Part 1: Understanding Your Jealousy

Chapter One: Is an open relationship right for you?

This first chapter doesn’t necessarily focus on jealousy itself, but rather starting down the path of open relationships and seeing if this is even a good idea for you. Facing and working on your jealousy can be a very difficult, painful, and stressful thing to do. If you decide to open up your relationship, it is absolutely essential to commit to this work. Even if you decide to be monogamous, the work might be worth it.

While monogamy is assumed for many people, polyamory is also not something that is even considered by most of these people. Many people assume that monogamy is the default or even only option. It’s time to look at your options and decide what path you are most comfortable following. Even if you’re already in a polyamorous relationship, it can be helpful to go over these exercises to figure out why polyamory works for you.

This is a judgement-free chapter (and book!); there are no right or wrong answers, and neither polyamory or monogamy are better or worse than the other. A lot of these exercises can be done alone, but it can also be helpful to compare with your partner(s).

Exercise 1: Your Relationship Role Models
You may not have answers to all of these questions, but that’s fine. The point here is to pin down what you view as healthy, and what is important in a relationship to you.

Exercise 1: Discussion/Ask Yourself
- What do you think is the healthiest relationship you have seen in person?
- What do you think are key relationship habits and skills for a healthy relationship?
- What is the most important skill to you?
- What is the skill you think you need to work on the most?
- Can you think of any fictional relationships that display healthy relationship habits?

Exercise 2: Clarify Your Relationship Orientation
What works best for you?

Relationship orientations can work in the same way that sexual orientations work, for the most part. While the Kinsey scale has its problems, it can serve as a good guide for relationship orientation. On one side are people that can only be happy in monogamous relationships - for these people, even mono/poly relationships are probably a bad idea. In the middle are the people that can be happy in either a monogamous or polyamorous relationship, but may lean towards one or the other. And on the other side are the people that can only be happy in polyamorous relationships. This exercise can help you understand where you fall on this spectrum.
Answer these questions as honestly as you can. This will help you figure out what benefits of both monogamous and polyamorous relationships are helpful for you.

Exercise 2: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you believe relationship orientation exists on a spectrum? Why or why not?
- Share, if you’d like, what orientation the exercise shows that you may be. Does it surprise you? Why do you think that is?
- Does your relationship history reflect your relationship orientation?
- If you have a partner (or partners), do they share your relationship orientation?
Chapter Two: Identifying and Grieving Your Losses in an Open Relationship

Many people that open their relationship look for all the positives and benefits that you can gain. As fulfilling as polyamorous relationships can be, there are still losses that you can experience. In this chapter, we go over the process of identifying and grieving these losses.

Exercise 3: Your Cost-Benefit Analysis
What are you gaining and losing?

Even if you have discovered you are on the side of the orientation spectrum that is completely polyamorous, you have likely been in monogamous relationships in the past. Just like there are positives in polyamorous relationships that can’t be found in monogamy, there are positives of monogamous relationships that can’t be had in polyamorous relationships. You may need to identify these and accept the loss of them in your life or relationships.

Have you been in both monogamous and polyamorous relationships? If so, these questions may be easier for you. However, if not, it’s still possible to answer all of these questions. Take your time to figure out what is important to you, and what you feel the loss and gain of the most.

Exercise 3: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What are the biggest costs of monogamy to you?
- What are the biggest rewards of monogamy to you?
- What are the biggest costs of polyamory to you?
- What are the biggest rewards of polyamory to you?
- Are there any pros or cons to either monogamy or polyamory that you feel that you don’t see listed?
Chapter Three: Understanding Your Jealousy

Jealousy is a complex mix of multiple emotions. It can take place in many different situations: At work, with siblings, with romantic partners, and more. It mostly comes down to a fear of loss or change.

Envy is a close cousin of jealousy, but is not the same. Envy is when you want what someone else has; when you envy someone, you may want their job, their car, their lawnmower… or their partner. Whatever it is, they have it and you want it. Jealousy, on the other hand, is when you’re worried someone wants what you have. You’re afraid that they want your job, your car, your lawnmower, or your partner, and that they will take it from you.

Exercise 4: Jealousy Through the Lifespan

How have you handled jealousy?

Everyone has dealt with jealousy sometime in the past. You may have been jealous of a sibling who has taken parental attention from you, or of a coworker that may steal a promotion out from under you. It is extremely common to feel jealous and threatened in relationships when you perceive a person as more attractive or appealing than you in some way, and worried they will “steal” your partner from you. How have you handled it in the past?

Exercise 4: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- How have you handled jealousy in the past in non-romantic relationships?
- How have you handled jealousy in past romantic relationships?
- What, if anything, do you wish you did differently, or will do differently in the future?
Chapter Four: What Triggers your Jealousy?

You’ve defined what jealousy means to you, but do you know what triggers that feeling? There are small and big triggers, there are subtle and blatant triggers. Some may be from your past, and some may be from a gut feeling that something is wrong. No matter what the trigger is, you have to find it in order to work on the jealousy that has been triggered.

Exercise 5: Guided Imagery exercise to visualize your jealousy triggers

This exercise takes place mostly in your imagination. You will be asked to go through various steps in a situation you think or know makes you feel jealousy, but instead of finding the whole situation triggering, you’re going to narrow down your focus to the exact moment that sets it off. It is from here that we can build up the tools to help deal with this jealousy.

It is worth noting that the example solutions given in this exercise may be problematic in real world scenarios. In the examples, rules are put into place to curb the jealousy reaction. As you’ll see in future exercises, rules like this only treat the symptom, not the underlying jealousy trigger. There will always be something else that will trigger the jealousy, and you can’t expect to continue to make up rules to give in to the reaction.

If you do introduce rules like that, realize that they are only a temporary fix to what could be a permanent problem if work and reflection is not done. Those rules are like taking cold medicine when you’re feeling sick; they can help mask the symptoms, but only so much. Your body needs to do the healing itself - you can’t take DayQuil forever! Similarly, you have to work on and heal your jealousy and insecurities, because these rules won’t protect you forever.

Exercise 5: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What is a trigger that you didn’t expect?
- What didn’t trigger you that you thought might?
- What are the feelings that you felt when the jealousy was triggered? Use the feeling wheel on the next page if you are having difficulty coming up with words for your feelings.
- What are some alternatives to creating rules to contain jealousy?

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Chapter Five: Freud’s Jealousy Nightmare Scenario

While Freud had some wacky ideas, he also brought us many good ideas and foundations to build off of. Specifically, one of those things is the way he believed jealousy is processed. According to him, there are four stages of jealousy: Grief, realization, enmity, and anger. The book goes into more details on what these four stages mean.

Exercise 6: Learn Something from Sigmund Freud

What it comes down to is that jealousy taps into our worst fears and insecurities. We will learn more about our jealousy by studying these four stages. You will decide what stage of jealousy you feel affects you the most, and read about what you can do to help with the components that affect you the most.

Exercise 6: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What component of jealousy feels the worst to you?
- Were you surprised to find out what stage of jealousy affects you the most?
- What do you think you can do to start working on that component of jealousy?
Chapter Six: Is Your Jealousy Rational?

While jealousy absolutely can be rational, in many cases it is irrational or an overreaction. Your emotions and feelings are always valid, but you have to decide what actions to take, and this can be affected by the realization of whether or not your jealousy is currently rational.

Exercise 7: Your Jealousy Filter

In this exercise you will be screening your jealousy for hints and clues of what the basis of your jealousy is. There are four questions to answer, and your jealousy generally has to have elements of each in order to be considered rational. Be as honest as possible with yourself when answering these questions; is it the jealousy answering, or your rational self?

Exercise 7: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you have a source of jealousy that you have discovered to be irrational? Why do you feel that it is irrational?
- Do you have a source of jealousy that you have discovered to be rational? Why do you feel that it is rational?
- Were you unsure whether a source of jealousy was rational or irrational? What do you think you can do to help you figure it out?
- Which of the four questions do you believe is most important for you in figuring out whether your jealousy is rational?


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Part Two: Effective Interventions for Jealousy

Part two is more about situations where you are already feeling jealousy. In this workshop we will practice them in theoretical situations so that you can better use them in the future when you are actively feeling jealousy.

Chapter Seven: Your Jealousy Pie Chart

“Jealousy” is a word that encompasses many, many emotions and feelings. Just saying that you’re jealous doesn’t really describe what’s going on. In this chapter, we’re going to cover exactly what your jealousy involves and how you’re actually reacting when you’re jealous.

Exercise 8: What are you actually feeling, thinking, and experiencing when you are jealous?

As we saw in Exercise 5 on the feeling wheel, there are many words to describe emotions you may be having, including emotions when you’re feeling jealous. Not only that, but there are physical symptoms as well. Go over this exercise with a moment where you felt jealousy in mind, and pay close attention to the mental and physical feelings that you had in that moment.

Also consider that jealousy may have been triggered by the present moment, but the real reason for the jealousy may lie in the past. For example, you may have been cheated on, or humiliated in some way in the past.

Exercise 8: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What are the strongest emotions you feel that you associate with jealousy?
- Look again at the feeling wheel from Exercise 5 - are there any feelings or emotions that you think this exercise didn’t cover?
- What physical sensations have you felt when overcome with jealousy? Were these easier or harder to deal with than the emotions?

Exercise 9:

Fear, anger, and sadness - these are the emotions most strongly associated with jealousy. You will want to figure out which are the strongest for you. It can be helpful to go over the pie chart twice to check that the emotional percentages are accurate for you.

Exercise 9: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Did you have to revisit the pie chart if the emotions didn’t add up to 100%? Why?
- What was the strongest emotion for you? Why do you think that is?
- Does your partner have a different strongest emotion? Why do you think that is?

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Chapter Eight: How to manage the fear, anger, & sadness of jealousy

So, now you know what jealousy is for you. What do you do about it? There are multiple coping strategies you can learn that will help you with jealousy in all areas of your life, not just romantically. You’ll want to start with the strongest emotion and work from there.

Exercise 10: Fear

Fear is a strong motivator for jealousy. It can be fear of abandonment, loss, betrayal, inadequacy, or deprivation.

Exercise 10: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you feel as though your biggest fear will actually come true? Do you have a plan to handle this fear?
- Do you need support in handling this fear? Is this from your partners, friends, or family? What are the questions you need to ask in order to get this support?
- If your fear is unlikely, how will you manage reminding yourself of this?
- If your fear is likely, how will you handle it if it comes to pass?

Exercise 11: Anger

Anger can point in many different directions when it comes to jealousy. You could be angry at your partner, your metamour, a situation, or even yourself.

Exercise 11: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Is your reaction triggered by the current events or something in your past?
- What or who is your anger directed at? Is that same person or thing the actual source of the trigger?
- What support do you need in handling or letting go of this anger?

Exercise 12: Sadness

Sadness and mourning are powerful emotions, and can be a strong reaction. Like the other jealousy triggers, sadness does not have to be rational to exist. Sadness often comes from a sense of loss.

Exercise 12: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Is your sadness triggered by the current events or something in your past?
- What are you mourning with your sadness? Is it something that’s directly influenced by the current event?
- What support do you need in handling this sadness? Who do you need this support from?


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Chapter Nine: Jealousy, envy and coveting

Though many people conflate jealousy, envy, and coveting, these are three distinct feelings, and it’s helpful to remember the difference.

Jealousy is when you’re worried that someone else wants what you have. You’re worried, for example, that someone else wants your partner, and could take them from you.

Envy is what happens when you see someone else with something you really want, and you want to have what they have or are experiencing. Envy is when, for example, you want to be with someone else’s partner.

Coveting is a close cousin to envy, but it is separate. Specifically, coveting requires that not only do you want what someone else has, but you want to take it away from them as well. This is when, for instance, you want to take someone else’s partner monogamously.

It is far easier, though still difficult, to get a handle on your emotions when you know whether you’re facing jealousy, envy, or covetousness.

Exercise 13: Separating envy from jealousy

Remember the differences between envy and jealousy. Think about a situation that sparks jealousy or envy; are you afraid that someone else wants what you have, or do you want what someone else has?

Exercise 13: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Which do you tend to feel more strongly - envy or jealousy? Why do you think that is?
- Does clarifying the difference between envy and jealousy make it easier to tackle the emotions? Why or why not?
- Do your feelings focus more around a person, an event, an activity, or something else? Why do you think that is?
Chapter Ten: Two approaches for managing jealousy: the engineering model and the phobia model

The engineering model attempts to identify what triggers your jealousy, and then you try to “engineer” the triggers out of your life, by creating rules or boundaries around the triggers; if you have a fear of snakes, then you may decide to avoid reptile exhibits at the zoo. The phobia model uses slow exposure to your phobias in order to get used to and thus disempower the triggers; if you have a fear of snakes, you may work with a trusted individual to slowly introduce snakes into your life (starting with a picture, then seeing them across a room, etc.) until you are no longer afraid. Many people use a combination of both.

Exercise 14: Will the engineering approach or the phobia model work best for you? (and using the engineering approach)

Neither approach is right or wrong, only what is right or wrong for you. Either way, be sure to keep in mind your partner’s consent, boundaries, and autonomy in mind while you use either method. This may be trickier to do when using the engineering approach, so keep that in mind.

Exercise 14: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Which model do you think works best for you? Why?
- Do you think you will have to deal with different triggers in different ways? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that your decision respects your partner’s consent, boundaries, and autonomy? Does your partner feel the same way?

Exercise 15: Using the phobia model for managing jealousy

It is important to remember that jealousy is both perfectly normal and yet usually irrational, like many common phobias. Because of this, it is entirely possible to help your jealousy using the same model as therapists can use to help with phobias.

Exercise 15: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- How exaggerated do you feel your jealousy response is? Why do you think that is?
- What do you think would be the first step in facing your jealousy?
- What sorts of temporary agreements would help you take that first step?


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Chapter Eleven: Unlearning the core beliefs that generate jealousy

Every emotional response we have is learned behavior, often learned from our parents when we were young, and our peers, media, teachers, and everyone around us as we grew up. It can be very hard to unlearn these responses, and jealousy is especially hard to do so with.

Exercise 16: Core Belief #1

“If my partner really loved me, they wouldn’t have any desire for a sexual relationship with anyone else.” This belief blames your partner for not loving you enough.

Exercise 16: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you feel as though this core belief is true? Why or why not?
- Where did you learn this belief, and from whom?
- Has this belief changed over time for you? In what ways?

Exercise 17: Core Belief #2

“If my partner were happy with me, and if I were a good partner/spouse/lover, my partner would be so satisfied that they wouldn’t want to get involved with anyone else.” This belief depends on the thought that the desire for someone else means they have decreased desire for you.

Exercise 17: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you feel as though this core belief is true? Why or why not?
- If you are happy with your partner, does that mean you wouldn’t want to be involved (emotionally or physically) with anyone else? Does that include emotional intimacy such as with friends?
- Where did you learn this belief, and from whom?
- Has this belief changed over time for you? In what ways?

Exercise 18: Core Belief #3

“It’s just not possible to love more than one person at the same time.” This belief relies on the concept that love is limited, like time, money, and food.

Exercise 18: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you feel as though this core belief is true? Why or why not?
- Do you think this belief holds true for parents and their children? Children and their parents? Other family members? Best friends?
- Where did you learn this belief, and from whom?
- Has this belief changed over time for you? In what ways?


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Chapter Twelve: What if your partner is jealous?

It can be even harder to deal with a partner’s jealousy than your own. You’re not in control of the situation or their feelings. You have to simply offer support as they work through their jealousy.

Exercise 19: Technique for helping a jealous partner

Displaying empathy and listening are two of the most important things you can do when helping a jealous partner process. When your partner is processing and talking about it with you, remember that this is not an argument, but a discussion. Do your best not to be reactive, and take what your partner says as an expression of their feelings, not an attack on your or another relationship.

Remember that though you or your actions may have triggered jealousy, it's not always personal. It may be something from your partner’s past, for instance. Make sure to ask your partner where they think the jealousy is coming from, but be patient! It can take time to figure these things out.

Even if you don’t feel much jealousy yourself, it can be important to understand it so that you can help your partner(s) in these situations.

Exercise 19: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Have you been on this side of jealousy? How did it feel for you?
- How do you let your partner know that it’s okay to have and express their feelings?
- What kind of agreements do you think you’d be willing to make to help your partner process their jealousy?
Chapter Thirteen: The three circles of “Poly Hell”

Please note: This chapter refers to specifically jealousy within a “primary” relationship, but not all poly people have primaries. Not only that, but it’s entirely possible to feel jealousy within a “secondary” relationship, so it’s important to keep all of this in mind no matter where your relationships stand.

There are three key triggers when it comes to jealousy. By no means are these the only triggers, only the most common. A lot of these can be compounded by NRE, or New Relationship Energy, when a newer relationship has that exciting butterflies-in-the-stomach honeymoon period flowing. It’s important to remember that you’re still balancing an existing relationship when you’re in NRE, and you need to think of your existing partner’s thoughts, emotions, and needs.

Exercise 20: Circle one - Demotion

Demotion is when you need to adjust from feeling like the “one and only” to one of two (or more). This often happens at the beginning of an open relationship, when the existing partner is suddenly facing the realities for the first time. This can also still take place for any partner when a new partner is added. While love is not a finite resource, emotional energy and time are.

Exercise 20: Discussion/Ask Yourself

● Has there been a time when you felt demoted? How did that feel?
● Do you feel like the example questions accurately mirror your concerns or the questions you want to ask? What extra questions do you feel should be addressed?

Exercise 21: Circle two - Displacement

Displacement is when it feels like you’re being “crowded out” of your relationship. The jealousy is usually triggered by a new partner, but it can also be triggered by an old partner wanting more time, or even hobbies and other interests. When you’re in a polyamorous relationship, it’s expected that time is divided, as there are only so many hours in a day and so many days in a week. Nonetheless, it can still be hard to give up time that you felt was “yours”.

Exercise 21: Discussion/Ask Yourself

● Which is more important to you - quality of time, or quantity of time? Why?
● Would it be helpful to have activities for the three (or more) of you to do together? Why or why not?
● What other ways can you show affection to your partner if they feel displaced?
● What types of affection do you want your partner to show if you feel displaced?


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Exercise 22: Circle three - Intrusion

Like displacement, intrusion is about how time is limited. Unlike displacement, however, it is about how another partner can intrude on the time you’re spending with your partner. As an example, you might be texting with one partner while you’re on a date with another, or double-book a date with one partner when one is already planned with another. This is usually not maliciously taking up time, but rather a consequence of how relationships can ebb and flow; if you feel more secure in one relationship, you may not feel the need to nurture that relationship as much as a new one. This jealousy trigger is usually simply obliviousness, but that doesn’t soften the effect it can have on your partner.

Intrusion will likely always happen in some small way, it’s not entirely avoidable. But it’s important to balance it with your partners’ needs.

Exercise 22: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- How possible do you feel it is for you to compartmentalize your relationships to minimize intrusions?
- How would you handle an accidental intrusion, such as double-booking a date?

Exercise 23: Educating your partner about compartmentalization

Be very careful with compartmentalization; this can easily lead to a DADT (or Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell) policy where everything in your other relationships is kept secret. These policies rarely work well, and tend to signal that one partner isn’t okay with polyamory. Treat the suggestions in this exercise with caution. That said, compartmentalization can still be helpful when a partner doesn’t want to hear about elements of a relationship, such as sexual details.

Exercise 23: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- To what degree do you feel it is healthy to compartmentalize your relationships?
- What do you feel is the difference between privacy and secrecy?

Exercise 24: How to manage the more subtle intrusions

There are some subtle intrusions that can take place without either partner being aware that they’re intrusions. Distraction can be a large intrusion, even when there isn’t an active intrusion from the other partner happening. Scheduling conflicts can also be frustrating for everyone involved.

Exercise 24: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What do you feel are some of the more subtle intrusions?
- Why do you think these intrusions are important to manage?
Chapter Fourteen: Communication skills for people in open relationships

Advanced communication skills are essential to balancing an open relationship. This is especially important when it comes to rules, boundaries, and agreements, since you can never assume that everyone will be on the same page unless they've been explicitly laid out.

Exercise 25: Basic steps of successful communication

There are some important things to keep in mind when it comes to successful communication. You want to keep it simple, so that it's still easy to communicate while tensions are running high. You also want to pay attention to the full communication package - not only what your partner says, but also their body language and actions. Be sure to open up the lines of communication before things get rough so you can still communicate your wants and needs as they come up.

Exercise 25: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What do you feel is important about understanding nonverbal communication?
- What do you think are the differences between wants and needs?
- How would you handle having guessed wrong about what your needs and boundaries are?

Exercise 26: What will work for me?

The book states that there are three questions that you should ask yourself when you face a difficult situation: What would be absolutely ideal? What would be difficult and painful, but possibly manageable? What would be impossible to accept? A fourth one could be proposed: What would be manageable without much difficulty?

Exercise 26: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you feel fundamentally safe, well treated, and loved when it comes to the relationship agreements you’ve established?
- Have you been in a situation where boundaries, agreements, or rules had to be changed? What was that like?


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Study Group for
The Jealousy Workbook

Exercise 27: Tell the truth!

Telling the truth can be surprisingly hard, especially if you have broken a rule or violated a boundary. The fact remains, however, that truth is essential to keeping informed consent alive in polyamorous relationships, and that is one of the key tenets of polyamory.

Exercise 27: Discussion/Ask Yourself

● How can you practice telling the truth?
● What can you do to manage a situation if you’ve told a lie and want to tell the truth?

Exercise 28: Learn to metacommunicate!

Communicating about communication is important! It is also very simple. For example, you can start a conversation with what you plan to get out of this discussion, so that you and your partner can work towards a common goal. This can be very important if you and your partner generally have different goals, such as asking for support versus wanting to solve a problem.

Exercise 28: Discussion/Ask Yourself

● What is your usual goal for communication? What can you do to relay that?
● How can you best respond to your partner’s goal for communication?

Exercise 29: Clarify whether your communication is a request for support or action

Two different requests, two very different outcomes. If you are asking for support, action can seem dismissive or even an overreaction, whereas if you’re asking for action, only being provided support can ironically be seen as unsupportive. It can be very important, if you’re asking for emotional support and not action, to explicitly verbalize that you just want to express your feelings without asking your partner to take any particular action.

Exercise 29: Discussion/Ask Yourself

● What do you think you can do when your partner asks for support?
● How could you handle your partner asking for action?
● What would you like your partner to do in either of those scenarios?


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Chapter Fifteen: Disclosure about other relationships

How much do you really want to know about your partner’s other relationships? Chances are, you don’t want to know everything; few people do. Some people set their limits at not wanting to know about sexual experiences, while others may enjoy hearing about sexual experiences but not want to discuss emotional connections with other partners. It is perfectly okay not to want to know everything, and in fact it can be healthy.

Exercise 30: Which type of poly person are you?

This exercise states that there are two types of polyamorous people: Those that want to know everything, and those that want to know very little. It can be argued that there are in fact people in the middle, that want to know a lot about some topics and little about others. It’s very important that you and your partners know where you stand on this.

Exercise 30: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What elements of other relationships do you feel you need to know about in order to be comfortable?
- What elements of other relationships make you feel uncomfortable to know the details about?

Exercise 31: How do you guess what you want to know?

It can be a trial and error process to find out what level of information you are really comfortable with. You might think that you can handle your partner talking about their sexual experiences, but it turns out that the details make you queasy. A very common mistake is asking whether another partner is good - or even better - in bed. Making comparisons like that can be a big problem, and you should tread carefully there.

Exercise 31: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What have you learned from experience that you really didn’t want to know? What about what you did want to know?
- Look at the four broad categories listed in the book; do you think there should be any others? What are they?
- When is it important to you to know these things?
Chapter Sixteen: What’s compersion got to do with it?

Many people refer to compersion as the opposite of jealousy. Compersion is feeling pleasant thoughts or happiness over your partner’s relationship with someone else. Some people feel it naturally, others have to cultivate it, but it is a skill that can be learned. First, however, you need to remove the obstacles to compersion.

Exercise 32: Moving from constriction to expansion

While it is easier said than done, it is certainly possible to move from a constricting jealousy feeling to a more open point of view. When we feel jealous or constricted, we instinctively feel as though our life is at stake, and that we must protect it at all costs. We know that’s not true, but the physical symptoms are still there. It is important to consciously relax away those physical symptoms if you are going to get past them. Only then can you work on counteracting the mental constriction.

The mental constriction often takes the shape of black-and-white thinking, obsessive thoughts, or exaggerated fears. These are all very difficult to overcome in the moment, but there are some things you can do to relax, just like you can physically. It can be very helpful to write down your racing thoughts in order to get them out of your head, and then take a step back and look at them.

You’ll also want to look at the feelings of exclusion, abandonment, and deprivation. There are various coping mechanisms to move past each of these. As Dr. Doleshal says, “If you are feeling excluded, move towards belonging. If you are feeling abandonment, move towards autonomy. If you are feeling deprivation, move towards responsibility.”

Exercise 32: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Where do you physically feel the symptoms of constriction?
- How do you mentally feel constricted?
- Is exclusion, abandonment, or deprivation felt most strongly for you?

Exercise 33: Identify your relationship’s scarcity and abundance quotients

Are you getting what you need from your relationships? Everyone needs some resources in their relationships, whether it’s companionship, affection values, or many other things. What are important to you and your partner?

Exercise 33: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What are your strongest resources? Your weakest resources?
- Are any of the weaker resources in one relationship stronger in another? Can you use this to help you with your scarcity?
Exercise 34: Imagine “looking through their eyes, and being in their shoes”

It is important to cultivate empathy and to understand the feelings of the other people involved in your experiences and relationships. This exercise utilizes some techniques to help you work on that, and maybe even help you experience compersion.

Exercise 34: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- How does it feel to put yourself in your partner’s shoes?
- How does it feel to put yourself in your metamour’s shoes?
- Were you able to feel all three perspectives at once? What was that like?
- Did this exercise change your perception of that jealous episode? How so?

Jealousy and compersion, while often considered opposites, can happen at the same time. It is perfectly natural to experience compersion (happiness due to your partner’s happiness) while you feel threatened in some way (fearing that the source of the happiness can replace you). It can be hard to reconcile these feelings, but it is important to remember that compersion can be a powerful tool in fighting jealousy. Don’t judge yourself for feeling these emotions, as they will happen no matter how much you judge yourself. Instead, acknowledge them, let them pass, then process them.


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Chapter Seventeen: Ask the jealousy experts

Even with this book, facing your jealousy will always be difficult. Luckily, you are not alone in your jealousy journey. Here is some information from some experts on the topic of jealousy.

Exercise 35: Janet Hardy’s “Jealousy As Teacher” Technique

Janet Hardy, known by many as co-author of *The Ethical Slut*, gave us an exercise that she uses to show us that jealousy can teach us a lot about ourselves.

Virtually everyone experiences jealousy. Those who have not most likely simply have not found their jealousy trigger yet. It’s a universal human experience, and you need to accept that it’s something that you will encounter, just like everyone around you. The main difference is in what you choose to do with that feeling.

Your jealousy will tell you many things: Your fears, insecurities, your traumas, what you hate, and what you love. It is only once you find these that you know what you can do about them, whether it is something you can change, or something you have to accept.

Janet tells us that jealousy is “negative emotion projected outward” - it takes what you have inside and projects it out onto someone or something else. The problem? This doesn’t change anything. It doesn’t work. Let the jealousy point towards those fears and insecurities. Let it show you what wounds need to heal, so that you can start working on them. The more you work on them, the easier it gets.

Exercise 35: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What is your strongest jealousy source?
- If you’ve not experienced jealousy yet, what do you think your jealousy source might be?
- What do you think will be the easiest to start working on? Why?

Exercise 36: Wendy-O Matik’s “Self Compassion Meditation for Jealousy”

Jealousy can be an extremely intense feeling, leading you to want to take extreme measures in the moment - breakup, lash out in anger, move out, or many other rash decisions. This exercise is a form of mindfulness meditation that you can use whenever you feel like making a very big, emotional decision, in order to think it through more rationally when you need to.

Exercise 36: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Where do you feel jealousy physically?
- What emotions do you feel when jealous?
- What are the rational thoughts that come through as you work through these feelings?


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Exercise 37: Dawn Davidson’s “Juggling for Idiots” Jealousy Tapping Exercise

This exercise is based off of the EMDR technique, or Eye Movement, Desensitization and Reprocessing, which is used in multiple therapeutic settings. It uses a technique where you recreate a jealous moment, and with enough practice, you may be able to use it directly when experiencing jealousy.

Exercise 37: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What do you do to help yourself calm down when acutely jealous?
- Do you think this technique can help you? Why or why not?

Exercise 38: Francesca Gentille’s “Technique for When Your Partner is Triggered”

Triggers are words, behaviors, actions, environments, sounds, even smells, and more that set off a negative reaction in someone, usually due to past trauma. Many different things can trigger a reaction, and many different reactions can be the result of these triggers. Triggers are often accidental; If someone triggered a reaction it doesn’t mean they harm on purpose.

This exercise focuses on jealousy triggers, but can be used in many other triggering situations. Specifically, this focuses on recognizing when your partner’s jealousy has been triggered. You will learn some ways to identify the trigger reaction, and how best to react to this.

Exercise 38: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- Do you have any triggers? Do you know what response(s) they trigger in you?
- Do you know if your partner has any triggers? (Don’t share these without your partner’s permission) Do you know what response(s) they trigger in your partner?
- What can you do to help your partner when they are triggered?
- What can your partner do to help you when you are triggered?

Exercise 39: Terry Brussel’s “Joy Without Jealousy” Self-Hypnosis Technique

This technique is about calming yourself using progressive muscle relaxation, positive affirmations, and a visualization exercise. This may not be for everyone, especially if you have trouble visualizing, or have fears of water.

Exercise 39: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What can you say to positively affirm yourself and your relationship?
- Do you find it easy to relax and visualize a concept? Do you know why or why not?
Chapter Eighteen: Buddhist jealousy advice from an atheist

Many people find Buddhist techniques and philosophy to be helpful, no matter what their religious affiliation (or non-affiliation). In a nutshell, the advice in this chapter is about learning how to relax and let go of your fear of losing something, for it is often that fear itself that can cause you to lose the thing - in this case, your relationship. You would do well to remember that you cannot control other people, and by extension, anything that other people are involved in, especially relationships.

Exercise 40: Shift from attachment to connection

Society tells us that we can take ownership of our partner and their affection. In reality, however, this is not the case. Unfortunately, if you don’t feel this or act like you do, some people feel as though you don’t care. You don’t need to completely detach from your partner, but this exercise will help you shift away from being clingy and possessive. This can help you feel even more connected to your partner, without the fear of loss that comes with the feeling of ownership. Often the feeling of ownership or possessiveness comes with a feeling of opposition - it’s you versus your partner’s desire for freedom.

After this exercise is a section on various techniques to actually work on changing from attachment to connection. These techniques cover a wide range of options. First, there is the point that jealousy often causes severe anxiety, and it can be important to tackle that anxiety before taking on the jealousy itself. Second, she points out that a good night’s rest can be essential in dealing with jealousy. Third, it is pointed out that you should focus on the relationship that you’re in, because that’s the only one you have any control over. Fourth, journaling is a technique you can use to help with managing jealousy. Fifth, a reminder that your own fulfilling hobbies and activities are important to pursue. Sixth is the suggestion to talk to your metamour if they are asking your partner to break agreements or pushing boundaries. Finally, seventh, she reminds you that there are worse things than what jealousy is telling you, and accepting those things can help you loosen jealousy’s grip.

Exercise 40: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- What does your attachment look like when you’re jealous?
- What does a genuine connection look like?
- How can you shift the picture of attachment to a picture of connection?
- What can you do to help yourself relax?
- What can you do to get better sleep?
- How can you focus best on your relationship, and not on the outside ones?
- Do you think journaling will help you? Why or why not?
- What hobbies and activities can help you find more meaning and joy?
Chapter Nineteen: Using Neuro-linguistic Programming (NLP) to Experience More “Emotional Choice”

Most people feel helpless in the face of strong jealousy; it can feel emotionally crippling. NLP, a cognitive behavioral technique, helps dissect thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in order to facilitate better understanding of yourself and others.

Exercise 41: Identify and modify the components of your emotional experience

This exercise may seem daunting, but it is really mostly about breaking down and understanding your jealousy in smaller, more manageable chunks. Identifying each part of the jealousy makes it easier to tackle it, bit by bit.

Exercise 41: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- How do you identify what the time frame of your emotional reaction is?
- What can you do to shift to a more positive frame of mind?
- How can you become more actively involved in managing the outcome you desire?
- What can you do to manage the intensity of your jealousy reaction?
- What actions can you take to stop making comparisons to your metamour?
- How can you change the tempo of your emotions? Does speeding up or slowing down help?
- How do you know if the criteria you’re judging yourself by are realistic? Are you trying to be the Perfect Poly Person?
- How can you break down your jealousy into manageable chunks? Conversely, does looking at the bigger picture help you manage your jealousy in the moment?

Exercise 42: Generative Chain Technique for reducing jealousy

A generative chain is something that can be used to (usually) lead to a specific outcome, and you can use this technique to practice a better generative chair to lead to a more desirable goal.

Exercise 42: Discussion/Ask Yourself

- How does jealousy have a purpose for you?
- Where does your jealousy come from? Does it come from something that can actively harm your relationship?
- What are some past examples in your life that show you that you can cope with the situation?