

**'Beware of Jealousy. It is the green eyed monster  
which does mock the meat it feeds on'**

**– Othello –**

### ■ What underlies jealousy?

The first and primary fear in jealousy is that of losing something important, whether it be an important relationship, control or status. Underlying this fear is usually a deep-seated feeling of insecurity and a lack of confidence. Jealous people often lack confidence in themselves and have difficulty believing that somebody else can love them for themselves. Very often the person who suffers from jealousy has had a childhood where they felt that they were never really unconditionally loved for who they were, instead they often base their feelings of self worth on what they do. To make themselves feel better they base their feelings of worth on either external achievements, physical attractiveness or possessions. Rejection or losing possessions, or a relationship breaking down, is devastating because it leaves the jealous person feeling worthless.

The second fear associated with jealousy is the fear of change, often triggered by a change in the relationship as the other partner develops or grows in some way. The sub-conscious irrational thought here is that change is always for the worst. Very often this person's childhood has been characterised by an avoidance of change, adventure or spontaneity – change spells danger.

A further fear is that of being alone and this is often related to past feelings of abandonment and lack of trust in the partner's ability to stay in the relationship. Often somewhere in the person's past he or she has felt painfully excluded or abandoned.

### ■ Characteristics of jealous relationships

The jealous person has an inbuilt attentional bias and is constantly scanning their environment for signs of infidelity. As with any hypervigilance 'the more you look, the more you will find'. This needs to be modified. The jealous person might also deliberately avoid jealousy-provoking situations, such as social events; again this needs to be reversed.

Relationships where there is a great deal of possessive jealousy often have a number of unhealthy characteristics. There is sometimes a master/slave mentality where a partner is seen as a possession or something to own, or control, rather than a free, growing individual. Secondly, there is often the rather naive notion that people love each other unconditionally and continue to do so irrespective of one person's behaviour. The lesson needs to be learnt that you will drive them away – you are damaging your relationship. Thirdly, there is often a lack of care about the other's feelings and a blind spot as to how the jealous, persecutory behaviour makes the other person feel.