



The trouble with jealousy

Emma Heaney-Yeatts

Lead Counsellor and Extension Manager, Post-and Ante-Natal Distress Support Wellington (PND Wellington).

What is jealousy?

A somewhat unspoken concept in everyday life, but very common and real for the clients I see. This article is based mainly on practice based evidence – the wealth of learning I gather from working with my clients.

I see jealousy as the feeling associated with the fear that someone you love might be taken away from you by somebody else. This is different to (but often confused with) envy which is when you want something that somebody else has.

What does jealousy look like?

You might feel panicky and fearful of losing someone, or resentment towards the newcomer. The thoughts might be 'I need them', 'They are better than me', 'I'll be lonely'. This can lead to destructive behaviours such as possessiveness, over-doing it, or checking out.

Jealousy might come about in relation to other family members' relationships with your child, or it might be in your social circles. You might feel insecure about the relationship you have with someone and fear they might be taken away from you by a newcomer.

Why does it come about?

Based on what I see from my clients, the feelings of jealousy are often rooted in a negative and untrue belief that 'I am not as good as others', or 'I'm not OK and you are'. It's not surprising that this can create feelings of insecurity in your own self and therefore in your relationships with others.

What's the trouble with jealousy?

Feelings can be very useful indicators for change. Unwanted feelings can at times feel frighteningly permanent – but they are temporary. Feelings ebb and

flow, and morph into other feelings. If used in a constructive way, feelings can tell us that that something could be more balanced in our lives, or perhaps some new skills could be learned in helping us manage certain triggers.

Sometimes feelings such as jealousy can make us behave in ways that may contradict what we really value and want in life. For example, if we feel insecure about our relationships we may put others first to the detriment of our own well-being. Alternatively if we are fearful of rejection/loneliness we may avoid pursuing relationships altogether.

So what to do?

Instead of comparing yourself to others, focus on you – what you feel like doing and what you need in order to feel OK. Ask yourself; ‘Am I focusing on what’s important to me?’ and ‘Am I behaving in a way that’s in line with what I want and what I value?’

When uncomfortable or unwanted feelings arise, you can try observing the feelings and then put a name to them e.g. there’s ‘Miss Fearful’. This can help ‘externalise’ the feeling, which helps you to see that it is just a feeling - it’s not you. This is based on a mindfulness technique.

Another method is doing a ‘Thoughts Analysis’, which is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. This is where you examine your thoughts and feelings in a particular situation. Here is an example of a thoughts analysis (based on Sarah Edelman in her book ‘Change your thinking’):

Feeling	Jealous – fear that someone/something you value will be taken away by another person.
Thoughts	‘She is better than me, more attractive than me, more intelligent than me...’
Beliefs	‘I’m not good as good as others, not as loveable, not as worthy.’
Alternative beliefs	I am OK. I am as worthy as anyone else. I can accept I will appeal to some people and not to others, and vice versa. I will always be loved and I can handle uncomfortable situations.

Constructive behaviours

Challenge myself to situations that might feel uncomfortable. Do things that are important to me, rather than doing or not doing things out of fear.

What next?

If you would like some extra help with developing new skills to manage jealousy, or other feelings, then PND Wellington's Counselling service can help. Just see our contact details below.

A word from the author...

I am Emma Heaney-Yeatts, PND Wellington's Lead Counsellor and Extension Manager. I am a fully qualified Counsellor and I also have an honours degree in Education.

Wellington is so fortunate to have a new free/low cost counselling service for parents who are finding it difficult to adapt to pregnancy, or life with a baby. You may or may not identify with the term PND, it does not matter - our service will have something that suits you.

+ PO Box 9362 Marion Square, Wellington 6141

☎ 04 472 3135

✉ email pnd.wellington@gmail.com

🌐 www.pnd.org.nz

(If you are feeling unsafe contact emergency or Wellington's crisis team on 04 4949169)