

# Beyond Comparison: Healing from Jealousy and Rebuilding Trust

## Key Distinctions and Definitions

In the complex landscape of human emotions, jealousy, mistrust, and envy often intertwine, creating a tangled web of feelings that can be challenging to unravel. While these emotions are frequently lumped together, understanding their distinct characteristics is crucial for effectively addressing them. Let's embark on a journey to explore the nuances of these powerful feelings, beginning with clear definitions and important distinctions between envy, jealousy, and mistrust.

### 1. Definition and Nature of Envy

Envy is a complex emotion characterized by the desire for something that another person possesses, whether it be qualities, achievements, or material possessions. It often arises from feelings of inferiority and dissatisfaction with oneself when comparing one's situation to someone else's. Here are the key aspects of envy:

- **Basic Definition:** Envy occurs when an individual lacks another's quality, skill, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it.
- **Emotional Components:** Envy can include feelings of longing, resentment, and ill will towards the person being envied. It often stems from negative social comparisons.

### Types of Envy

Envy can be categorized into various types based on its nature and effects:

1. **Benign Envy:** This type motivates individuals to improve themselves and strive for similar achievements without wishing harm on the envied person.
2. **Malicious Envy:** Characterized by hostility toward the envied individual, this form can lead to destructive behaviors aimed at undermining or harming the other person.
3. **Social Envy:** Occurs when one desires social status or recognition that another possesses.
4. **Material Envy:** Focuses on wanting material possessions that others have.
5. **Achievement Envy:** Involves wanting the accomplishments or successes of others.

### Psychological Implications

- **Social Comparison:** Envy is often triggered by upward social comparisons, where individuals feel inferior compared to those who are perceived as better off.

- **Impact on Behavior:** Depending on whether it is benign or malicious, envy can lead to positive actions (self-improvement) or negative actions (hostility and sabotage) towards the envied person.

In summary, envy is a multifaceted emotion that can lead to both constructive and destructive outcomes, heavily influenced by social comparisons and personal insecurities.

## 2. The Difference Between Jealousy, Mistrust, and Envy

The difference between jealousy as mistrust and jealousy that is more like envy lies in the nature of the emotion and its focus:

### Jealousy as Mistrust:

- Involves the fear of losing something or someone you already have.
- Often related to romantic relationships or close personal connections.
- Stems from feelings of insecurity, anxiety, and suspicion about a partner's fidelity or attention.
- Can lead to protective or controlling behaviors, such as checking a partner's belongings or messages.

### Jealousy Similar to Envy:

- Focuses on wanting something that someone else possesses.
- Not limited to romantic relationships; can apply to various aspects of life.
- Involves feelings of longing, inferiority, or resentment towards others' achievements or possessions.
- May motivate self-improvement but can also lead to negative emotions if left unchecked.

While both forms of jealousy involve negative emotions, jealousy as mistrust is more about protecting what one has, while jealousy akin to envy is about desiring what others have. The former is often considered more detrimental to relationships due to its potential to breed suspicion and controlling behaviors.

## 3. The Green-Eyed Monster: Confronting Envy, Jealousy, and Distrust as it relates to Media Addiction and Recovery

Now, let's see how envy, jealousy, and distrust relate to our 4th Step inventory. These emotions are like a toxic cocktail that will poison our lives if left unchecked.

Envy, that gnawing desire for what others have, is like a constant itch we can't scratch. Jealousy, fear that someone we love is going to be lost to us because someone better will take them away, creates a possessive grip that suffocates our relationships. And distrust, the inability to rely on others, is the wall we build to protect ourselves from being hurt.

As media addicts, we're particularly vulnerable to these emotions. We've spent countless hours scrolling through carefully curated highlight reels of others' lives, comparing and despairing. Our 4th symptom in MAA speaks directly to this: "We compare ourselves with what we see in magazines, films, TV, and social media. We try to create a persona that other people will admire, but end up feeling despair when we can't live up to those ideals."

We may not even realize how deeply these emotions have seeped into our lives, coloring our perceptions and driving our compulsive behaviors. But make no mistake, they're there, lurking beneath the surface, ready to sabotage our happiness and recovery if we don't shine a light on them.

### **The Deadly Nature of Envy and Jealousy**

We must be honest here - envy and jealousy are not harmless emotions. They're like a cancer that eats away at our serenity, our relationships, and our very souls. The story of Cain and Abel, the first murder in biblical history, shows us the devastating consequences of unchecked envy.

But we don't need to look that far back to see the destruction these emotions can cause. Let us share the tragic tale of John and Anthony (pseudonyms), two playwrights whose love story turned into a cautionary tale about the power of envy.

### **A Tragic Tale of Love and Envy**

In the glittering world of New York theater, where dreams are born and shattered nightly, two men found love amidst the chaos of creativity. John, a struggling, passionate, unproduced playwright, and Anthony, his devoted partner and biggest fan. Their love story began like a perfect script - two artists supporting each other's dreams, their bond seemingly unbreakable.

But life, as it often does, had other plans. A twist of fate - or perhaps misfortune - saw them both serving brief sentences for tax evasion. It was during this time, in the confines of a prison cell, that Anthony discovered his own gift for storytelling. While John grappled with the harsh realities of incarceration, Anthony's imagination soared and he began crafting a play that later landed on Broadway with critical acclaim.

Suddenly, Anthony was the toast of the town. John tried playing the supportive partner and cheered from the sidelines, but a seed of envy began taking root in his heart.

Determined to find his path to success, John turned to painting. His canvases, much like his unproduced plays, were filled with passion but failed to capture the public's imagination. As Anthony's star continued to rise, with Hollywood knocking at his door, John's resentment grew in equal measure to his love.

John had to watch Anthony's success as they attended the glittering parties, where adoring fans swooned over Anthony's work. The life John had always dreamed of was beyond his reach, embodied in the man he loved most in the world. Anthony, aware of John's struggles, tried to help, organizing art shows and introducing John to his influential contacts. But each well-intentioned gesture only served to highlight the growing disparity between them.

Their love, once a sanctuary, became a battlefield of unspoken resentments and painful comparisons. John found himself torn between genuine pride in Anthony's achievements and a gnawing sense of inadequacy that poisoned his thoughts.

The tragic events unfolded during what was meant to be a romantic getaway. Consumed by jealousy and despair, John committed an unthinkable act. In a moment of overwhelming emotion, he took the life of the man he loved, unable to reconcile his conflicting feelings. Before taking his own life, John wrote a confession, revealing how envy had driven him to murder the person he both loved and hated most. Days later, hotel staff discovered the bodies of both John and Anthony in their room, a somber end to a relationship torn apart by destructive jealousy and envy.

This heartbreaking story illustrates how envy and jealousy can make us want to destroy the very things we love and admire. It's a stark reminder of the words found in the first edition of our Big Book: "The greatest enemies of us alcoholics are resentment, jealousy, envy, frustration, and fear." [*Alcoholics Anonymous*, 1st. Edition, To Employers, pg. 145]

#### **4. Finding Freedom from the Green-Eyed Monster**

So, how do we combat these destructive emotions in our recovery from media addiction? The solution, as with all aspects of our program, lies in working the steps, relying on our Higher Power, and engaging with our MAA fellowship.

We start by practicing rigorous honesty. When we feel the pangs of envy or the sting of jealousy, we need to acknowledge these feelings without shame. Remember, it's not the emotion itself that's the problem, but what we do with it.

We turn to our Higher Power, asking for the strength to let go of these feelings and the wisdom to see the abundance in our own lives. The *Serenity Prayer* becomes our mantra in these moments.

Gratitude is our secret weapon. When we focus on what we're grateful for, it becomes harder to envy what others have. We can make gratitude lists, share our blessings in meetings, or simply take a moment each day to appreciate what we have.

Remember, envy is often based on a fantasy. We see snippets of others' lives, especially on social media, and imagine them to be perfect. But we don't know the full story, the struggles behind the scenes, or the price paid for what we envy.

Working with a sponsor and sharing in meetings helps us process these feelings and gain perspective. The fellowship reminds us that we're not alone in these struggles and provides support as we work through them.

### **Action steps:**

- **Practice generosity, genuinely wishing the best for others.**
- **Set healthy boundaries with our media use to limit exposure to triggers.**
- **Work on building our self-esteem through service and personal growth.**
- **Be watchful for signs of envy and jealousy in our daily lives.**
- **Examine where we have shame around envy, remembering that shame thrives in secrecy.**

Lastly, let's address the shame that often accompanies envy and jealousy. Shame tells us we're not worthy of having what others have. But this shame thrives in secrecy. By talking about it, we rob it of its power.

In conclusion, envy, jealousy, and distrust are formidable foes in our recovery journey. But they don't have to overpower us. By working our program, leaning on our Higher Power, and supporting each other in fellowship, we can overcome these emotions. We can find freedom not just from media addiction but from the green-eyed monster that threatens our serenity and joy in life. Staying vigilant, honest, and compassionate with ourselves and others, we can find freedom, peace, and love on this path of recovery together.

### **How Envy Can Be Useful If Used to Motivate**

Envy can serve as a powerful motivator, illuminating our true desires and pushing us to pursue our goals. When we experience envy, it often indicates that we see something in another person's life that resonates with our aspirations. This feeling can act as a catalyst for self-improvement, prompting us to take action toward achieving what we

truly want. Rather than allowing envy to consume us, we can harness its energy to fuel our ambitions and strive for the success we desire.

Moreover, when we recognize envy as a signal of our unmet needs, we can shift our focus from comparison to personal growth. Instead of resenting those who seem to have what we lack, we can use their achievements as inspiration. By setting clear goals and taking proactive steps toward our dreams, envy can transform into a constructive force that propels us forward rather than tearing us apart. Embracing this perspective allows us to channel our emotions into positive actions that align with our true values and aspirations.

### **Embracing Jealousy as a Teacher**

Jealousy, while often viewed negatively, can serve as a powerful catalyst for self-discovery and growth. When we experience jealousy, it reveals our deepest desires and insecurities, offering us an opportunity to examine our relationship with ourselves and our Higher Power.

By confronting our jealous feelings, we can uncover the ways we've sought validation from others, often at the expense of our own self-worth. This realization can be the first step towards cultivating a deeper, more authentic love for ourselves. Instead of comparing our journey to others, we can choose to appreciate our unique path and the strength it has taken to walk it.

Embracing jealousy as a teacher allows us to redirect our focus inward, fostering a more intimate connection with our Higher Power and ourselves. As we develop this relationship, we begin to understand that true self-esteem doesn't come from external sources but from within. By nurturing this internal wellspring of love and acceptance, we can find a sense of wholeness that no outside validation can provide. In this way, jealousy becomes a doorway to a profound love affair with our authentic selves and a deeper trust in our Higher Power's plan for our lives.