

What Men And Women Really Get Jealous About (M)

Are you misinterpreting your partner's jealousy triggers?

Men tend to be more concerned about sexual infidelity, while women are more distressed by emotional infidelity, research finds.

Interestingly, people show a high level of understanding within their own gender, but struggle to comprehend the opposite sex's jealousy triggers.

For example, men often underestimate the impact of emotional infidelity on their female partners, leading to misunderstandings in relationships.

Professor Leif Edward Ottesen Kennair, study co-author, said:

"We understand our own sex best.

Generally speaking, men are good at understanding other men's jealousy responses, and women are good at understanding other women's jealousy responses.

At the same time, we are surprisingly good at understanding the opposite sex at the group level."

The study involved over 1,000 participants, primarily heterosexual, however sexual preference did not significantly influence perceptions of jealousy.

The results showed that both heterosexual and sexual minority men assume other men would be more jealous of sexual infidelity than of emotional infidelity.

Similarly, heterosexual women believe that other women would be more affected by emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity.

Misunderstanding the other sex

While people understand their own sex relatively well, they have less insight into the opposite sex, explained Professor Mons Bendixen, the study's first author:

"...when trying to understand what others get jealous about, individuals often base these perceptions on their own jealousy responses."

Men are usually more concerned with sexual infidelity, said Professor Kennair:

"Several of our studies have shown that men are more jealous of sexual infidelity than women."

Women, meanwhile, tend to be more concerned with whether their male partner is falling in love.

Professor Bendixen said:

"Men don't fully appreciate how much this affects their partner."

Heterosexuals and sexual minorities largely made the same assumptions about jealousy, the study found.

Professor Bendixen said:

"Homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual men reported that other men would be more jealous of sexual infidelity than they would admit."

Jealousy is genetic

The researchers wanted to find out if social influence through friends, family and the media had any influence on perceptions of jealousy.

They found little effect, explained Professor Kennair:

"Social influence has no impact on what we think about other people's jealousy responses."

Popular culture typically describes infidelity as sexual infidelity, but this does not seem to affect what most people get upset about, namely emotional infidelity."

Instead, the researchers think that jealousy is programmed into our genes.

Given that jealousy and infidelity are two of the most common causes of break-ups, it is important for our survival to understand them.

Men in particular can have difficulty understanding emotional infidelity, said Professor Kennair:

“In our study on forgiveness of infidelity, men were perhaps a little naïve about both their partners’ and their own emotional infidelity, as this is something that can threaten a relationship.”