

## Ep #42: Understanding Envy



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With Your Host

**Kori Linn**

## Ep #42: Understanding Envy

This week we're talking about envy.

You are listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It, the podcast for ambitious, high-achieving women who are ready to stop feeling stressed about work and kiss burnout goodbye forever. Whether you're starting a business or staying in your day job, this show will give you the coaching and guidance you need to start loving your work today. Here's your host, Career Coach, Kori Linn.

Hey y'all, this week we're talking about a pretty juicy topic. And that is envy, jealousy, whatever you want to call it. That feeling we get when we want what someone else has. You've probably experienced envy, maybe from time to time, maybe a ton of it.

I know that when I was younger, I used to experience a lot of envy, a lot of jealousy. And I'm kind of using those interchangeably. I think sometimes people teach that they mean something different from each other. But I'm just going to use them interchangeably for the purposes of this podcast.

So, I know that when I was young, I was jealous a lot. I was jealous of all kinds of things, like who had the best clothes, and who had great hair, and who got the better grade on the test. I just remember as a kid feeling so much longing to have what other people had or to have what I perceived they had.

And that brings me to the first thing I want to talk about with envy, which is that envy reveals something to us about our desire. In a way I think envy is a form of desire that gets a little bit twisted with another belief that gets layered into it.

So the part that's desire is like, "Oh, I want that. I want that thing." That part can kind of almost even feel good. Like we desire things, we want things all the time. But when it becomes envy it's about like, "I want that, and they have it. I want that and they have it and I don't have it. It means something that they have it and I don't have it."

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And so it gets twisted up together. The desire gets twisted up with this other thing that I'm going to kind of call a bitterness, right? It's like an emotional bitterness at either us not having it, or someone else having it while we don't have it. Or them having what we perceive to be a better version of it.

And part of how I think we can handle our envy and use it in a more constructive way actually involves untwisting those and separating the part of the envy that's desire from the part of it that's like a bitterness. And sometimes I think even that other thing can be like a form of entitlement.

Now, I think none of us want to believe that we're entitled. But I see this a lot in myself and in others where we want something and we think that because we want it, we should get to have it.

I know my brain for sure believes that I should be able to have whatever I want. But the reality is often in life I don't have whatever I want. Or I get something and it's not the way I wanted it to be. And then I get upset because on some level I feel entitled for it being the way I want it to be.

Now that's not the way I am hearing it in my brain. My brain is not like, "Oh, I feel entitled to have this." But my brain is just like, "Oh, this isn't what I wanted. That's not fair, that's not cool, that's not okay." Like whatever the vernacular of my brain is, it's like a resistance to what is.

And that's important to notice because what is, is. We can resist it all we want it. But that emotional resistance, which is not the same as, let's say political resistance, emotionally resisting what is doesn't change what is. If we want to change, what is we usually have to take some action.

And before we can take action, we usually have to change our mindset from "it should be different" to "oh, it is this way. I don't prefer it to be that way, I am a powerful person in the world because I believe I am. What am I going to use my power to do about that?"

Okay, I'm a little off topic, which is par for the course around here. So envy is desire and something else. The something else could be resistance to

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the reality that we don't have the thing. The something else could be bitterness that someone else does have the thing. The something else could be entitlement, like we feel like we should be able to have the thing. It's desire plus something else.

Now, before we get into what we're going to do with the desire, let's just unpack the concept a little. When we're jealous of other people, we often sort of like just stop there. We're like, "I'm jealous they have it, I don't have it. I want it. I'm upset."

And we sort of get stuck in that negative emotion and we don't have anywhere to go. We're just like, "This is a terrible feeling, I don't want to feel it." But trying not to feel it doesn't really help, it doesn't really work. And it kind of just is like this kind of emotional drama mess.

And a lot of us don't want to feel jealous when we are jealous, but like I said, not wanting to feel it – Sometimes not wanting to feel an emotion just amplifies it, makes it feel even bigger. And people try to run away from their feelings, which is why we get into numbing and avoiding activities, which could always just be normal activities we do. But when we're doing them to numb or avoid, then they're numbing and avoiding activities, right?

Like watching a little bit of Netflix for fun can be fun. Watching Netflix to try to get away from our emotions is a numbing and avoiding activity. So instead of numbing and avoiding, let's unpack this. Let's look at this.

When you're jealous of someone, like just think in your head of a time you've been jealous recently. Maybe you're a manager and there's another person and she's a senior manager. And you want to be a senior manager so you're jealous of her. That will be our example we'll use.

Are you really jealous of what she has? Or are you jealous of the story you're telling yourself about what she's experiencing? I'm going to break this down because this might make your brain hurt a little bit.

When we're jealous of people, sometimes we're not actually jealous of what they have. We're jealous of what we believe it means about them. So if

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you're a manager and there's another woman in your office and she's a senior manager. And you're telling yourself, "She's so smart. She's so ahead in her career. Look at her, I can't be successful like that. Her being a senior manager means she's much happier than me." Whatever the thing is.

The stories we tell ourselves about what something means usually do come down to like, they're better, they're having a better time, their life is going to go better in the future, right? There's a lot of versions of that, but it's pretty basic.

So just pause right here and think about it. Is it the story you're telling yourself about what it means that the other person has the thing? Is that the part you want? Or do you actually want the thing they have?

Do you actually want to be a senior manager? Do you actually want to do the workload of a senior manager? Or do you just want to be able to think I'm successful, I'm so smart, I'm ahead in my career, I'm doing great, I'm going to have a great life, I'm on track? And get clear with yourself.

It's okay, if you've been wildly jealous about something and then you're like, "Oh, I don't actually want that." That's just good information to have. When we dig into our jealousy this way and get this information, that might resolve your jealousy right there. Maybe not all of your jealousies, but maybe some of them.

And that's great news, because then you don't have to go out and do all the work to get the thing that they have, only to discover that you don't actually want that thing anyways. This is something I see a lot with, I think, certain kinds of jobs, job titles, job roles, certain kind of pay grade, right? Is that we want what we think having that means. Like "I want the money of this job I'm jealous of this person for having."

But do you actually want to do all the other stuff that goes with it? Do you want to do the upkeep? Do you actually want to be responsible for doing the job? And are you lying to yourself about what the experience would be?

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Because often, we're like, "Oh, I'm great, I'm so confident. I'm jealous that they have that role. If I were in that role, I'd know exactly what to do. And it would be awesome, and I'd be so good at it."

Here's what I know from experience and from coaching hundreds of people, then when you get in the role that you were fantasizing about, you're not fucking fantasizing anymore. And when you're in the role, it's real. There's real skin in the game.

It's very pleasurable to sit around thinking we know what to do. It's a totally different thing to be doing the job, and to be actually making decisions that are going to have impact to the business, to other people's lives. It's much easier to fantasize about knowing what to do than doing the thing.

It doesn't mean doing the thing is too hard. You can obviously do it. I'm 100% on your side for your capacity. I'm just saying get really clear with yourself. Are you jealous of what they have? Or are you jealous of your fantasy version of what they have? Or the story you're telling about what they have?

It's not a work thing, but another place I see this happen is like with relationships. Being jealous of someone else's relationship because of what you think it means to be in a relationship.

Listen, remember, for people who were socialized as women, we've been socialized since birth essentially that the number one most valuable thing we can do with our lives is get married. And I don't believe that, and you probably don't believe that. But you might still have socialization in your brain that hasn't been deprogrammed yet that's saying that.

And so when you're looking at a couple and they seem happy, or when your friend gets proposed to your brain might be having a little meltdown in there somewhere. Because you think that this person has reached some kind of level of success that you haven't if you don't have that.

And I see many people, many women, being jealous of people in relationships when they don't actually even want to be in a relationship. But

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they have that deep programming that that's how you know you're successful. That's like the pinnacle of what we could achieve. And a lot of people like me who've studied feminism still find these thoughts in their head and still have to do work on deprogramming them.

The way thoughts are, it's like a neural pathway. So if you've practiced that neural pathway over and over again, like not on purpose, but just by being in culture and your brain absorbing that message, it might still be a really strong neural path for you. Even if you have another neural path that you've chosen as an adult, like, "I don't need to get married to be valuable." It doesn't mean the other ones not still in their fucking about, fucking things up for us, right?

So to go back to the relationship example, if you have that social conditioning and it's in there, you're looking at someone who's in the relationship or just got proposed to and you're telling yourself a story about what that means about them. And then usually I think we're also telling ourselves a fantasy story about what it's like to be in a relationship.

Because the reality is being a relationship, even with the most wonderful person in the world, is a 50/50 experience. We're going to experience some negative emotion; we're going to experience some positive emotion. Some days we're going to be so grateful and think they're the most amazing. Other days, we're going to be like, "Who even are you? What is this?"

And then there's also the thing of if you see maybe a couple you know who has really great communication, they probably didn't get that by accident, right?

Often when we're jealous we're also comparing our insides to other people's outsides. Like we're comparing what we know about the inside of our relationship, or our past relationship we've been in to like what we see. We're like, "Oh, they're so great at communication." If they're great at communication, it's probably because they did a lot of work to get there. And I don't think that's always what we're considering when we're busy being deeply jealous.

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Okay, so let's recap. Envy, or jealousy whichever you want to call it, I see as desire and something else. The something else could be a "I should have that" it could be a form of entitlement, it could be a form of bitterness at someone else having it, it could be anger. It could be lots of different things. But it's desire plus something else.

But before we even do work on separating those out and looking at the different pieces, I want you to just pause and think, am I actually jealous of what the other person has? Or do I only want either, A, the fantasy version, which will never be real, or the story I'm telling myself about what it means that that person has that thing.

If all you want is the story, just tell yourself the story now. If all you want is to think you're successful and amazing and your life's going well, you can just tell yourself that now. And here's the funny thing, there's truth to it. You can always tell either side of a story.

That's a big part of what coaching is about. There are always multiple ways to look at the data. There are always multiple stories to tell, and which story you tell has a huge impact. Because if you tell the story of how you're not successful, you're going to continue to feel less and less successful. If you tell the story of how you are successful and look around your life and look for data for that, you're going to find data and you're going to feel more successful. And then you will actually also go out and create more success for yourself.

So it's a self-fulfilling prophecy either way. So when you're jealous of someone, if you've identified that what you really want is the story you're telling about them, take a good hard look at your current life and write down all the ways that story you want is already true about you. You can also do things to make it even more true. But first, capture what's working.

Capture the ways it's already true, that will galvanize you and give you energy and strength to go out and make it true in even more ways. If you want the story of the senior manager job, but you also want this in your manager job, I would start by telling yourself the story that you want about



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yourself now. And then we'll also go through and do the steps to get you to that senior manager role.

And listen, if all you want is the fantasy version, you're in good company. I find that often all I want is the fantasy version. But that's just good to know. Because if all we want is the fantasy version, then there's no point in doing the work to get the thing because we're not going to like it anyways.

If you want to have the fantasy version, just be honest with yourself about that and just enjoy the fantasy. There's no need to create a change in your life if what you want isn't the real thing. There's nothing wrong with that.

That's also why I like to like read a lot of books and like watch on Netflix, because I enjoy story, I enjoy fantasy. And it's fun to imagine having some things in our lives that I realize I wouldn't actually want to have in my life. But it's really important to know the difference, or I'm going to spend a lot of time being unhappy that I don't have all these things I'm fantasizing about.

Okay, let's just say you've discovered one, where you have what I'm going to call true desire. So you're feeling envious, you're feeling jealous. You've looked at the thing, you're like, "Do I really want the fantasy? Do I really want the story? Or do I actually want the thing that they have?"

And you're like, "No, I want the fucking thing they have. I want the thing they have." Okay, great. Now we know and now we can get to work. So when you think about envy, I want you to think about transforming envy into inspiration and invitation.

Envy doesn't feel very good. It feels kind of gross. It's kind of like burny, I don't really like it. But I think it's an important emotion when we can untwist it from that second half and just get to know the desire. So when you pull the desire out of the framework of envy, it's just a desire. It's just an invitation for you to create something in your life.

I love to think about envy this way, that envy is just information. It's just telling me about something I want. Again, I have to double check do I want the thing? Do I want the story? Or do I want the fantasy? But it's an

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invitation. It's information about something I want to have that I don't currently have.

And then I think envy, when we spin it, or unspin it, whatever way you want to think about it, can also be a form of inspiration. So if you're jealous of the senior manager because you're a manager, being jealous of her doesn't feel very fun probably.

But when we can detangle the desire from the judgment about how we don't have it or the entitlement that we should already have it or blah, blah, whatever, the bitterness. We just pull that desire out and separate it, then we can look at her and go, "How is she inspiring? How is she teaching me about how to have this thing I want?"

I also think there's something in envy too, where it's very much rooted in like scarcity and comparison. Oh, if she has that I can't have it. Oh, if we both have it like mine has to be the best.

So I think a lot of envy disappears when we ask ourselves if we want the thing, the fantasy, or the story. But I think a lot of envy can also disappear when we're like, "Yes and..." She can be a senior manager and I can be a senior manager. If you're in an organization where there's only one, you can find a different place to be a senior manager.

If you're both senior managers, but you think she's doing a better job, first of all, stop telling yourself that because that's what your brain will look for more data for. And that is the story you will believe. You could literally be doing a better job by everyone in the office's opinion. But if you keep telling yourself she's doing a better job, that's what your whole reality will feel like, because that's how powerful your thoughts are.

But I also think we live in a culture with all this BS about how we have to be the best all the time. You don't have to fucking be the best and there is no best. You can be excellent, and she can be excellent. And when we stop having to be better than, or prove our worth, or be the best, which literally most of the time is impossible. We live in a world of what, like nearly 8

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billion people now? Most of us are not going to be the best at most things. And who gives a shit?

You don't have to be the best to be good. You don't have to be perfect to be good. And you don't have to be the best to be happy and have a nice life. You can keep trying to if you want to. But I just don't think it's a very fun plan. And if you want to be the best and you are really attached to that, then I would just start telling yourself that you're the best. It doesn't even have to be true.

You get to tell yourself whatever you want to. The question of how to determine if a thought is worth thinking is not if it's true, it's if it's helpful. If it helps you show up in a way you want to. You're perfectly welcome to think delusional thoughts whenever you want to. And that might sound like irresponsible advice but hear me out.

Lots of people who've done amazing things were perceived as being delusional until they like broke a world record or changed the course of history. Sometimes when we're going to do really big work in the world, being what I'm going to call intentionally delusional can be incredibly useful.

Like believing, like Roger Bannister, that maybe you could run a four minute mile when people thought it was impossible, but then he did run a four minute mile. And as soon as he did, a bunch of other people did too. People totally could have said that he was delusional.

So I'm not saying only pick delusional thoughts and be delusional about everything. What I am saying is, you're allowed to think thoughts that reflect the reality you want to have and then feel inspired by them. And then take action and see if you can create something amazing that seemed impossible.

Just because things seem impossible, doesn't mean they are. Here's the other thing, how we feel in life and what we get done is largely a matter of focus. And when we're focused on what others have and what we don't have, we're not focused on what we do have. And we're also not focused on how we can create what we want.

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When we're willing to let our envy become information, invitation, and inspiration, envy becomes useful. It stops being so painful, and bitter, and burny. We're like, "Cool, I can use this. I can use this to help me live more of the life I want to live."

When we're willing to look at an examine our envy, we can decide if it is encapsulating a true desire or if it's just alerting us to some thoughts we'd like to be able to think about ourself. To some stories we want to tell about ourselves. Or if it's alerting us that we actually just want to enjoy fantasizing and we don't have to be so bitter towards that other person because we don't actually want what they have.

I think envy gets a really bad rap. And I think it's a feeling people try to get away from because they don't like it. And they feel guilty about having it. But if envy is just desire plus something else, you can just separate it from the something else and then decide what you want to do with it.

Do you want to take action to create the thing you're jealous about? What kind of action do you want to take? When we can tolerate our own envy, it can become really useful for us, and almost even fun.

I know that probably sounds fucking insane. But go with me on this. When we can be curious about our envy, when we can hang out there, when we don't have to turn away from it, I think it's easier to untwist it from the something else. It's easier to let it be something useful.

So that's what I want to invite you to do today. I want to invite you to think about something you've felt intense or just super minor jealousy about and put it through the process I've explained. Ask yourself, do you want the thing, the story, or the fantasy? If you want the thing, how can this jealousy and whoever you're jealous of or whatever you're jealous of be information, invitation, and inspiration?

All right y'all, I am super excited to see what interesting miracles you create for yourselves when you allow yourself to transform envy in this way. Come find me on Instagram and report back. I want to know all about what you're up to.

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And if you love what I teach, and you want some help taking things a little bit deeper and figuring out how this all applies to your own life, I've got good news for you. I've got space for a few new one on one coaching clients starting this month. So let's hop on a call. I'll give you some coaching right away to help you get going. And if it seems like a good fit, I will share with you how we can work together. Just head on over to my website and click on the work with me button and get started there.

Also, bonus, my coaching offering is totally virtual so as to better serve my global audience. And yes, I do work with people who are not native English speakers and we've had great success doing that. There's even a testimonial on my website with someone in that category so you can check that out on the testimonials page. All right y'all, have a lovely week and I will talk to you next time. Bye.

Thank you for listening to Love Your Job Before You Leave It. We'll have another episode for you next week. And in the meantime, if you're feeling super fired up, head on over to [korilinn.com](http://korilinn.com) for more guidance and resources.