

LL22-Jealousy

Hi I'm Doug Weiss
and I'm Alvean Lyons and this is Love Life.

Alvean, today we're going to talk about the monster under our bed. The big green monster, Jealousy.

Oh that's an interesting question. We've been asked this, what do you do when you have a partner who is jealous? How do you cope with that?

That's such an interesting question and as we often say, neither of us lend much credence to these polar opposites in terms of men and women, but here will be one of those moments where we reference some gender things. This is interesting for me because I probably have a very atypical relationship in that my best friends growing up were always guys and so when I met Matthew after our first date and we came back to the house my best friend Ray was at the house waiting for us. He was hanging out with my parents, so we walked into the relationship with him very comfortable because in the foundation of the relationship I had guy friends. It was never an issue inside of the relationship but I still have deep and abiding friendships with my guys that I know that the typical husband, and I say typical in air quotes might not be comfortable with. Most of my business partners and people that I do work with are all guys and attractive talented ones, I mean look oh I'm here with Sean Connery. So I mean it's just one of those things that I think has to do with what was in the foundation of the relationship and we actually live a very transparent world in that I don't keep a lock on my phone so that he can go through any text message at any given time. I don't even think about it. He doesn't keep a lock on his phone. We make it crystal clear that if there is something that one of us shouldn't see then we shouldn't be doing it. If there's something one of us shouldn't have heard, shouldn't hear than we shouldn't be saying it. So I lay in bed at three o'clock in the morning when one of my guy friends called because something happened, and I'm talking with my head on Matt's chest because there should not be anything that I'm having a conversation about that he couldn't hear. It lends itself to a reduced environment for jealousy to be nurtured. I imagine for other people that don't have those things in the bedrock of their interaction it's probably quite different. When you

have very good friends or your best friend is a guy or your colleagues a beautiful man or woman or whatever and you spend a lot of time with this individual I can imagine that that might be challenging for a partner who does not feel that they have that kind of access and openness.

Well I think you go to the heart of the matter which is trust. But I think that there are circumstances where one can be trustful, that is operate in above board transparent fashion and still experience jealousy that derives from an insecurity on the part of the other individual, or may in fact derive from something even more subtle. Let me speak to this for just a second, because I've walked this walk once at least in my life, a relationship where there are two people, one of whom is perhaps needy for assurance, and another who is somewhat dismissive of giving that assurance. They will give it verbally but then will do other things that suggest that there may not be a lot of truth to those verbal representations. Of course I love you, of course and then they turn around and do something that says this in question. That kind of signaling can sometimes happen in marriage, can create a form of ...not jealousy per se, but insecurity. It can lead to the insecurity that can come out in the form of jealousy. We've been talking the last few weeks about vindictive exes and whether one can get back with your ex. Well the conditions to create an ex..... I can't think of one that's more prominent than jealousy and it's a frightening circumstance. In the weeks to come we're going to talk about issues of control in relationships but talking about this today, Jealousy is a form of or leads to a form of controlling behavior between people. I've never seen a circumstance where it ends well. Frankly, I'm interested in what you clinicians think.

I'm not sure that there's a lot of remedies that are available to you beyond the obvious ones which are the evident assurance and willingness to talk through why someone feels insecure about the relationship. What trust has been violated what conditions have set up that circumstance that causes a person to feel that when you go out with your girlfriends that you are out with your girlfriends and not someone else. And what need is unmet? Let me give an example. Prior to my marriage to Matthew we were just not mature. We got married young. We just did not necessarily have all of the tools in our toolbox that we now have twenty plus years into marriage and because I had guy friends, I would lean on them a little bit more because Matthew was not as emotionally

available as he now has the capacity to be. And while he is not naturally a jealous person I remember a moment that he told me about when he was watching me or listening to me talk to one of my guy friends and he watched the way that I smiled and he didn't like the way that that looked, because he knew that that smile was me getting something in that exchange that he hadn't seen. He couldn't recall me smiling like that. He was concerned and it was something so subtle but he said to me I didn't like how that made me feel and we talked about it, to your point about being open and honest. My thing is I never want to make you feel insecure, that was that's never my intention. But if a moment arises that the feeling is just outside of our normal relationship, that's something that should be addressed immediately so that it doesn't have a chance to grow like a cancer inside of the relationship. I should be able to sit and hear your feelings about it because you're not accusing me of anything you are merely saying, I saw this look come across your face. I know what it made me feel because you looked like you were happy about this. I'm not saying that I know what you're feeling but that's what the look appeared to be to me, and I want to be the only person that creates that look for you. We consciously worked on making sure that that is what we were consistently creating and not taking each other for granted. Those little things that allow you to feel invested in and engaged and not just desired. People want to be craved inside of a marriage, and the difference between desire and craving is that if I want a donut that's just my desire so if I can't get the donut I'll take a piece of cake because I just want something sweet. But when you're craving a piece of cheesecake nothing else will do. You can eat the donut, you can eat the piece of chocolate cake and you will still go eat the cheesecake because that's what you were craving and inside of a relationship if you want to tamp down the possibility of jealousy make sure that you create environments where people crave each other so that no one is looking for something else outside of what it is that you are giving to one another.

There's a parallel point to be made I think about conditionality. I think sometimes people set a bar for the other person in their relationship. If you loved me you would,.....fill in the blank. And that conditionality is a very destructive force.

I agree because there is no end to it. Whatever the condition is today it can change tomorrow.

It can and will change tomorrow, because it's coming from an individual whose

neediness is not bounded, it's not rational. It's an emotional difficulty, and it's unlikely that you'll ever be able to satisfy that. You might be able to in the short term but not in the long term.

Can I jump in, please don't lose your thought. There's a theory that I use that is based on what I call the bucket. When we choose partners we need to choose people who don't have a gunshot hole at the bottom of their bucket. Try to find people who have a pin sized hole because the reality is, in a relationship we are going to need affirmation of various forms but the healthiest versions of ourselves are like a bucket. If you imagine a bucket with water in it, if we have a pin sized hole it will take a long time before all of that substance ever falls out. You can do a lot if there's a lot of capacity there, but if you're dealing with somebody who has a gunshot hole at the bottom of their bucket no matter how much you pour in you can't pour in fast enough to keep the water level high enough in that relationship with that person and you end up destroying yourself trying to keep them full. So as I listen to you I couldn't help but think about that. You have so much need that I can exhaust myself and I still won't be able to keep your water level where it needs to be.

I think this speaks to so many aspects of subjects we've talked about on Love Life not least of which is this notion of conditionality. I have often said that if we could learn to love the way God loves us, without conditions, what a beautiful relationship we'd have. We're human so we're going to fall short of that, but if we could learn to love that way then indeed we would never have any problem with the pinhole or even the gunshot holes because we'd be replenishing so fully all of the time. But because we're human that is a challenge, one we hope that you do not have. We do hope that you will continue to listen to us as you have so faithfully and join us again next week for another episode of Love Life.

We want to thank you, our listeners, and Barbara Hamm Lee, our producer, Todd Washburn our recording engineer, and we look forward to being with you again next week.

See you soon.