I'm a jealous boyfriend and I want to change

Dear Alice,

I am in a wonderful relationship with my girlfriend and we love each other very much, but I can't get over being jealous of certain little things. It is starting to get so bad that it is causing arguments between us. I try to control it, but sometimes I just can't help it. When she tells me any little thing that involves her with another guy, my first reaction is to get mad. How can I get rid of my jealousy, or change it?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Jealousy is a normal part of relationships, and a little bit of envy can even be a turn-on that makes your partner feel wanted. However, if jealousy gets out of control it can cause serious damage. In this case, your desire to rein in your jealousy is a sign that you truly care about your girlfriend and want to keep your relationship healthy.

According to psychologists, jealousy is a complex response that's part emotion (e.g., feeling inadequate), part cognition (e.g., thinking your girlfriend is cheating), and part behavior (e.g., checking her email for "evidence"). Since jealousy is such a complicated issue, it's no wonder many couples struggle with trust. Following are some ideas that may help you get a handle on your jealousy and anger.

First, it's worth taking a closer look at your feelings. Pinpointing what triggers your jealousy may help you to keep your anger in check next time an argument is brewing. For example, what, or who, makes you feel jealous? Are you afraid of losing your girlfriend to another guy? If there's any history of cheating, even in a previous relationship, maybe trust is the bigger issue. Writing or journaling may also help you sort out complicated feelings. Try making a list of all the "triggers" or events that make you feel jealous. For example, do you feel jealous when your girlfriend mentions her ex, spends time with a male friend, or talks to other guys at a party?

Next, have you tried talking about this with your girlfriend? She might be more understanding if you bring up your worries when you're both relaxed instead of during an argument. Remind your girlfriend how much you love her, and then explain exactly what's causing you to feel jealous and angry. Be careful not to make accusations, and focus on your own feelings (using "I" statements is a good start). Maybe you want to ask your girlfriend to help you keep your jealousy in check. For example, if she's going to be late coming home, can she call to check
in? Or, maybe you'd just like some extra reassurance that you're number one.

If your jealousy continues to get in the way, it might be helpful to talk with a friend, a spiritual advisor, or even a counselor. A counselor or therapist can help you learn more about your jealousy, and find ways to curb your anger and jealous behavior. Some effective techniques you can practice with a counselor include anger management, communication training, and role reversal. You can get a counseling referral from your primary health care provider.

When you're feeling green with envy, remember how much your girlfriend cares about you. With communication and trust, hopefully you two will be able to keep jealousy at bay.

Alice!

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