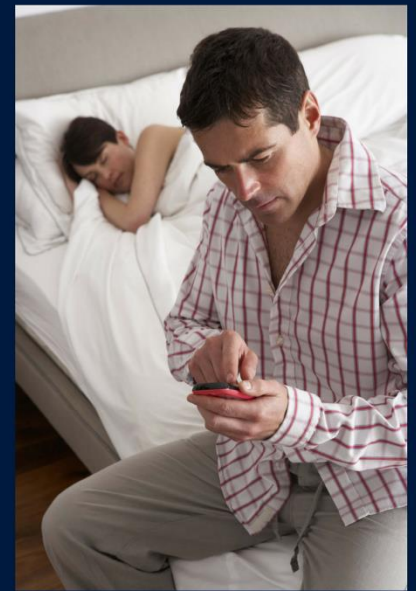
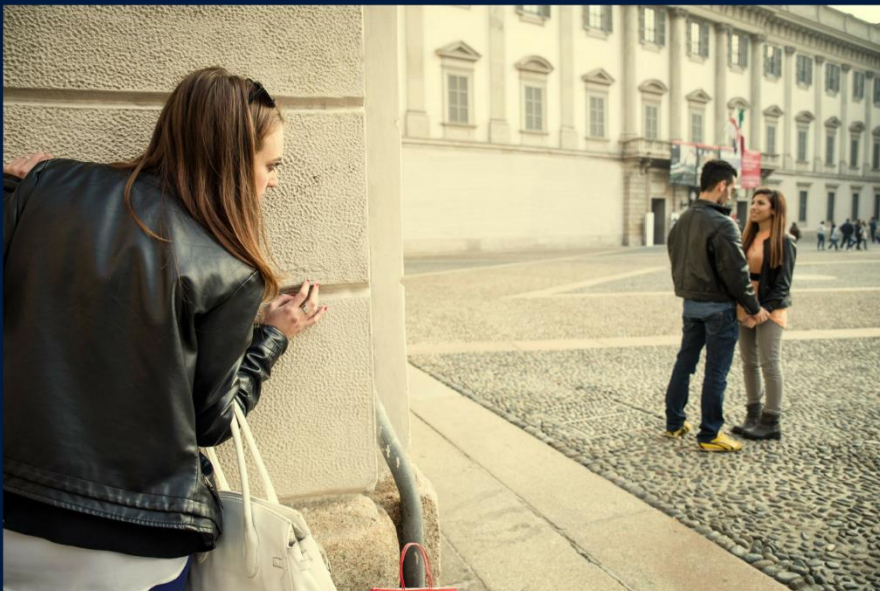


# JEALOUSY IN RELATIONSHIPS:

## How insecurity and the fear of abandonment stir anxiety



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She has over 25 years' experience in treating clients in public and private practice both in person and via the internet.

She works from Sevenoaks, Kent, UK and has helped hundreds of people across the world move past jealousy into having happy and healthy relationships.

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Helen Mia Harris is a registered therapist but offers her insights and advice for guidance only. All dates, place names, titles and events in this account are factual. However, the names have been changed in order to protect privacy and respect patient confidentiality.

# Jealousy in a relationship

How insecurity and the fear of abandonment stir anxieties



This book is to help those who find themselves experiencing one of the most disturbing, hidden, shameful and self-defeating of emotions: **jealousy**.

I say ‘hidden’ because when we are experiencing it, we often try to conceal it for fear of our significant other noticing our suspicious preoccupation with who he or she is looking at or speaking to, smiling at or kind towards, and having them tell us we are being unreasonable or irrational. We suddenly feel an unsettling ember of anxiety in the pit of our belly; we feel discarded and unwanted and certainly far “less” than the other woman or man, and left unchecked, the ember becomes a raging fire of angst.

I want to say before I begin, if you are experiencing an actual infidelity or betrayal in your relationship, then any chronic jealous or insecure feelings you may feel are **completely founded**, as broken trust shatters the emotional bond of attachment two people share, so parts of this book may not apply to you. But if you are struggling with unfounded jealousy – your own or a partner’s – read on.

## What does jealousy in a relationship really look like?



## Do any of the following apply to you?

- Feeling **overly anxious**, hyper-vigilant, threatened, oversensitive and possessive if your love interest shows attention to another.
- Showing **controlling and undermining behaviour** towards the beloved to protect yourself from the threat of loss.
- **Power games** to make your partner feel just as anxious; sometimes this may involve flirting with someone else as a payback.
- A sense of lack in oneself, **unworthiness**, and not feeling good enough for the beloved, feeling undeserving. This can often be the case if your partner is extremely attractive and people notice them when you are out together.
- Possessiveness
- **Insecurity**; a chronic fear of rejection and abandonment.
- [Love addiction, co-dependency, unrequited love and anxious attachment](#)
- A strong and **envious desire** to have what the perceived rival might have, both physically and mentally.
- **Low self-esteem**; unaware of one's own strengths and qualities.
- **Looking for validation and identity** from the beloved; lack of meaningfulness, purpose or self-fulfilment.
- Depression, sadness, shame, rage, anger, hopelessness, powerlessness.
- **Physical symptoms** may include: panic, sweating, increased pulse rate, fight and flight threat response, love withdrawal, shaking, separation anxiety fears, crying and wailing, emotional trauma.
- **Othello syndrome or morbid jealousy**: a preoccupation with the strong suspicion that your partner is being unfaithful, and acting out in a highly furious manner even with no real proof of infidelity.

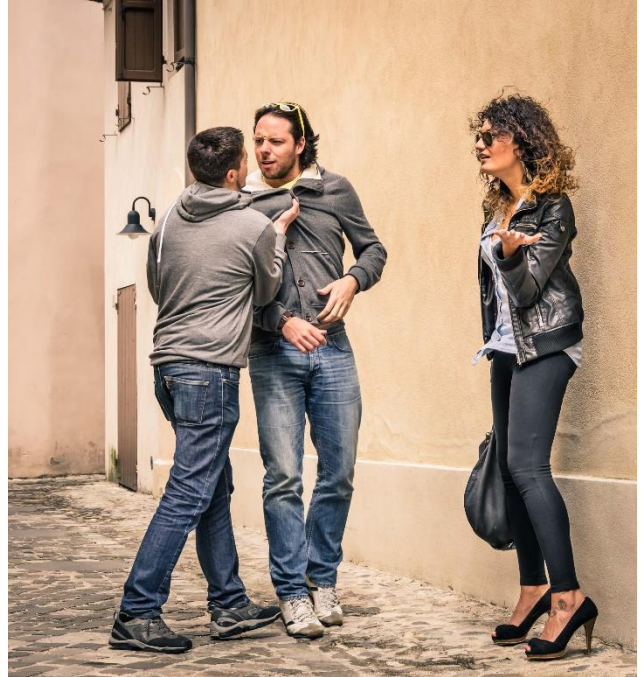
- The main sign of jealousy is **emotional dependency**, wanting to have the beloved completely and utterly for yourself and no one else, which is why the threat of loss in these cases is so overwhelming.



# What provokes feelings of jealousy?

Jealousy, insecurity and possessiveness can drive away the love and emotional connection we crave. These destructive feelings can stem from:

- **uncertainty in the relationship** – whether you feel loved and wanted by the beloved, the chosen one
- **a fear they are going to leave you** – the love interest may have expressed that they need more space and wish to take it slowly or that they feel unsure of a commitment
- the person you have chosen **not being good for you** – maybe they are naturally quite flirtatious and preoccupied with others, maybe they are there but not there, emotionally unavailable or even avoidant (The [\*Love Addiction Co-Dependency and Heartbreak Recovery Programme\*](#) explains this in more detail.)
- believing this person gives your life **certainty and security**, and experiencing terror at the thought of losing this – leaving you feeling unlovable and threatened
- **it being impossible to ‘prove’ love** – if we could just KNOW someone was fully committed to us, it would help us to feel secure, leaving no room for jealousy as we would KNOW we were safe giving ourselves to this person
- **a lack of equality** in the relationship – one feeling undermined by the other, making the love equilibrium unbalanced



- **feeling threatened** by a situation, whether real or imagined, because you value your love interest so highly, perhaps more than yourself, that you fear losing them
- **betrayal and infidelity** – your love interest showing attention to, or their preoccupation towards, someone else.





*“Jealousy, insecurity and the fear of abandonment are symptoms of love addiction and co-dependency.*

***Many will stay in an unhealthy, painful relationship truly believing they cannot leave for fear that the loss of the love interest to another will completely destroy them.***



*This lies at the very heart of this type of jealousy: the overwhelming fear of abandonment and rejection.”*

# There is help...



**The Love Addiction & Heartbreak Recovery Programme**

**Your journey from heartbreak to emotional freedom**

The Complete Online Recovery Programme  
Created by the UK's leading relationship expert, Helen Mia Harris

The Love Addiction and Heartbreak Recovery Programme I have created is based on how the symptoms of jealousy and abandonment play a huge role in the fear of losing the beloved. The programme workbook is woven around my own personal journey and in this I have many exercises, insights and strategies to help you overcome this fear of loss in an addictive relationship.

I wish I had access to this workbook when I was suffering from an addiction to love, love withdrawal, heartbreak and grief. But of course, without my own personal (and deeply painful) journey, I may never have created this workbook in the first place, which really is the culmination of over two decades of helping others.

# Abandonment and the fear of loss

In order to move past jealousy we need to understand what is causing it, what's at the root of these debilitating, overwhelming feelings. How is it that jealousy has the power to threaten our very core?

No matter what, it is always about FEAR: fear of loss, fear of losing him or her to someone else, fear of rejection, of being left, fear of not being good enough, worthy enough, beautiful enough, slim enough or adequate enough in some other way.

The moment we feel the **prick of jealousy** or the sting of insecurity, when we notice **the gaze of our love interest** resting on someone else, in that split second we give away all our power, rendering ourselves less than the person he or she is looking at, and most of all fearing we have 'lost' them to another.



Having worked as a love addiction and co-dependency specialist, relationship therapist, and couples' counsellor for over 25 years, I've seen many people, both men and women, experience the pain and torment that occurs when a person perceives their partner as being distant, far away and preoccupied. This sense of not feeling safe or emotionally secure in the relationship can trigger a strong fear of rejection and abandonment. This in turn can cause many to feel quite powerless, and unfortunately lead them to try to hold tighter to the beloved for fear of losing them.

# Jealousy: whether or not you feel loved, wanted and secure

For some I have seen who are experiencing relationship jealousy, whether or not they feel loved and wanted is completely and fundamentally aligned with their own worthiness and security in their relationship.

Approval from a loved one can make them extremely happy, ecstatic even, whilst disapproval can devastate them, especially if the love interest pays attention to anyone else.

How their partner sees them is paramount to their happiness, indeed to their survival. Inferiority plays a major part of jealousy: many think of themselves as less of a person without the love and security of the love interest.



If you had a **barometer** that could measure exactly how much the other loved you, you would feel safe, and you wouldn't fear losing them as you would KNOW you were loved.

If they paid attention to someone else and you saw them **conversing in a playful way**, you would not be triggered with anxious suspicious thoughts as you would know **you were the chosen one**, that he or she wants to be with you.

**You would be free of this jealousy infliction, free of anxiety and fear, no longer insecure, fragile and frightened.**

Unfortunately, there is no such barometer to hold up to someone's heart and measure their love; love is an intangible feeling, it's like mercury – you can try to hold it in your fingers tightly but it slides through, you're unable to grasp it.

**You only have your instinct, your intuition to gauge whether you feel loved.**

We might judge it by how many texts we get in a day, the tone of a text, how much our beloved wants to spend time with us. We look for their emotional cues, words, actions and responses to verify whether we are emotionally connected or not.

If we are completely dependent on the beloved's responses but believe we are not loved, we can instantly feel unlovable, unworthy and an unsettling agitation begins: "I am not good enough and certainly not secure, nor safe with him or her."

Our jealousy finds itself in fertile ground and begins to flourish.

So far this has all been about whether **we** are feeling loved; what the beloved is giving to **us**, trying to read their emotional cues, their responses, waiting for their texts, phone calls, emails etc.

Now I'm going to suggest we turn these thoughts and behaviours around and do something quite the opposite in the way we love.

**Instead of thinking what are we getting from this relationship, what are we receiving, let's change our position to ask what we can give to this relationship.**

How can we be generous with our love, what could we do to express to him or her our appreciation?



And more than this: how can we concentrate on our **own** life and fulfilment, and validate **ourselves** rather than bind our identities to the relationship?

## Mona's Story

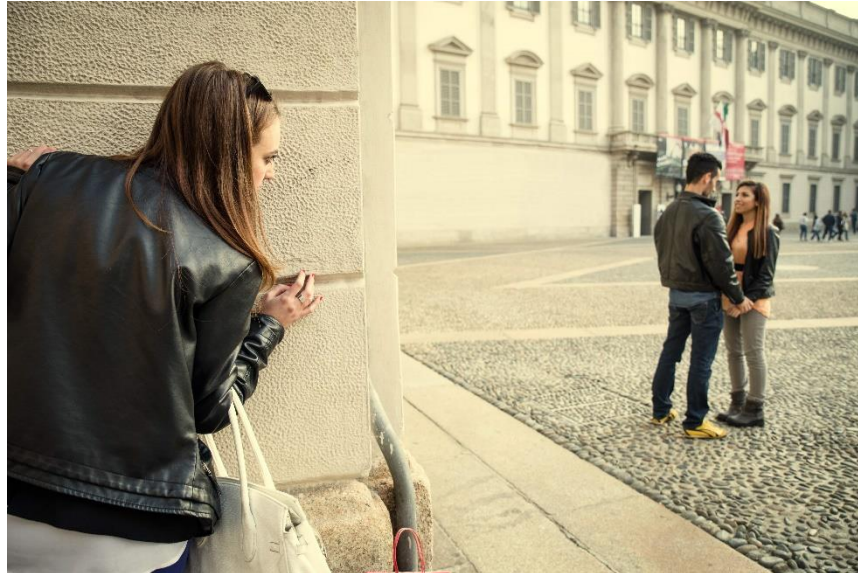
Last year, Mona\* came to see me in my therapy practice, having purchased the *Love Addiction, Co-Dependency and Heartbreak Recovery Programme*.



Mona was experiencing the most debilitating bouts of extreme jealousy. She had been living with her partner Peter for 13 months and if he was even 10 minutes late from work, she truly believed he was having an affair. Mona would search through his phone, iPad and computer desperately searching for evidence. If they went out together she would be scanning his every move, watching the direction of his gaze, listening intently to the way he spoke to the waitresses.

One day, the day that brought her into therapy, Peter bumped in to some work colleagues whilst they were in a wine bar. He approached their table briefly and spoke to the four of them, two men and two women. One of the women, in her early thirties, was very attractive, with long blonde hair, green eyes and much prettier than Mona herself, she believed. Whilst the conversation was going on, she became fixated on this woman. She began to have strong beliefs that Peter was having an affair with this woman, and imagined them being intimate together. These overwhelming thoughts felt very real and very powerful to Mona, she felt disorientated and panicky. In a split second she had stood up, walked over to their table and thrown her drink over the woman, claiming she knew about their affair and had done for several months. Mona and Peter split up that day. He didn't try to justify himself this time; Peter simply felt he couldn't go on with the daily interrogations and accusations.

Now, this is an extreme story of jealousy but it illustrates what happens when inadequacy and unworthiness takes precedence over all other thoughts. Her



behaviour clearly puts the other woman above herself. “She is prettier than me, more beautiful, I am nothing in comparison with her, Peter would prefer her over me” and so on. This is a key symptom of jealousy: putting oneself beneath one’s partner and comparing oneself with others who could be considered ‘rivals’.

It is important to say here that Peter was emotionally available, and not disconnected or distant from Mona. She told me Peter tried to make her feel both secure and wanted but she just couldn’t believe him. This was clearly to do with Mona’s sense of inadequacy and unworthiness; she really believed she wasn’t good enough for him. She explained that he ran his own business in architectural design and people held him in high esteem at work, whereas she felt she was “just a primary school teacher, nothing as interesting as Peter”. This putting of oneself ‘below’ the other is common in irrational jealousy. (It’s important to note that for some, jealousy might be completely founded as the significant other may well be flirtatious with others and emotionally unavailable.) As long as we doubt ourselves, of course we are going to fear losing the beloved; are we worthy enough for them to stay?



## How did I help Mona in therapy, and what did she take away from our sessions?

We looked at ways she could:

- let go of the debilitating ideas she had, such as “If he loves me then I am a worthy person and if he fails to love me I am nothing, helpless, and definitely unlovable.”
- make real choices about whether to stay in a relationship in which she felt insecure and undermined, doubting her looks and work aspirations, or whether to leave the relationship, freeing herself from all the anxiety, suspicion and suffering.
- see that happiness is far stronger than the fear of losing a relationship that rendered her powerless and jealous.
- trust that if she "knows" she is loved and wanted, to believe in this love rather than sabotage what is good, joyful and positive.
- help her to understand what "triggers" her rejection and rage if Peter talked to someone in passing.
- understand more fully her "instant split second reaction" to a threatening event and her highly vigilant behaviour if she believed another person was a threat.
- respond in a more mindful and rational way using CBT to understand her core reactions, behaviours and responses to anxious distressing events.
- consider whether or not it was emotionally healthy to stay in a relationship that was making her lose her own identity and self-worth.
- realise that her self-deprecating thoughts and feelings were transforming imagined scenarios into very real dramas in her relationship with Peter.
- understand the difference between loving someone and being afraid of losing them, which is very much at the **core** of jealous feelings.

- explore what it might feel like to love with generosity, to be more preoccupied with risking vulnerability and loving them with appreciation rather than “watching” them with suspicion and fearing loss.
- sensitively explore issues around separation anxiety and abandonment in early childhood.
- understand how she masked her feelings and what she really felt about herself when she experienced the fire of jealousy; feeling unlovable, shameful, embarrassment, guilt, weakness, powerless and worthless.
- explore what ‘trust’ meant to her; if she had felt trust with Peter, would she have felt safe enough to love completely, without anxiety, threat, and fear of loss?

We also explored:

- her experience of being bullied at school (age 12 to 14)
- adolescent crushes between the age of 11 to 14 often experiencing chronic rejection and worthlessness at such a tender age
- sibling rivalry and how she had three younger siblings who she felt received more maternal love than she did.
- that her Father worked away for much of the time so wasn't present in her early years

**\* Mona’s story told with client’s consent. Names and personal details have been changed.**

## Jealousy Video

I’ve recorded a video about jealousy. Please click on [this link](#) to access it.

# I'm in a relationship with someone who is insecure and jealous what should I do?

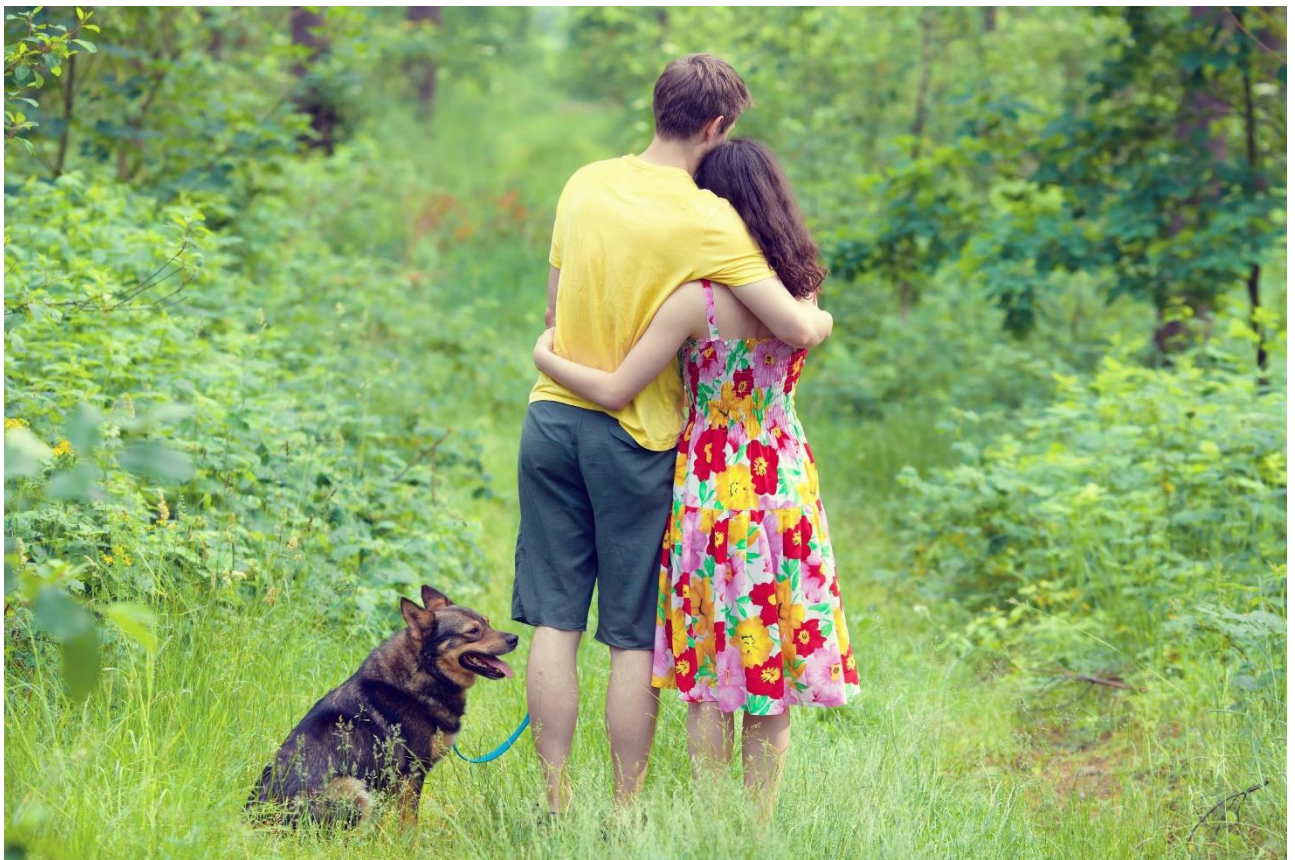
- **Reassure them that you are emotionally present**, show them this by being extra attentive and affectionate.
- **Be more emotionally available and responsive**, show this by doing something you know they will appreciate.
- **Share time speaking about your anxieties** and how their jealousy might be affecting you; be sure to follow this up with warmth and tenderness so they know you are doing the best you can.



- If there has been a real cause for insecurity and jealousy, **be as transparent as possible in the way you communicate together.**
- **Build daily on your emotional attachment bond** so you become closer and more emotionally connected.

- Go to see a couples' counsellor.

Remember, being jealous – or with someone who is jealous – does not have to mean the end of a relationship, but if you want to stay together it does mean being more emotionally available and understanding, which will often reduce the symptoms of the fear of abandonment and insecurity.



# 9 Tips to Help You Break Free from Jealousy

## 1. Do something you are passionate about.

Choose something that gives your life meaning and purpose. If the jealousy and fear of abandonment you feel is caused by being with your love interest and s/he is not emotionally available and responsive with you, this does not mean you are unlovable, but it might mean you need to consider if the relationship is good for you.



2. **Try not to seek approval and validation from others.** Remember, **YOU** are your priority right now. Self-validation is the only thing that matters.

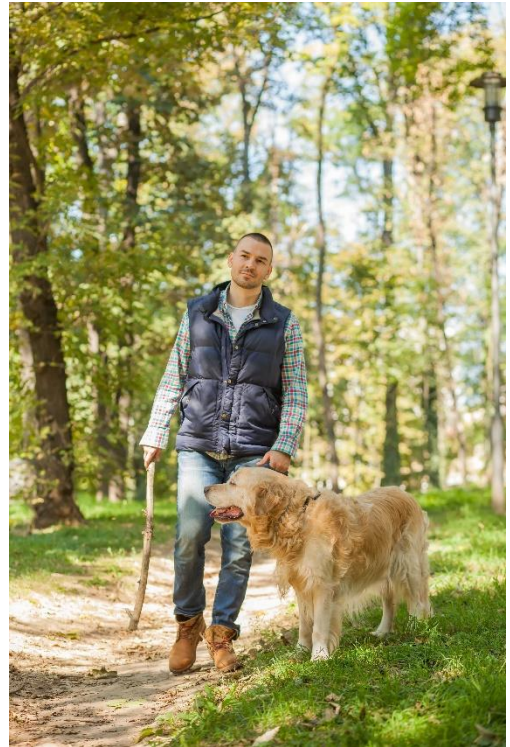
## 3. Don't abandon your *'self'* in the relationship.

This way you can finally find autonomy and emotional self-reliance and love without losing yourself.



**4. Be gentle with yourself, one day at a time.**

Mindfully focus on self-care and self-generosity. You need to concentrate on becoming YOU once again, as this is the only way you will ever break free from feeling insecure and jealous.



5. **Activities and hobbies** like yoga, Pilates, walking, running, swimming, and general forms of exercise are crucial. Eating good healthy food that's nutritious for your body and soul is vital too, as are things like meditation, massage, homeopathy, alternative therapies.



6. **Remember it's OK to be alone if you feel your love interest is not fully committed to you.** If you've been stuck in a destructive relationship cycle, it's BETTER to be alone for a while. And don't worry, you *will* survive the pain of romantic love withdrawal, but **do seek professional help** if the pain is enduring or unbearable.

7. **Know that you CAN survive without the person who may be causing you to feel insecure.** Love withdrawal can feel as if a part of your body is missing, but you can survive it. **DO seek professional help with a registered therapist or GP if you are experiencing withdrawal symptoms or separation anxiety due to feelings of abandonment and jealousy.**
8. **Each day give yourself at least three things to do that will reflect your new-found independence.** Doing this will strengthen your ability to take care of yourself in a soothing way and will build emotional self-reliance.



9. **Make choices that impact the way you live in a POSITIVE way.** Don't allow yourself to play the role of victim. Instead, make decisions to reflect your strength as a person so you live wholeheartedly, free of emotional pain.

# EXERCISE



Here is a really helpful exercise to use at any time when experiencing these anxious feelings of jealousy and fear of loss. You will need pen and paper.

1. Imagine the love you feel is in the palm of your hand; feel it with generosity and let it be free; it is like a resting place, a quiet, freeing, resting place, you are safe now.
2. Imagine a scenario that might be true in the here and now, in real life. You are carefully watching your partner from a distance, exactly like you do when feeling jealous. Picture where you are, what you are wearing and what is it you are looking at, and ask yourself:
  - What do you fear?
  - What do you see and what do you feel?
  - What are you looking at and what is happening in your body?



Do this quietly and mindfully; observe what you feel entirely, explain to yourself what you feel right now. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed. Write down everything you see and feel.

3. Now imagine you are looking through a camera lens; observe objectively what is happening without being in the picture yourself. Look at what you see as if you are one step removed. Put aside your fears and anxiety, and gently observe what you see through the camera lens.



Write everything down and list what you are now experiencing.

The object of this exercise is to see if it can give you some distance and perspective of what you most fear. What are you seeing and feeling when you have this distance? Hopefully you can see there is nothing to fear and that you can just let it go.

4. Now write down an affirmation that makes you feel more settled and at ease, for example: "I am safe in myself, and even though he or she is speaking to someone, I am still lovable." Make sure the affirmation has nothing but positive words.
5. Let that person go with generosity and keep looking through the lens to analyse and objectify your anxious thoughts.

Now write five affirmations about your love interest. What do you admire about them? What qualities are you attracted to in your love interest and what similar qualities do you have in yourself?

6. Write a short letter describing this experience to them but don't send it.
7. Consider how real or true is it that your love interest may be attracted to someone else? How real or true is it that the person he or she is talking to has got something YOU haven't got?
8. Now this is a most important one. In order to feel safe in a relationship we have to KNOW we are strong enough live without the beloved.

Imagine five positive ways you will thrive without the other person.

9. Now as you look through the camera lens notice how different you feel. Has your anxiety and fear of loss lessened? Do you feel less agitated? Do you feel stronger and more equal to your partner?
10. Take some deep breaths and, whatever might be happening, try to exude warmth as if all your fears have melted...melted...melted....

**“You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them.” — Maya Angelou**

I do hope you now feel calmer, more secure, more aware of your self-worth, and more empowered. If you feel you would benefit from exploring any of these issues further, my [Love Addiction Co-Dependency and Heartbreak Recovery Programme](#) could be for you.

“Helen, you and your life changing programme have really helped me find myself again. Literally! I was needy, insecure, emotional, unsociable and un-trusting, looking for any word or signs that would send me into a blind rage of jealousy and insecurity. After doing your recovery programme I feel like I have been on a long journey of self-discovery, I can’t thank you enough for giving me my life back.”

Susanna

With warmest wishes



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