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Wayne D. Calloway, CEO, PepsiCo Inc., quoted in Industry Week, 1100 Superior Ave., Cleveland 44114, 23 issues, $50/yr.

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Research at National Defense University, reported in Men’s Health, 33 E. Minor St., Emmaus, Pennsylvania 18098, monthly, $36/yr.

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KPMG Peat Marwick, 767 Fifth Ave., New York 10153.

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You, you, you

Why do people experience envy?

People don’t feel envy around just any success or attribute of someone else, but rather when the success is in their own backyard. It has to occur in a domain that’s important to their sense of self—to the way they define who they are.

Example: If fame is important to you but money isn’t, you may feel envy when someone similar to you wins up on the cover of People, but not if he/she wins the lottery.

In what way is envy positive?

It’s actually a normal part of human existence. It can help us figure out what’s really important to us, what we really care about. If you feel intense envy in a situation, it tells you something about yourself. It’s a barometer of what matters most to you, often things you hadn’t really realized mattered so much.

Example: One man in my study, who valued the independence he and his wife gave each other in their relationship, found himself envying a couple who were very close and did everything together. He had a happy marriage, but never realized how much he wished he and his wife were closer.

Envy is bred into us. Since it is a factor in survival, envy is thought to be an innate quality that has been refined through evolution. Envious people seek what others have that sustains life, from food to money.

How about jealousy? Is that bad for you?

Jealousy is also a normal human emotion and can be positive. Jealousy tells us that some relationship that’s important to us is being threatened by someone else—that we may lose this relationship and we must do something to keep it. Jealousy warns us, the same way fear warns us, that we may be in danger.

What’s the difference between envy and jealousy?

The difference is one of possession. In jealousy, you have something, often a relationship, that you value, which is in danger of being taken away from you by someone else. In envy, someone else has something that you want and would like to take away from them.

When does envy get out of hand?

It’s a matter of degree. For some people envy is incredibly intense and never goes away.

People who have a problem with envy and jealousy aren’t experiencing those emotions differently than anyone else, but rather more frequently and more powerfully.

How do you know if your envious feelings are normal or pathological?

Ask yourself if your feelings are interfering with your ability to have relationships with others and do work. If you’re able to function normally, your

Boardroom interviewed Peter Salovey, PhD, associate professor of psychology, Yale University, and editor of The Psychology of Jealousy and Envy, Guilford Press, 72 Spring St., New York 10012, $31.50.

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T hose troubling emotions, envy and jealousy, are not as negative as commonly assumed. Envy actually has a positive function in our lives, according to the latest psychological research. It’s only harmful when it gets out of hand.

To find out more about the positive side of envy, we spoke with Yale University psychologist Peter Salovey. He has done substantial research in envy.

There’s A Good Side To Envy... YES...ENVY

Peter Salovey, PhD
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You, you, you

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August 15, 1991 Boardroom Reports

PERSONAL ADVANTAGE

THERE’S A GOOD SIDE TO ENVY...YES...ENVY

Peter Salovey, PhD
Yale University

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feelings are probably in the normal range.

How does envy affect relationships?
If you’re constantly sizing yourself up relative to others, you’ll probably have trouble getting involved in a relationship with someone who threatens you in any way. You may only be able to get involved with people who you feel are inferior to you. That can be a  real stumbling block.

There are studies of dual-career couples who both work in the same field. Those kinds of relationships can be very tricky because of envy.

Does envy exist in all societies?
There is probably less envy in an Israeli kibbutz, where collective success is emphasized, or in Japan, where you do things out of duty to your company, your family and your country long before you do it for personal glorification. Our emphasis on individual success makes envy worse.

But almost all cultures throughout history have had to deal with envy. They often used the concept of the evil eye to control envy. You tempt the evil eye by being too successful and flaunting it. When you do that, something bad happens to you.

Admonitions against the evil eye keep people from doing things that elicit the envy of others. One possible reason for the universality of evil eye beliefs is that other people’s envy is often accompanied by violence and danger.

Does the evil eye concept keep people from being successful or just advertising their success?
To some extent, both. In cultures where prescriptions about tempting the evil eye are very strong, people are reluctant to achieve. But for the most part it regulates the way we display our achievements.

This is true in our society as well as others. Even though many of us envy wealth, we tend to frown on conspicuous consumption.

Example: Donald Trump was the golden boy of the 1980s. But now we’re gloating over his money and marital troubles. In some way, he tempted the evil eye and is now paying the price.

The lesson here is that if you want to minimize the envy of others in your own life, don’t show off. There has to be some basis to beliefs that have been around as long as the evil eye.

How can people deal with their own envious feelings?
Don’t place all your eggs in one basket. Don’t decide that who you are is all tied up in one thing. That will make you very vulnerable to envy.

Instead, try to base your sense of self on a number of different areas—such as work, parenting, hobbies, friendships, etc. If you’re negatively compared with someone else in one dimension of your life, you can still look at one or more of the other dimensions for positive feedback.

Use envy to enhance self-reliance. It can be a great motivator.

Example: Janet, who taught elementary school, was overcome by envy when one of her colleagues left teaching to become a commercial artist. Janet had always been artistic but never did anything about it. On this occasion she used the envy as a spur to go back to art school at night. Eventually she also left teaching to pursue a commercial art career.

Discount the importance of what caused the envy.

Example: Women who are envious of other younger, prettier women would be better off de-emphasizing the importance of beauty to a happy life.

Reduce your expectations for yourself. People can be eaten up by envy in areas where they have no chance of succeeding.

Example: In academia, I see people all the time who are miserable because they’re not number one in their fields. Even if they’re in the top 10, if there are nine people above them, these people are eaten up by envy.

Is envy a function of low self-esteem?
In a few of our studies, it seems people with low self-esteem are most vulnerable to envy.

But what’s even more important than general low self-esteem is low self-esteem in areas of life that you deem important. If you’re not measuring up to your ideals in the areas that define who you think you are, that can put you at risk for envy.

...and more for you

☐ Personal assets of top executive can be seized when the business is found in violation of state environmental laws. The state does not have to prove that the boss had a role in the unlawful acts, only that he/she was in charge. The very fact that the CEO delegates the job of compliance to someone else is taken as proof that he/she had the power to make the key decisions.


☐ When dealing with the press, set attribution rules in advance. Basics…On the record means everything said can be quoted. Not for attribution means a statement may be quoted, but must be attributed to an unnamed spokesperson rather than a named individual. Background means information may be used, but cannot be attributed to any source. Off the record means nothing said may be published (the purpose of the interview is to expand a reporter’s general knowledge about a topic).

Trap: If you try to fix the level of attribution after making a statement, reporters don’t have to go along. And remember, when possible, use your own name, title and organization when you speak and be willing to take responsibility for your own comments.

Charles K. Beard, director of public relations, Speer, Young and Holland, Inc., Los Angeles public relations firm.

☐ Screening kids for high cholesterol. Studies concluding that screening all children for high cholesterol is unnecessary, or possibly harmful, are inconclusive. The benefits of testing at an early age and, if necessary, limiting cholesterol intake, may far outweigh any negative side effects. So far, there is no conclusive evidence that taking such actions with children is harmful, suggesting that further research should focus on whether the gains from intervention do outweigh any risks.

Ken Renickow, PhD, American Health Foundation, et al., writing in Journal of the American Medical Association, 535 N. Dearborn St., Chicago 60610, weekly, $60/yr.

Robert Half International

Good luck... Good luck

To get ahead, do everything you perceive is right, grab opportunities, work hard, don’t let failures discourage you—then the law of averages will be stacked in your favor.

Look for opportunity.
Understand you may only have to succeed once.
Calculated risks are necessary.
Kick yourself in the rear end.
Remember, luck is a by-product of determination.

Boardroom interviewed Robert Half, Robert Half International, Box 3000, Menlo Park, California 94026.

August 15, 1991 ☐ Boardroom Reports