and encouragement to balance out your pain and suffering in a healthy, productive way.

### **3. Face Your Aloneness**

Now, while you're in good company, you *are* alone (no one is going through your experience in life but you). And one of the most significant pieces of growing through jealousy pivots on this point.

Looking at your own aloneness leads to an exploration of your self-other posturing (i.e. how you might use relationships to fill gaps within yourself...). The only healthy relationship that one can have with another starts with having a healthy relationship with oneself.

Can you be alone with yourself? If not, why? How does fear of being alone factor into how you relate and/or cling to others? Ask yourself these questions and many others.

Personally, I think it's vital to recognize, acknowledge, and deeply accept the incontrovertible (existential, actually) fact of our aloneness in this world in order to really step up and step forward within ourselves. The world around us tends to try to assure us that we are *not* alone, and actually encourages us to take solace in that idea. But it doesn't reflect the deepest truth of our experience, and ends up being a hindrance to moving on to bigger and better things as people.

So spend some time on this one. It's a gem.

### **4. Self-Examination**

Because jealousy often tends to parade around wearing masks like anger, contempt, criticism, manipulation, self-pity, and so forth, your self examination around it requires a lot of honesty with yourself.

You must be willing to plumb the depths of your emotional psychology. Jealousy turns you inside out anyway, so you may as well take the opportunity to look at what's exposed! Hopefully you've already explored and distinguished your own needs, wants, and desires. Now you'll get to examine all your insecurities and their basis.

For most of us, these insecurities are based upon formative factors imbedded deep in our personal history. Issues of self worth, esteem, abandonment, control...the list goes on. These things may shape and color many other aspects of our lives, too. So recognizing them now can be a great boon of insight with reverberating benefits. Some of us may find we need professional therapy to deal with these things. By all means, find what you need and use it.

In my own experience, I began to recognize a pattern after a while. I was making more and more connections that all funneled into the same basic issues. (For me everything came back to an issue of low self-worth based on a history of abuse, so it's something I've been addressing for my whole life.)

*Sit down and list all your fears (or concerns, insecurities, beliefs/thoughts/ideas) that animate your jealous feelings, articulating them as best as you can. Unspoken, unidentified fears are amorphous enemies that thrive in darkness and ambiguity. Shine the bright light of your awareness on them. Now, and every time they arise. Over and over. Out loud. And they will begin to be put in their place.*

## **5. Re-Evaluate Sexuality**

Yep, it helps immensely to whittle down overblown notions of what sex “means.” We’ve all been taught to think it means this, that, and the other thing when, frankly, it all boils down to “bodies rubbing.”

Even if you want to *make* it better—more intimate, more fun, more special, and so forth—it’s impossible to make it into all the great things it can become without first stripping it down. Sex has, over the millennia, become far too encumbered with the superfluous baggage (moral, emotional, political, etc.) of so many people with so many agendas. So it’s really significant to set it free from all of that stuff within your own mind. Then you can see it for what it is and make it into something more of your own, rather than what others have been making of it for centuries.

You can really help yourself through all the emotional struggles around jealousy by going back to this notion: bodies rubbing. What’s my partner doing tonight? Rubbing bodies. What am I crying about? Bodies rubbing. Because, what’s the big deal about bodies rubbing against other bodies? What you need at this moment is perspective. So seriously, take a load off.

## 6. Be Honest/Communicate

Another thing that most of us haven't picked up from the world around us is skillful, honest communication. If you think about it for less than a minute you can recognize that, in fact, this world of ours bends over backwards NOT to be honest, *particularly around sex*.

Instead, we've had to learn straight out of the chute (that birth canal!) how to conceal our sexual responses and desires from one another (or even from ourselves) and dance around the issue making all kinds of assumptions, innuendos, and insinuations in addition to all the far-flung-yet-unspoken expectations we put upon one another.

So naturally, this is going to feel most uncomfortable. But we've got to figure this out right now, and it's another Live One to strap yourself onto—because it can take you far if you grab it for all you're worth.

If you're not sure what to say or how to say it, just stop and tune into what you're feeling. If you need to create a space, do so, and then just say it. Even if it's ugly or ridiculous. *Especially* if it's ugly or ridiculous!

The wonderful thing about voicing the goofy, asinine, shameful, embarrassing feelings we have going on is that we get to hear ourselves say it out loud. It's the most liberating thing to listen to your own inanity, and maybe even have a good laugh at yourself.

It may also come out with a flood of tears. Whatever. It's all good stuff—because it's *moving*. Imagine that giving voice to your inner shadows is mobilizing them from a heavy, stagnant, inert position into a lighter, freer, more malleable condition. (Human consciousness co-evolves with language, so use it to your advantage!)

Do not judge what gets revealed. Your stuff stinks no worse than anyone else's, honestly. Anyone who tells you so hasn't looked around enough—inside or out.

If you have a mature, willing partner who can participate with you and reflect constructively back to you, by all means *use them*. This is your moment to play the fool, so live it up. Make it count. It will give you wings and lift you up above the mess you're buried in. (This part can also build and deepen your intimacy together beyond your wildest imagination. That was my own experience.)

This anchor point of honesty and communication could be an entire book, and I'm sure there are many good ones to choose from. But for our purposes right here and now just remember—skillful, effective communication takes lots of practice and lots of intention (it also takes lots of maturity, but that can and does grow along the way, if you hold the intent and stay the course).



## Here's some basic tips to remember:

- Practice.
- Hold space for each other.
- *Express*, don't attack (work hard to know the difference if you don't).
- Listen.
- Don't take anything personally.
- Reflect deeply, boldly, and honestly.
- Question all assumptions.
- Be compassionate with yourself and each other, but also be clear and firm (don't coddle your inner children, or you'll hinder the growth).
- Learn to see where your own stuff begins and ends, and where the other person's stuff begins and ends.
- Take full responsibility for your own stuff (own it, as they say).
- Be honest and direct.
- Don't project.
- Don't exaggerate.
- Don't dramatize.
- Don't give up.

## 7. Be Open

Open your heart.

Of course you know that to love requires an open heart. It's just that most of us haven't been taught (or shown) how to really love. Parents frequently viewed (and treated) us as property, or extensions of themselves. And our culture generally approaches love relationships, and most certainly sexual ones, the same way. Not very open. Not vulnerable. More closed, transactional, and controlling, to varying degrees—all at an unspoken, uncommunicated level.

We tend therefore to hold these relationships to ourselves in a possessive death grip...which is precisely what jealousy reveals. So this is why working to deal with our jealous tendencies can be an instruction in real (*true*) love.

*Be jealous and open at the same time.*

Personally, the place that burned me the hottest was standing in the fire of jealousy without shutting down to my partner—or being jealous and open at the same time. This is the fire of purification, and it will torch you like none other. It's the most vulnerable position you can hold and it may in fact be the only one of these points that can stand on its own (like if you only did this, you might just be totally successful).

## 7. Be Responsible

Another little secret is that *responsibility is personal power*. Being responsible is ultimately empowering, so we really ought to seek it out where we can—and confronting jealousy is the perfect place for it.

There are, of course, many many levels of responsibility. I'll just focus on a small handful (and these are not necessarily in order of importance).

- **Responsibility to sex itself.** Sex is, in general, an incredibly important area to take responsibility at the utmost level, because it is a powerful thing and any powerful thing must be handled with care. The ancient Greeks devised their codes of sexual conduct based upon their understanding of its special energetic quality, as something that could be mis-used, or abused, and thus handled “appropriately”, or “inappropriately.” Cultivating an appreciation of the significance of sex as a wholesome and deeply important aspect of individual and collective well-being helps replace an unhealthy attitude about sex with one of honor and respect.

- **Safe Sex.** One of the most obvious sexual responsibilities is taking great care around safety and protection from pregnancy and disease. If you're opening a sexual relationship, taking this responsibility to protect yourselves is of the utmost importance. (My partner and I made a very clear outline based on our needs in this regard.)
- **Responsibility for Yourself.** Examining and defining your needs (anchorage point #2) is an incredibly important act of taking responsibility for yourself in relationship to others.
- **Responsibility to each other.** If you're exploring being more open in your sexual relationship (whether it's about "opening" the relationship, or just being less possessive in general), a key element is trusting each other. So there's a responsibility to each other to be trustworthy by respecting and honoring whatever boundaries have been established (and those should be carefully, intelligently devised and clearly communicated).
- **Responsibility for your own Stuff.** Learning to take full responsibility for your own stuff (insecurities, fears, expectations, assumptions, issues, feelings, etc.) is the most important piece of growth, maturity, and healthy relationship.

All of these aspects of responsibility play into the depth of maturity, trust, and intimacy that can evolve in a relationship (and around sexuality in general) through this process.

## **8. Reach for Support**

Having outside support from others who are respectful of your endeavor to overcome jealousy is another great anchor. Here's some key pointers:

- If you have friends with experience and understanding in this area, use them.
- If you need a professional, by all means seek that out. There are many therapists and counselors these days with specialties in open relationship.
- There are also good books and other resources that can be supportive.
- But a **real, live person** that you can call when the sh!t hits the fan is a godsend and can help you go from lunacy to sanity in short order.
- Support should help you to move *through* the jealousy, rather than around it. It should encourage you to build your strength, clarity, and perspective *through* the experience, while facing your demons in an intelligent, aware, responsible way.
- Always make sure your support peeps have a clear understanding of your "higher ideal" so that they know how to offer you the most meaningful input, helping you to access your own vision and purpose in the midst of your hot-mess moments.

## 9. NEVER Abuse With Jealousy

Hopefully this point is obvious. Nothing is more damaging to trust than abuse. And because of the nature of jealousy, it's a very tender issue, and abuse here can be deeply damaging or even devastating.

Nevertheless, when we're in the grip of our worst emotional selves, it's possible to find ourselves acting out or lashing out (remember jealousy's other masks: anger, contempt, criticism, manipulation, self-pity, and so forth). So it must be brought to the forefront of awareness that abuse has no place in this most vulnerable process. Following the prior points will help prevent this worst-case scenario from taking place.

If, however, (or possibly even *when*) it rears its ugly head, we have to rein in abuse as soon as possible, cop to it fully, and dedicate as much time as necessary to processing through the fallout of the moment. Use this as an opportunity to dig deeper into honesty, communication, vulnerability, and responsibility. Your capacity to do just this can turn an otherwise devastating moment into a transformational event—within you and even between you.

The choice is yours to make, the power is yours to take!  
Go forth sisters, brothers, and others—  
may the Force be with you.

~\*~

(If this mini-guide is helpful, drop me a line through the website at the bottom of the page. If it's missing something important, also let me know. If it raises questions or concerns, same thing. Thank you and best wishes!)