

## I'm a jealous boyfriend and I want to change <sup>[1]</sup>

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 typical part of relationships, and to some people 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 your relationships. 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 partner is cheating), and part behavior (e.g., checking their email for "evidence"). Since jealousy is such a complicated issue, it's no wonder many couples struggle with trust. Keep on reading for 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 partner to another person? Do you feel like you have trouble trusting her? 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? Having an understanding of what makes you feel jealous may help you figure out how to monitor your reactions when it occurs.

You mentioned that when this happens, your first response is to get angry. Have you tried reframing or pausing in that moment to think about the situation in a new way? When you reframe a situation that causes you to feel stress or jealousy, you may want to stop for a moment

to identify what's actually contributing to that emotion in the moment. Then, you can think about whether or not your reaction is a rational one and how you'd want to react instead. Once you've had a chance to reflect on your reaction, you can think about a response that is more in line with how you hope to react. For example, if she mentions a guy she works with and you find yourself getting angry, you can pause for a moment to evaluate what is triggering your anger. If your first thought is that they may be more than just coworkers, you can try to pause, ask yourself if that is a rational reaction based on the information provided and the relationship you have with your girlfriend, and then think of a new response. In this scenario, it may be to remind yourself that your girlfriend is simply telling you about something at work that happens to involve a guy coworker and that it doesn't have any bearing on the relationship that you have with your girlfriend.

This technique can also be helpful if you find your inner critic isn't being supportive of you and your relationship with your partner. Recognizing and reframing jealous self-talk may help you regulate your feelings more easily. Additionally, by feeling more comfortable with yourself, you may find that you're more confident in your relationship with your girlfriend over time.

Once you've had a chance to do a little self-reflection, you may want to talk about your feelings and reflections with your girlfriend if you haven't already. 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). It's good to listen carefully to what your girlfriend is saying and note how she's responding to what you're sharing, rather than just reacting so that the conversation goes both ways.

If your jealousy continues to get in the way, it might be helpful to talk with a friend, a family member, a spiritual advisor, or even a mental health professional. A mental health professional 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 mental health professional include anger management, communication training, and role reversal. You can learn more about connecting with a mental health professional in [How to find a therapist](#) [2].

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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