

What's On Your Mind?

with dr. ann lane, clinical psychologist

Events in our lives or interactions with family members, co-workers or friends can make us feel the need to seek professional advice. We've invited Dr. Ann Lane, clinical psychologist, to share her thoughts on some of the common themes that she hears from her client sessions. We're also inviting you, our readers, to ask Dr. Ann "What's on your mind?" Your concern is probably shared by others and Dr. Ann can provide some helpful insight.



THE GREEN EYED MONSTER

Feelings of jealousy are a complex mix of anger, fear and possessiveness. Jealousy is a reaction to the perception that something of high personal value is in danger of being taken away by someone else. It can occur in the context of relationships or in any situation that may lead to loss of possessions, status, position, power or self esteem. The term 'envy' is often mistakenly used interchangeably with jealousy. However, envy is the desire for what another has and does not involve the negative emotions of jealousy.

While most people do not like to see themselves in such a negative light, most experience the Green Eyed Monster on occasion. The instinct to be protective and possessive about what is ours is natural. We can see it clearly in sibling rivalry and among social animals. Mild, occasional jealous feelings can serve as motivation for problem solving, relationship enhancement and personal growth. On the other hand, jealousy-driven behaviors, such as snooping, spying, undermining, threatening, obsessing and begging reflect a lack of control, are self defeating and lead to misery and shame.

Persistent feelings of jealousy and/or jealous behaviors in reaction to real or imagined perceptions suggest insecurities, lack of confidence and a sense of powerlessness. Your suspicions may be accurate and you may have good reason to be jealous. Those feelings may be signaling that something is wrong. But extreme reactions do not lead



to successful solutions. If your partner's flirting bothers you, if you suspect a co-worker is after your job, if you feel left out by your friends take some constructive steps rather than stew, obsess or act out.

When the Green Eyed Monster rears its head, look deeper to gain a better understanding of what is going on. Grab hold of your extreme emotions and try to look at the situation rationally. Test the reality of your perceptions by having honest conversations with the people involved. Take a close look at yourself: are some old painful experiences being triggered by the current situation? Gather all this information and place things in perspective so that you can take the steps necessary for resolution.

You have the choice to allow jealousy to consume and destroy you or you can take control of your feelings and rationally figure out what is going on and what you need to do about it. ☺

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