

LIVE

# Understand jealousy before 'conquering' it

**QUESTION:**

My boyfriend and I are getting back together after a separation he initiated because he was tired of our disagreements triggered by my jealousy.

I want to stop feeling jealous when we're together, but I don't seem to be able to control myself. Why do people get jealous?

What can I do about it?

**Answer:**  
Whenever we try to conquer an emotion it's helpful first of all to



understand more about what it is, because then it can

begin to lose its power.

Most often, experiences of jealousy involve a fear of loss, suspicion or anger about a real or imagined betrayal, low self-esteem and sadness over loss, uncertainty and loneliness, fear of losing an important person to someone else, and distrust.

Jealousy also includes an imagined complex narrative or story about the betrayal that may or may not reflect reality. The story justifies the feelings and perpetuates them. The pattern of

reasoning and perceptions on which the story is based is shaped by the cultural context, and can invoke intense, sometimes irrational passion and behaviour.

You have taken a first important step in bringing your jealousy under your control. You are looking at yourself, rather than blaming and finding fault with him.

So let's look further. When you explore your own feelings and behaviour calmly, honestly, what do you find? Do you yourself experience

attraction and temptation? What do you do with it?

Are there parts of yourself you don't trust? For example, behaviour that takes you by surprise? How positive are your feelings about yourself? Are you staying active and spending time with friends, or are you relying solely on your relationship for strong self-esteem?

So much of how we view others and interact with them is a reflection of how we see ourselves. And much of how we see in ourselves

can be hidden. We can be completely unaware of both positive and negative aspects of ourselves that are influencing us and shaping our perceptions, beliefs and feelings.

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## Group provides strength in difficult times

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when she hit 13.

"She'd been a really easygoing girl, she didn't have an easy time in school but she was always easy at home to deal with and all of a sudden she became quite defiant," says Thorpe, noting the family doctor said it was normal teenager stuff.

After being transferred from Prince of Wales secondary to an alternative school, which is where Thorpe now believes her daughter got mixed up with some hardcore kids, Alexandra's grades continued to plummet and by Grade 12 her mom decided to take her to a new doctor.

"He basically diagnosed her right off the top with (attention deficit disorder), she was very, very strongly ADD. He was blown away that we had not had a diagnosis and very concerned that she may be using substances to sort of self-medicate," says Thorpe.

The doctor prescribed Alexandra with medication to help her

focus, and she got a job at a local grocery store. To her parents, things seemed to have improved.

"She was home a lot, which we were happy about. She didn't see a lot of her friends at that point," says Thorpe.

"We lived in a house that had a (huge) hedge in front of it and she would take the dog for a walk every night. What we didn't know was that she'd take the dog for a walk and there would be the dealer outside, but we couldn't see."

It wasn't until Thorpe received her credit card bills after Christmas of 2000 that she realized what was going on.

"She'd emptied all of our accounts. She'd racked up our Visas to the max, she'd been able to forge cheques and she'd gotten through everything."

When the Thorpes confronted their daughter, she admitted she was addicted to heroin and owed her dealer \$25,000 by a certain date, or he was threatening to kill her family.

As far as Thorpe knows, her daughter first tried heroin at a high school party along with two of her best friends. All three of them became addicts and two of them, including Alexandra, are now dead.

"She just couldn't believe that feeling. She didn't think she was addicted, she just, every so often, would want that feeling again," says Thorpe.

After stints at a couple of treatment centres, one suicide attempt and repeated relapses, Alexandra finally made a decision.

"She said 'I clearly

need to find my bottom and I need to move downtown and live downtown, then I'll know my bottom then I'll really be committed to getting better,'" recalls Thorpe.

Although the family begged her to reconsider, Alexandra moved out on Feb. 18, 2002, her 21st birthday.

She stayed at a couple of shelters in the Downtown Eastside and her parents and grandmother went looking for her often. Most of the time they didn't find her but occasionally they tracked her down.

Up until a few weeks before her death, Thorpe says her daughter had only smoked heroin, which makes it very hard to overdose. But on their last visit together she noticed a needle mark and confronted Alexandra.

"I just totally freaked out and she said 'I know, I know! But I'm never going to do it again.'"

In July, the family got a visit from the police who informed them that Alexandra was on life support at St. Paul's Hospital. She had overdosed in a downtown hotel room.

"She was on life support for a week in the ICU at St. Paul's and they ended up having to turn her off," says Thorpe, explaining the doctors, thankfully, were the ones who made the decision to pull the plug.

"In fact she lived for 24 hours after they turned her off and we were able to be with her so it was nice."

Thorpe, whose husband passed away last year, has continued to find strength in From Grief to Action.

"The parents support group really got me through a lot of that just knowing that there are lovely, wonderful people that are in the same boat," she says.

Locht, president of FGTA, also has a close family member who is addicted to drugs. She says addiction is a disease for which there aren't any easy cures or directions on what to do.

"It's traumatic to the people who develop the disease and

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