

Sometimes When I'm Jealous

Deborah Serani, Psy.D.

illustrated by Kyra Teis



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9850 51st Avenue North, Suite 100

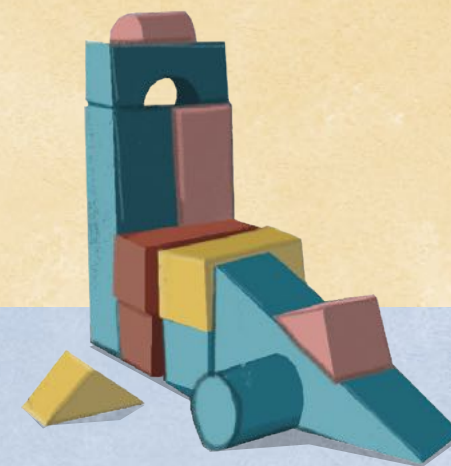
Minneapolis, MN 55442

(612) 338-2068

help4kids@freespirit.com

freespirit.com

For Michael Anthony



Sometimes when I'm jealous,
everything bothers me.



I don't like it when Mommy
is on the phone.



Or when Daddy is taking
care of the baby.



Or when my
sister is doing
homework.



3. Avoid comparisons: Be mindful of statements—whether intentional or unintentional—that highlight comparisons. Noting aloud that you, children, or others are not measuring up creates a negative mindset of feeling inadequate. Research shows that while we're genetically wired to evaluate ourselves and others in society, relying too heavily on social comparisons instills a poor sense of self and can worsen jealousy in children.

4. Practice gratitude: Help children express thankfulness for who they are and what they have. Gratitude, defined as reflecting on and appreciating what one has in life, significantly reduces envy and jealousy. When children find happiness in their own backyard, they are less likely to feel the need to chase the greener grass on the other side.

5. Reinforce positive behaviors: Learning how to manage and negotiate jealousy is not a quick process. It takes time for children to identify the emotion, adjust their response, and find prosocial ways to offset jealous and envious feelings. Take notice of children's growing awareness, behavioral changes, and attempts—and praise, cheer, and compliment every step of the way.



WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

As mentioned earlier, jealous feelings are part of the range of expected emotional experiences in childhood. Jealousy can be a challenge as a child matures, and the goal for caregivers is to turn such moments into self-discovery. However, if jealousy isn't evolving into something prosocial, and is controlling a good portion of a child's life, professional help may be needed.

Chronic jealousy has been shown to overload a child's stress response, keeping them stuck in a fight-or-flight mode. This can lead to overwhelming anxiety, worries about perceived rivals, or a fixation on wishing for what they don't possess. As a result, a child will suffer physically, with aches and pains, a weakened immune system, and increased heart rate and blood pressure as possible effects, along with interference with cognition and learning. Intense jealousy can also cause depression, poor self-esteem, and suicidal thinking. Studies about unmanaged jealousy as children move into adolescence show an escalation of aggression and hostility, with bullying, abuse, violence, and criminal behaviors being risk factors. So if you notice a child's jealousy increasing instead of reducing over time, it's critical to seek a mental health professional. Specialists can recommend and teach specific interventions to minimize jealousy and cultivate adaptive ways to embrace well-being.



RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry

aacap.org

American Academy of Pediatrics

aap.org

Association for Children's Mental Health

www.acmh-mi.org

Child Mind Institute

childmind.org

Children's Mental Health Network

cmhnetwork.org

National Parenting Education Network

npen.org

National PTA

pta.org

Zero to Three

zerotothree.org