
THE RETROACTIVE JEALOUSY WORKBOOK

A 30-Day Path from Obsession to Peace

Atticus Poet

atticupoet.com

*30 days. 30 exercises. A complete recovery program.
From understanding to awareness to practice to integration.*

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INTRODUCTION

You are holding this workbook because something is causing you pain that you may not fully understand. You love your partner, but you are haunted by their past. Images, questions, comparisons, and a relentless voice that says *you are not enough* — these have taken up residence in your mind, and no amount of logic seems to evict them.

This is retroactive jealousy. It is more common than you think, more treatable than you fear, and more understandable than it feels. It is not a character flaw. It is a pattern of intrusive, obsessive thinking that follows predictable neural pathways — pathways that can be rewired.

For a comprehensive overview, read the complete guide: [What Is Retroactive Jealousy?](#) on [atticuspoet.com](#).

How to use this workbook:

This is a 30-day program organized into four weeks. **Week 1 (Understanding)** teaches you what retroactive jealousy is, where it comes from, and how it works in your brain. **Week 2 (Awareness)** helps you map your personal patterns: your OCD cycle, your compulsions, your triggers. **Week 3 (Practice)** introduces the core therapeutic techniques: ERP, cognitive defusion, mindfulness, acceptance, and communication. **Week 4 (Integration)** brings everything together into a sustainable recovery plan.

Each day takes 20–30 minutes. You will read a brief concept, complete a practical exercise, and have space for journaling. The exercises build on each other, so do them in order. Do not skip days, even when a day feels too easy or too hard.

You will need a journal or notebook for the longer writing exercises. The journaling spaces in this workbook are for quick reflections; the deeper work benefits from more room.

One last thing: be honest with yourself throughout this process. The Stoics had no patience for self-deception, and neither does recovery. If an exercise makes you uncomfortable, that is where the growth is. Lean in.

— Atticus

WEEK 1: UNDERSTANDING

DAY 1 — WHAT IS HAPPENING TO ME?

Week 1: UNDERSTANDING

“The only thing more painful than jealousy is the shame of feeling it.” — Marcel Proust, paraphrasing Swann’s torment in In Search of Lost Time

KEY CONCEPT

You are not losing your mind. What you are experiencing has a name: retroactive jealousy. It is the obsessive fixation on a partner’s past — their ex-lovers, sexual history, or romantic experiences that happened before you ever met them. It is intrusive, repetitive, and often feels completely irrational even to the person experiencing it.

Retroactive jealousy comes in three forms. The first is **obsessive questioning** — the compulsive need to know every detail, even when knowing makes things worse. The second is **mental movies** — vivid, unwanted images of your partner with someone else that play on a loop you cannot shut off. The third is **moral judgment** — the feeling that your partner’s past makes them damaged, less worthy, or not who you thought they were.

Most people with retroactive jealousy experience all three. And most suffer in silence, because the shame of obsessing over something you know is irrational makes you feel broken. You are not broken. You are dealing with a recognized pattern of intrusive thoughts that responds to treatment. This workbook is your first step.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Rate each symptom from 1 (not at all) to 10 (overwhelming):

- Intrusive mental images of my partner’s past: ____
- Compulsive need to ask questions about their history: ____
- Checking their social media or phone for clues: ____
- Comparing myself to their ex-partners: ____
- Feeling that their past “contaminates” the relationship: ____
- Difficulty being intimate without intrusive thoughts: ____
- Anger or disgust about things that happened before we met: ____
- Anxiety that they secretly miss a past partner: ____

Total: ____ / 80. Save this score. You will retake it on Day 30.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [What Is Retroactive Jealousy?](https://www.atticuspoet.com/what-is-retroactive-jealousy/) on [atticuspoet.com](https://www.atticuspoet.com)

DAY 2 — THE BRAIN SCIENCE

Week 1: UNDERSTANDING

“Try to pose for yourself this task: not to think of a polar bear, and you will see that the cursed thing will come to mind every minute.” — Fyodor Dostoevsky (later validated by Daniel Wegner’s white bear experiments)

KEY CONCEPT

Your brain is not malfunctioning. It is doing exactly what brains do — but doing it in a context where the result is suffering. The intrusive thoughts of retroactive jealousy follow the same neural pathways as obsessive-compulsive disorder.

The cortico-striato-thalamo-cortical (CSTC) circuit is your brain’s threat-detection loop. Normally, a worry enters, gets processed, and is dismissed. In retroactive jealousy, the circuit gets stuck. The worry enters, triggers alarm, and instead of being dismissed, it loops back to the beginning. The more you try to resolve it — by seeking reassurance, checking details, or mentally reviewing the past — the stronger the loop becomes.

The default mode network (DMN) is the brain system active when you’re not focused on a task. It’s the daydreaming, mind-wandering system. In people with retroactive jealousy, the DMN becomes hijacked by rumination. The moment you stop concentrating on something else, the thoughts flood back. This is why the thoughts feel worst when you’re lying in bed, driving alone, or doing mindless tasks.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Today, carry a small notebook or use your phone. Every time a retroactive jealousy thought appears, write down:

1. The time
2. What you were doing
3. What triggered it (a word, image, memory, nothing obvious)
4. How intense it was (1–10)

Do this for the full day. Tonight, review the data. Look for patterns: when are the thoughts worst? What are your most common triggers? This is your baseline map.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [The Brain Science of RJ](http://The Brain Science of RJ on atticuspoet.com) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 3 — YOUR ATTACHMENT STORY

Week 1: UNDERSTANDING

“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.” — Rumi

KEY CONCEPT

Retroactive jealousy does not appear out of nowhere. It has roots, and those roots almost always trace back to your attachment style — the pattern of relating to others that you developed in childhood and carry into adult relationships.

There are four attachment styles. **Secure** attachment means you are comfortable with intimacy and trust. **Anxious** attachment means you crave closeness but fear abandonment, constantly scanning for signs that your partner is pulling away. **Avoidant** attachment means you value independence and feel uncomfortable with too much emotional closeness. **Disorganized** attachment is a painful combination of craving and fearing intimacy simultaneously.

Retroactive jealousy is overwhelmingly associated with anxious attachment. The obsessive questioning (“Did you love them more?”), the reassurance-seeking (“But you’re happier with me, right?”), and the hypervigilance for signs of betrayal — these are all expressions of an anxious attachment system in overdrive. Understanding this does not excuse the behavior, but it explains the machinery driving it.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Answer these questions honestly:

1. When my partner doesn’t text back quickly, I feel: _____ 2. When I imagine my partner leaving me, I feel: _____ 3. In conflict, I tend to: (a) pursue and escalate, (b) withdraw and shut down, (c) both alternately 4. My parents’ relationship was: _____ 5. As a child, I felt emotionally safe: (always / sometimes / rarely / never)

Based on your answers, which attachment style feels most accurate? Write it down. This is not a diagnosis — it is a starting point for self-understanding.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Attachment and Jealousy](https://atticuspoet.com) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 4 — THE STORIES YOU TELL

Week 1: UNDERSTANDING

"We suffer more often in imagination than in reality." — Seneca, Letters 13.4

KEY CONCEPT

There is a crucial difference between facts and stories. A fact: your partner had a relationship before you. A story: that relationship means they cannot fully love you. A fact: they had sexual experiences. A story: those experiences diminish what you share. The facts are neutral. The stories are where the suffering lives.

Cognitive behavioral therapy identifies several **cognitive distortions** that are rampant in retroactive jealousy. **Mind-reading:** "They must have enjoyed that more than they enjoy me." **Catastrophizing:** "If they did that, what else might they have done?" **All-or-nothing thinking:** "A good partner wouldn't have that kind of past." **Emotional reasoning:** "I feel disgusted, so their past must be disgusting."

The thought record is your most powerful tool against these distortions. It slows down the automatic process of trigger → story → suffering and inserts a gap where reason can operate. You cannot stop the trigger. But you can learn to question the story.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Complete a thought record for your most recent retroactive jealousy episode:

Trigger: What set it off? _____ **Automatic thought:** What story did your mind tell?

Emotion: What did you feel? How intense (1–10)? _____
Evidence FOR the thought: _____ **Evidence AGAINST the thought:**

Balanced reframe: What is a more accurate, less extreme version?

Emotion after reframe: How intense now (1–10)? _____

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [CBT for Retroactive Jealousy on atticuspoet.com](https://atticuspoet.com)

DAY 5 — WHAT THE STOICS KNEW

Week 1: UNDERSTANDING

“You have power over your mind — not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.” — Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 6.8

KEY CONCEPT

Two thousand years before cognitive behavioral therapy existed, the Stoic philosophers discovered the same insight that forms its foundation: it is not events that disturb us, but our judgments about events. Epictetus said it in the first century. Aaron Beck, the father of CBT, acknowledged his debt to Epictetus in the twentieth.

The Stoics developed a concept called the **dichotomy of control**: some things are up to us, and some things are not. Your partner’s past is not up to you. It happened before you existed in their world. No amount of questioning, analyzing, or suffering will change a single moment of it. What IS up to you: your response, your interpretation, your choice to ruminate or redirect, and the kind of partner you become today.

This is not passive resignation. It is radical focus. Every minute you spend agonizing over what you cannot change is a minute stolen from what you can: building trust, deepening intimacy, becoming the partner you want to be, and living a life that is too full and meaningful for obsessive thoughts to dominate.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Draw a line down the center of a page. Label the left column **“Within My Control”** and the right column **“Not Within My Control.”**

Now list everything related to your retroactive jealousy in the appropriate column. Your partner’s past: right column. Your reaction to it: left column. What they did with an ex: right column. Whether you ask about it again today: left column.

Look at the two columns. Where have you been spending most of your energy?

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Stoicism and Jealousy](https://atticuspoet.com/stoicism-and-jealousy) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 6 — YOUR TRIGGERS

Week 1: UNDERSTANDING

"It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters." — Epictetus

KEY CONCEPT

Retroactive jealousy triggers fall into predictable categories, and knowing yours is essential. **Location triggers:** places your partner went with an ex. **Media triggers:** songs, movies, or shows that reference infidelity or past lovers. **Social triggers:** seeing the ex on social media, mutual friends mentioning them. **Intimacy triggers:** during or after sex, when your mind starts comparing. **Calendar triggers:** anniversaries, dates that coincide with the previous relationship. **Internal triggers:** low mood, fatigue, stress, or boredom that weakens your mental defenses.

Triggers are not the problem. Your compulsive response to triggers is the problem. A trigger is a stimulus. What you do next — whether you spiral into questioning, mental movies, and reassurance-seeking, or whether you notice the trigger, label it, and redirect — is what determines whether you suffer for five seconds or five hours.

Mapping your triggers gives you advance warning. When you know that driving past a certain restaurant will set you off, you can prepare your response before the emotion hits.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Map your top 5 triggers. For each one, write:

1. **The trigger:** _____
2. **Category** (location/media/social/intimacy/calendar/internal): _____
3. **What happens next** (the compulsion): _____
4. **Intensity** (1–10): _____
5. **A planned alternative response:** _____

Keep this map. You will refine it throughout the workbook.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Understanding Triggers](https://atticuspoet.com/understanding-triggers) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 7 — WEEK 1 REFLECTION

Week 1: UNDERSTANDING

“The soul becomes dyed with the color of its thoughts.” — Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 5.16

KEY CONCEPT

You have completed the first week. You now have a vocabulary for what is happening to you: retroactive jealousy, the OCD loop, attachment styles, cognitive distortions, the dichotomy of control. You have a symptom baseline, a trigger map, and a thought record template.

This is significant. Most people who suffer from retroactive jealousy never name it. They endure in silence, convinced they are uniquely broken. You have done something different: you have looked at the problem directly, with curiosity instead of shame.

The Stoics believed that self-knowledge was the beginning of all wisdom. Marcus Aurelius wrote his journal not to congratulate himself, but to see himself clearly. That is what this first week has been: an honest inventory. Not a cure — we are not there yet — but a foundation. You cannot fix what you cannot see.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Week 1 Reflection. Answer in your journal:

1. What is the single most important thing I learned about myself this week? 2. Which concept resonated most deeply? Why? 3. What surprised me about my trigger patterns? 4. On a scale of 1–10, how hopeful am I that this can improve? 5. What am I committed to practicing in Week 2?

YOUR REFLECTION

WEEK 2: AWARENESS

DAY 8 — THE OCD CYCLE

Week 2: AWARENESS

"I know the thoughts are irrational. That doesn't make them stop. It's like knowing the stove is off but having to check it thirty times anyway." — Anonymous, r/retroactivejealousy

KEY CONCEPT

Retroactive jealousy follows the same cycle as OCD, and understanding this cycle is the key to breaking it. The cycle has five stages: **Trigger** → **Intrusive thought** → **Anxiety/distress** → **Compulsion** → **Temporary relief** → repeat.

A trigger fires (you see a photo, hear a name, have a stray thought). An intrusive thought appears ("What if they enjoyed that more?"). Anxiety spikes. You perform a compulsion to relieve the anxiety: you ask your partner a question, you check their phone, you mentally review the details, you seek reassurance. The anxiety drops briefly. And then the cycle starts again — usually stronger, because the compulsion has reinforced the brain's belief that the threat is real.

The compulsion is the engine of the cycle. It feels like the solution, but it is the problem. Every time you seek reassurance, your brain learns: "That thought was dangerous enough to require action." The thought returns stronger next time. The only way to break the cycle is to disrupt the compulsion.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Map your personal OCD cycle. Use the template:

My trigger: _____ **My intrusive thought:** _____ **My anxiety/distress (describe the feeling):** _____ **My compulsion (what I do to get relief):** _____ **Relief duration (how long before it returns):** _____

Do this for your three most common cycles. Notice how short the relief period is. That is proof the compulsion is not working.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [RJ as OCD](#) on [atticuspoet.com](#)

DAY 9 — FACT VS. STORY

Week 2: AWARENESS

"It is not things that disturb us, but our judgments about things." — Epictetus, Enchiridion 5

KEY CONCEPT

Today we go deeper into cognitive restructuring. Yesterday you mapped the OCD cycle. Today you will practice interrupting it at the thought stage — the moment between trigger and emotional spiral.

The thought record is the most evidence-based tool in cognitive behavioral therapy. It works by forcing you to slow down and examine the thought instead of reacting to it. Most retroactive jealousy thoughts feel like facts. "Their past means they can't truly love me" feels as true as "the sky is blue." The thought record reveals that it is not a fact at all — it is an interpretation, and interpretations can be examined and revised.

The key is doing this on paper, not in your head. Mental analysis is just another form of rumination. Writing forces you to externalize the thought, which creates the distance needed for rational evaluation. Your mind is not a reliable judge when it is the one on trial.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Complete three thought records today — one for each intrusive thought that appears. Use the format from Day 4:

Thought Record 1: Trigger: _____ Thought: _____ Emotion (1–10): ____ Evidence for: _____ Evidence against: _____ Balanced reframe: _____ Emotion after (1–10): ____

Thought Record 2: (same format)

Thought Record 3: (same format)

Notice: did the reframe lower the emotional intensity? Even by one point?

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [CBT Techniques](http://atticuspoet.com) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 10 — THE COMPULSIONS YOU DIDN'T NOTICE

Week 2: AWARENESS

"We are more often frightened than hurt; and we suffer more in imagination than in reality." — Seneca, Letters 13.4

KEY CONCEPT

Most people with retroactive jealousy recognize the obvious compulsions: asking questions, checking their partner's phone, scrolling through old social media photos. But there are subtler compulsions that are just as damaging — and harder to spot because they happen inside your head.

The seven core compulsions of retroactive jealousy: **1. Interrogating** — asking your partner questions about their past. **2. Mental review** — replaying known details in your mind. **3. Reassurance-seeking** — "But you love me more, right?" **4. Checking** — phone, social media, email, browser history. **5. Comparing** — measuring yourself against ex-partners. **6. Mental movies** — imagining scenes you were never part of. **7. Testing** — provoking your partner to see how they react, gauging their loyalty.

The mental compulsions (review, comparing, mental movies) are the most insidious because they are invisible. You can perform them for hours without anyone knowing — including yourself. Today is about making the invisible visible.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Behavioral audit. For each compulsion below, mark how often you do it:

• Interrogating partner about their past: (daily / weekly / rarely / never) • Mentally reviewing details I already know: (daily / weekly / rarely / never) • Seeking reassurance: (daily / weekly / rarely / never) • Checking phone/social media: (daily / weekly / rarely / never) • Comparing myself to ex-partners: (daily / weekly / rarely / never) • Playing mental movies: (daily / weekly / rarely / never) • Testing my partner's loyalty: (daily / weekly / rarely / never)

Circle the ones you do daily. These are your priority targets.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Compulsions in RJ](#) on [atticuspoet.com](#)

DAY 11 — YOUR PARTNER’S EXPERIENCE

Week 2: AWARENESS

“I feel like I’m being punished for having a life before them. I can’t change my past, and nothing I say is ever enough.” — A partner’s perspective (anonymous)

KEY CONCEPT

This may be the hardest day of the workbook, because it asks you to step outside your own pain and see what your partner is going through. Retroactive jealousy is not a solo disease. It affects the relationship like a slow poison.

Your partner is experiencing some or all of the following: **Walking on eggshells** — afraid that any mention of the past will trigger an episode. **Guilt for existing before you** — feeling punished for having a history they cannot erase. **Exhaustion** — answering the same questions over and over, knowing no answer will be enough. **Erosion of trust** — if you check their phone, interrogate them, or test their loyalty, they feel surveilled, not loved. **Loneliness** — they cannot share the full truth of who they are for fear of feeding the obsession.

None of this means your pain is not real. It is real. But empathy — the ability to hold your partner’s experience alongside your own — is not optional if the relationship is to survive. Today is about widening the lens.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Write a letter from your partner’s perspective. Imagine they are writing to a close friend, describing what it is like to be in a relationship with someone who has retroactive jealousy. What would they say about how it feels? What would they wish you understood?

This exercise is not about guilt. It is about empathy. Write at least one full page.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Helping Your Partner](https://atticuspoet.com/Helping-Your-Partner) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 12 — THE EVOLUTIONARY INHERITANCE

Week 2: AWARENESS

“Jealousy is an emotion that evolved to protect our reproductive interests. It was adaptive in the ancestral environment. In the modern world, it often misfires.” — David Buss, The Dangerous Passion

KEY CONCEPT

Evolutionary psychology offers a powerful reframe: your jealousy is not a personal failing. It is ancient software running on modern hardware. For hundreds of thousands of years, jealousy served a survival function. Males who were vigilant about paternity invested resources in their own offspring. Females who were vigilant about commitment secured resources for their children. Jealousy was adaptive.

But evolution does not optimize for happiness. It optimizes for gene transmission. The jealousy circuit that helped your ancestors survive the savanna is now firing in response to an Instagram photo from 2015. It cannot tell the difference between a genuine threat to your relationship and a memory of something that happened before you existed.

This reframe matters because it removes the moral dimension. You are not a bad person for feeling jealous. You are a human being running software that was designed for a world that no longer exists. The goal is not to eliminate the software — you cannot — but to stop obeying its commands blindly. You are not your instincts. You are the one who decides what to do with them.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Reframe your jealousy as ancient software. Write the following:

The evolutionary purpose of my jealousy: _____ **What the jealousy is responding to (the perceived threat):** _____ **The actual reality of the situation:** _____ **What a wise response would be (not the instinctive one):** _____

Repeat this exercise every time you notice the jealousy firing today. Name it: “Ancient software. Not a real threat.”

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Evolutionary Psychology of RJ on atticuspoet.com](http://atticuspoet.com)

DAY 13 — MINDFULNESS INTRODUCTION

Week 2: AWARENESS

“Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.” — Buddhist proverb

KEY CONCEPT

Mindfulness is not about clearing your mind. It is about observing your mind without obeying it. This distinction is critical for retroactive jealousy, because the instinct is always to engage with the intrusive thought — to analyze it, argue with it, solve it, or suppress it. All of these are forms of engagement, and all of them feed the cycle.

Mindfulness offers a third option: noticing. An intrusive thought appears. Instead of engaging, you observe it the way you might watch a cloud drift across the sky. “There’s that thought again.” No judgment. No analysis. No attempt to push it away. Just noticing.

This sounds passive, but it is actually the most radical intervention available. When you refuse to engage with the intrusive thought, you starve the OCD cycle of its fuel. The thought fires, but no compulsion follows. Over time, the brain learns that the thought is not a genuine threat, and it fires less frequently. This is the neurological basis of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

10-minute body scan meditation:

1. Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. 2. Bring your attention to the top of your head. Notice any sensations. No judgment. 3. Slowly move your attention down: forehead, eyes, jaw, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, chest, stomach, hips, legs, feet. 4. At each point, just notice. Tension, warmth, tingling, nothing — all are fine. 5. When your mind wanders (it will), gently return to where you left off. 6. When you reach your feet, take three deep breaths and open your eyes.

If an intrusive thought appeared during the scan, notice that too. You did not need to solve it. It came and it went.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Mindfulness for RJ](https://atticuspoet.com/mindfulness-for-rj) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 14 — WEEK 2 REFLECTION

Week 2: AWARENESS

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.” — Carl Jung

KEY CONCEPT

Two weeks in. You have mapped your OCD cycle, identified your compulsions, practiced thought records, built empathy for your partner, understood the evolutionary roots of your jealousy, and begun a mindfulness practice. That is a remarkable amount of self-knowledge in fourteen days.

This week was about awareness — making the invisible visible. The compulsions you did not know you were performing. The stories you mistook for facts. The ancient software you mistook for moral truth. Awareness alone does not cure retroactive jealousy, but nothing changes without it.

Next week, the work shifts from understanding to practice. You will begin doing the things that actually rewire the neural pathways: exposure, defusion, acceptance, and communication. The exercises get harder. The growth gets faster.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Week 2 Reflection. Answer in your journal:

1. What patterns have I noticed in my retroactive jealousy this week? 2. Which compulsion is most frequent? Which is hardest to resist? 3. How did the empathy exercise (Day 11) affect me? 4. Have I noticed any change in the intensity or frequency of intrusive thoughts? 5. What am I most nervous about in Week 3?

YOUR REFLECTION

WEEK 3: PRACTICE

DAY 15 — ERP INTRODUCTION

Week 3: PRACTICE

“The cave you fear to enter holds the treasure you seek.” — Joseph Campbell (and every recovered RJ sufferer)

KEY CONCEPT

Exposure and response prevention (ERP) is the gold standard treatment for OCD, and retroactive jealousy is a form of OCD. The principle is simple but terrifying: expose yourself to the triggering thought or situation, and then **do not perform the compulsion**.

Why does this work? Because anxiety is self-limiting. If you sit with an intrusive thought without seeking relief — without asking a question, without checking, without mentally reviewing — the anxiety will peak and then naturally decline. This is called **habituation**. Your brain learns that the thought is uncomfortable but not dangerous. Over time, the thought triggers less and less anxiety.

Today, we start gently. You are not going to do anything extreme. You are going to practice sitting with a mildly triggering thought for five minutes without performing any compulsion. That is it. Five minutes of discomfort, followed by the revelation that you survived it. This is the first step toward freedom.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Choose a retroactive jealousy thought that is triggering but not the worst one (aim for a 4–6 on the distress scale, not a 9–10).

1. Set a timer for 5 minutes. 2. Bring the thought to mind deliberately. 3. Sit with the discomfort. Do NOT: ask your partner anything, check anything, mentally review, seek reassurance, or try to “solve” the thought. 4. Notice the anxiety. Rate it every minute: ____ ____ ____ ____ ____ 5. When the timer ends, notice: did the anxiety stay the same, increase, or decrease?

Most people find the anxiety peaks around minute 2–3 and begins declining. This is habituation in action.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [ERP for RJ on atticuspoet.com](http://ERPforRJ.on.atticuspoet.com)

DAY 16 — COGNITIVE DEFUSION

Week 3: PRACTICE

“The mind is a wonderful servant but a terrible master.” — Robin Sharma (echoing ACT principles)

KEY CONCEPT

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) introduced a concept called **cognitive defusion**: the practice of creating distance between you and your thoughts. The opposite of defusion is **fusion** — when you are so merged with a thought that it feels like reality itself.

When you think “My partner’s past is disgusting,” you are fused with the thought. It feels true. It feels like you. Defusion adds a simple prefix: “I notice I’m having the thought that my partner’s past is disgusting.” Same content. Completely different relationship to it. The thought is now an object you are observing, not a truth you are living inside.

Other defusion techniques: say the thought in a silly voice. Sing it to the tune of “Happy Birthday.” Precede it with “My mind is telling me the story that...” Thank your mind for the thought: “Thanks, mind. Very creative.” These techniques feel ridiculous. They work because they break the automatic fusion between thought and belief.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Defusion practice. Take your most frequent intrusive thought and write it down:

“ _____ ”

Now rewrite it with each defusion prefix:

1. “I notice I’m having the thought that _____.”
2. “My mind is telling me the story that _____.”
3. “There’s that thought again: _____.”
4. “Thanks, mind: _____.”

Read each version aloud. Notice how the emotional charge changes. Practice #1 every time the thought appears today.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [ACT for RJ](https://atticuspoet.com) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 17 — THE DICHOTOMY OF CONTROL

Week 3: PRACTICE

“Make the best use of what is in your power, and take the rest as it happens.” — Epictetus, Discourses 1.1

KEY CONCEPT

On Day 5, you were introduced to the Stoic dichotomy of control. Today, you will apply it with surgical precision to every dimension of your retroactive jealousy.

The Stoics did not preach passivity. They preached **radical redirection of energy**. Every ounce of energy you spend on what you cannot control — your partner’s past, what they felt for someone else, what happened in a bedroom years ago — is energy stolen from what you can control: your own character, your daily actions, the quality of attention you bring to the relationship right now.

Epictetus spent his life as a slave. He could not control his body, his freedom, or his master’s cruelty. But he could control his response, his judgment, and his inner life. He chose to invest everything in the column labeled “mine.” That single decision made him, arguably, the freest person in Rome. Your jealousy is your Epaphroditus. The question is whether you will keep wrestling with what you cannot change, or invest in what you can.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Two-column exercise, applied to every aspect of your RJ:

NOT in my control: • My partner’s past choices • Who they dated before me • What they did sexually before me • Whether they have fond memories of past relationships • (add your own: _____)

IN my control: • Whether I ask another question today • Whether I check their phone • How I show up in this relationship today • Whether I do my exercises • (add your own: _____)

Circle three items in the “In my control” column that you will focus on today.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Stoicism and RJ on atticuspoet.com](https://atticuspoet.com)

DAY 18 — METTA MEDITATION

Week 3: PRACTICE

"Your heart knows the way. Run in that direction." — Rumi

KEY CONCEPT

Loving-kindness meditation (metta) is one of the most counter-intuitive and effective practices for retroactive jealousy. It asks you to direct compassion toward yourself, toward your partner, and — eventually — toward the ex-partner who is the object of your obsession.

The purpose is not to feel warm and fuzzy about someone who triggers you. The purpose is to **break the pattern of hostility** that keeps the OCD cycle spinning. Retroactive jealousy thrives on aversion: disgust, anger, moral outrage. These emotions feel righteous, but they are the fuel that keeps the intrusive thoughts burning. Metta starves the fire.

Research on loving-kindness meditation shows measurable increases in positive emotions, self-compassion, and relationship satisfaction after as little as seven weeks of practice. It physically changes brain activity in regions associated with empathy and emotional regulation. This is not wishful thinking. It is neuroplasticity.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Metta meditation (10 minutes):

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Repeat each phrase silently, with genuine intention:

For yourself: May I be free from suffering. May I be at peace. May I be free from retroactive jealousy.

For your partner: May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace. May you feel safe in our relationship.

For the ex-partner (when ready — skip if not): May you be free from suffering. May you be at peace. May you find happiness.

Notice what arises. Resistance is normal. The practice is in the intention, not the feeling.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Meditation for RJ](https://atticuspoet.com/meditation-for-rj) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 19 — THE ACCEPTANCE PRACTICE

Week 3: PRACTICE

“Accept the things to which fate binds you, and love the people with whom fate brings you together, and do so with all your heart.” — Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 6.39

KEY CONCEPT

Acceptance is the hardest concept in this workbook, because it is the most misunderstood. Acceptance does not mean approval. It does not mean you like your partner’s past or that it does not bother you. It means you stop fighting a reality that cannot be changed.

Resistance is suffering. When you resist what is — when you mentally argue with the fact that your partner had a life before you — you create an internal war that you can never win. The past is the past. It is as unchangeable as the weather. You can rage at the rain or you can carry an umbrella. Acceptance is the umbrella.

Both Stoic philosophy and Buddhist practice converge on this point. Marcus Aurelius wrote: “Accept the things to which fate binds you.” The Buddha taught that suffering arises from resistance to what is. ACT therapy makes acceptance its first principle. This is not coincidence. It is convergent wisdom from traditions separated by centuries and continents. Resistance is the disease. Acceptance is the first step toward cure.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Acceptance meditation (5 minutes):

1. Sit quietly. Bring to mind the fact about your partner’s past that troubles you most. 2. Say to yourself: “This happened. I cannot change it. I accept that it is part of their story.” 3. Notice the resistance. Name it: “There is resistance.” Do not fight the resistance either. Accept that too. 4. Say: “I choose this person as they are, with their whole history, because who they are includes where they’ve been.” 5. Breathe. Repeat as needed.

After the meditation, write one sentence about what acceptance felt like in your body.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Acceptance and RJ](https://atticuspoet.com/acceptance-and-rj) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 20 — COMMUNICATION SCRIPTS

Week 3: PRACTICE

“The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand. We listen to reply.” — Stephen Covey

KEY CONCEPT

Most people with retroactive jealousy either never talk to their partner about it or talk about it in ways that make things worse. The interrogation, the loaded questions, the subtle jabs — these are not communication. They are compulsions wearing the mask of conversation.

Healthy communication about retroactive jealousy has five conversations. **Conversation 1: The Disclosure.** “I have a problem. It is not your fault.” **Conversation 2: The Boundary.** “I need to stop asking you questions about your past. If I do, please gently remind me of this agreement.” **Conversation 3: The Check-in.** A weekly five-minute conversation about how both of you are doing. **Conversation 4: The Trigger Warning.** “I’m having a hard moment. I don’t need you to fix it. I just need you to know.” **Conversation 5: The Gratitude.** Regularly expressing what you love about your partner and your relationship, separate from the jealousy.

These conversations reframe the relationship dynamic from adversarial (you vs. their past) to collaborative (both of you vs. the OCD).

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Write your version of the Disclosure Script. Use this template:

“I want to tell you about something I’ve been struggling with. It’s called retroactive jealousy. It means I have intrusive, obsessive thoughts about your past. This is NOT your fault. You haven’t done anything wrong. It’s a pattern in my brain that I’m actively working to change. What I need from you is _____. What I promise to stop doing is _____. I’m telling you this because I love you and I want us to fight this together, not against each other.”

Customize this. Practice saying it aloud. You do not have to deliver it today — but write it.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Partner Communication](#) on [atticuspoet.com](#)

DAY 21 — WEEK 3 REFLECTION

Week 3: PRACTICE

"We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit." — Aristotle (via Will Durant)

KEY CONCEPT

You have now spent a full week practicing the core techniques: ERP, cognitive defusion, the dichotomy of control, metta meditation, acceptance, and communication. Some of these may feel natural. Others may feel forced or uncomfortable. Both responses are normal.

The Stoics understood that virtue is a practice, not a feeling. You do not wait until you feel like being courageous to act with courage. You act with courage and the feeling follows. The same is true for these techniques: you do not wait until defusion feels natural. You practice defusion until it becomes natural.

Notice what is working. Double down on it. Notice what is hardest. That is probably where the most growth is waiting. The resistance you feel toward a technique is often proportional to how much you need it.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Week 3 Reflection. Answer in your journal:

1. Which practice from this week was most effective for me? 2. Which was most difficult? Why? 3. Have I had a conversation with my partner about my RJ? If not, what is holding me back? 4. Rate my intrusive thoughts this week compared to Week 1 (much worse / slightly worse / same / slightly better / much better) 5. What will I continue practicing daily?

YOUR REFLECTION

WEEK 4: INTEGRATION

DAY 22 — VALUES CLARIFICATION

Week 4: INTEGRATION

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” — Aristotle (via Will Durant)

KEY CONCEPT

Retroactive jealousy narrows your identity to one role: the jealous partner. It consumes so much mental bandwidth that you forget who you are beyond the obsession. Values clarification is the antidote.

The question is not “How do I stop being jealous?” The question is: **“What kind of partner do I want to be?”** And beyond that: What kind of person? What kind of friend, child, sibling, colleague, community member? What do you stand for when the jealousy is not in the room?

Aristotle and the Stoics both taught that the goal of life is not the absence of negative emotion but the presence of virtue. You do not cure retroactive jealousy by subtracting the jealousy. You cure it by building a life so aligned with your values that the jealousy has no room to dominate. When your identity is rich and multi-dimensional, the obsession shrinks to its proper size: a small, manageable part of a much larger self.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Values card sort. Rate each value from 1 (not important) to 5 (core to who I am):

• Trust: ____ • Courage: ____ • Compassion: ____ • Honesty: ____ • Growth: ____ • Presence: ____ • Generosity: ____ • Loyalty: ____ • Freedom: ____ • Wisdom: ____ • Integrity: ____ • Humor: ____

Now: pick your top three. For each one, write one sentence about how retroactive jealousy is pulling you away from living that value. Then write one sentence about a specific action you can take today to live that value despite the jealousy.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Values and Identity](#) on [atticuspoet.com](#)

DAY 23 — THE BIGGER STORY

Week 4: INTEGRATION

“Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster.” — Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

KEY CONCEPT

Retroactive jealousy is painful, but it is also a profound teacher — if you let it be. It is showing you something important about yourself that would have remained hidden without the pain.

Jung called this **shadow work**: the process of confronting the parts of yourself that you would rather not see. Your jealousy is a mirror. What does it reflect? Perhaps deep insecurity that predates this relationship. Perhaps a fear of inadequacy rooted in childhood. Perhaps an unconscious belief that you are not enough as you are. Perhaps a need to control that stems from past betrayal or abandonment.

The jealousy is not the core wound. It is a symptom of the core wound. If you only treat the symptom — if you learn to manage the intrusive thoughts without ever asking what they are pointing to — the underlying vulnerability remains. This is why some people recover from retroactive jealousy about one partner only to develop it about the next. The target changes. The wound stays the same.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Shadow work journal. Answer honestly:

1. What does my jealousy reveal about my deepest fear? _____
2. What does it reveal about how I see myself? _____
3. If the jealousy disappeared overnight, what other feeling would be underneath? _____
4. Where in my life (outside this relationship) do I see the same pattern of insecurity or need for control? _____
5. What would it mean about me if I truly accepted my partner's past? _____

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Root Causes](#) on [atticuspoet.com](#)

DAY 24 — NEGATIVE VISUALIZATION

Week 4: INTEGRATION

“Let us prepare our minds as if we’d come to the very end of life. Let us postpone nothing.” — Seneca, Letters 101

KEY CONCEPT

The Stoics practiced an exercise called **premeditatio malorum** — the premeditation of evils. It sounds dark, but its purpose is gratitude. By imagining the loss of what you love, you learn to appreciate what you have.

Applied to retroactive jealousy, this exercise is transformative. Instead of obsessing about your partner’s past, imagine losing them entirely. Not to an ex-partner — to life. Imagine the relationship is over. Imagine the empty apartment, the silent mornings, the absence of their laugh. Hold that feeling.

Now come back. They are here. They chose you. They are with you right now, in this present moment, in this real relationship — not in the past with someone else. The past you are torturing yourself over is the very past that brought them to you. Every relationship, every experience, every heartbreak shaped the person who eventually walked into your life and stayed.

Gratitude is the opposite of jealousy. They cannot coexist in the same moment. When you choose gratitude, you evict the jealousy, even if only temporarily. Over time, the balance shifts.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Negative visualization practice:

1. Close your eyes. Imagine your relationship has ended — not because of jealousy, but because of circumstances beyond your control. Your partner is gone from your life. 2. Sit with the absence for 2 minutes. Really feel it. 3. Open your eyes. Your partner is still in your life. 4. Write down five specific things about your partner that you are grateful for right now:

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
5. _____

5. Tell your partner at least one of these today. Not about the exercise. Just the gratitude.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Stoic Practices](#) on [atticuspoet.com](#)

DAY 25 — WRITING YOUR NEW NARRATIVE

Week 4: INTEGRATION

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes.” — Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time

KEY CONCEPT

Narrative therapy teaches that the stories we tell about ourselves shape the lives we live. Right now, your story might be: “I am someone who is broken by jealousy. My partner’s past ruins everything. I cannot get over this.” That story is not a fact. It is a narrative — and narratives can be rewritten.

The new narrative is not about pretending the jealousy does not exist. It is about placing it in a different frame: “I am someone who faced a painful obsession, learned to understand it, and chose to grow through it. My jealousy taught me about my attachment wounds, my need for control, and my deepest fears. I am becoming a better partner and a more self-aware person because of this struggle, not despite it.”

This is not toxic positivity. It is the deliberate construction of a story that empowers rather than imprisons. The facts of your life do not change. But the meaning you assign to those facts — that changes everything.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Write your recovery story in the **future tense**, as though it has already happened. Write at least half a page. Begin with:

“Six months ago, I was deep in retroactive jealousy. Here is what happened...”

Describe your recovery. What did you learn? What changed? How is your relationship different now? How do you handle triggers? What advice would you give to the person you were on Day 1 of this workbook?

Write it as though it is true. Your brain does not fully distinguish between vividly imagined futures and remembered pasts. This exercise programs the destination.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Recovery Stories](https://atticuspoet.com/recovery-stories) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 26 — THE MAINTENANCE PLAN

Week 4: INTEGRATION

“The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way.” — Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 5.20

KEY CONCEPT

Recovery from retroactive jealousy is not a straight line. There will be setbacks. A trigger you thought you had conquered will ambush you. A bad day at work will lower your defenses. A new piece of information will send you spiraling. This is not failure. This is the normal, non-linear process of rewiring your brain.

A maintenance plan prepares you for these moments before they arrive. It answers the question: “When the jealousy comes back — and it will — what exactly will I do?” Without a plan, you will default to old compulsions. With a plan, you have a script to follow when your emotional brain overwhelms your rational brain.

The best maintenance plans are specific, written, and easily accessible. They name the triggers, prescribe the responses, and include an emergency protocol for the worst moments. Think of it as a fire escape plan: you build it when you are calm so it is ready when you are not.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Write your personal maintenance plan:

My warning signs that a setback is coming: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

My go-to techniques (ranked by effectiveness): 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

My emergency protocol (for the worst moments): Step 1: _____ Step 2: _____
Step 3: _____

People I can reach out to: 1. _____ 2. _____

Keep this plan accessible — on your phone, in your wallet, wherever you will see it when you need it most.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Long-term Recovery](https://www.atticuspoet.com/long-term-recovery) on [atticuspoet.com](https://www.atticuspoet.com)

DAY 27 — WHEN TO SEEK HELP

Week 4: INTEGRATION

“Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is a sign of intelligence.” — attributed to various sources

KEY CONCEPT

This workbook is a powerful tool, but it is not a substitute for professional help when professional help is needed. Knowing when to escalate is a sign of strength, not failure.

Red flags that suggest professional support is needed: You cannot function at work or in daily life because of the thoughts. The jealousy has led to verbal, emotional, or physical aggression. You have been doing this workbook diligently and see no improvement after 30 days. You are experiencing suicidal ideation. Your partner has told you the relationship is in crisis. You have a history of OCD, anxiety disorders, or depression.

Types of therapy that work for retroactive jealousy: **ERP (Exposure and Response Prevention)** — the gold standard for OCD. Find a therapist trained specifically in ERP. **CBT (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)** — effective for restructuring distorted thoughts. **ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy)** — excellent for building psychological flexibility. **EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing)** — useful if past trauma is fueling the jealousy.

Where to find help: The International OCD Foundation directory (iocdf.org/find-help) specializes in OCD-trained therapists. Psychology Today’s therapist finder allows filtering by specialization. Many ERP therapists now offer telehealth.

TODAY’S EXERCISE

Honest self-assessment:

1. On a scale of 1–10, how much is retroactive jealousy interfering with my daily life? ____ 2. Has my RJ led to any behavior I am ashamed of? (yes / no) 3. Do I have a history of OCD, anxiety, or depression? (yes / no) 4. Has my partner expressed that the relationship is in danger? (yes / no) 5. Am I experiencing thoughts of self-harm? (yes / no)

If you answered “yes” to #5, please contact the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988) or the Crisis Text Line (text HOME to 741741) immediately. You deserve support.

If your score on #1 is 7 or higher, or you answered “yes” to two or more questions, seriously consider professional support alongside this workbook.

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Getting Professional Help](http://atticuspoet.com) on atticuspoet.com

DAY 28 — LETTER TO YOURSELF

Week 4: INTEGRATION

"The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The second best time is now." — Chinese proverb

KEY CONCEPT

Today you will write a letter to yourself, to be read six months from now. This exercise serves two purposes. First, it captures your current state of mind — the insights you have gained, the progress you have made, the commitments you want to keep. Memory fades. This letter will not.

Second, it creates accountability to your future self. When the six-month mark arrives and you open this letter, you will see whether you followed through on the promises you made. Not with judgment, but with curiosity. Did I keep going? Did I maintain the practices? Am I closer to the person I wanted to become?

Write this letter with the same honesty you have brought to the entire workbook. No performance. No self-deception. Just a conversation between who you are today and who you hope to be tomorrow.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Write a letter to yourself, to be opened six months from today.

Date to open: _____

Include: • What you have learned about yourself in 28 days • The techniques that work best for you • The specific commitments you are making for the next six months • What you are grateful for in your relationship • A message of compassion for your future self if things have been hard

Seal it. Set a calendar reminder. Do not read it until the date arrives.

YOUR REFLECTION

DAY 29 — LETTER TO YOUR PARTNER

Week 4: INTEGRATION

"Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds." — William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116

KEY CONCEPT

This letter is optional. It can be sent or unsent. Its purpose is not communication (you have scripts for that from Day 20). Its purpose is emotional processing — putting into words the things that are hardest to say aloud.

Retroactive jealousy creates a backlog of unexpressed emotion: guilt for the pain you have caused, gratitude for their patience, love that gets buried under obsessive thoughts, admiration for who they are that gets obscured by fixation on who they were. This letter is a chance to clear that backlog.

Whether you share it is entirely up to you. Some people find that giving the letter deepens the relationship. Others find that the act of writing it is sufficient. There is no wrong choice. The only wrong choice would be to skip the exercise because it feels vulnerable. Vulnerability is the entire point.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Write a letter to your partner. Do not hold back.

Consider including: • An acknowledgment of what your retroactive jealousy has put them through • What you admire about them that has nothing to do with their past • What you are learning and how you are changing • What you love about your relationship when the jealousy is quiet • A specific commitment you are making to them going forward

Write at least one full page. Decide later whether to share it.

YOUR REFLECTION

DAY 30 — FINAL REFLECTION

Week 4: INTEGRATION

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I’ll meet you there.” — Rumi

KEY CONCEPT

Thirty days ago, you opened this workbook because something was causing you pain. You may have felt broken, ashamed, or hopeless. You are none of those things. You are someone who had the courage to look at a painful pattern directly, to understand it, to practice against it, and to grow.

Here is the truth the Stoics knew: there is no finish line. Recovery from retroactive jealousy is not a destination you arrive at and stay. It is a daily practice, like brushing your teeth or exercising. Some days will be easy. Some will be brutally hard. The measure of your progress is not whether the thoughts still come — they may always come — but whether they still control you.

You have tools now. Thought records, ERP, defusion, the dichotomy of control, metta, acceptance, a maintenance plan. You have self-knowledge: your attachment style, your triggers, your compulsions, the stories your mind tells. You have a partner who is in this with you. And you have the most important thing of all: the willingness to keep going.

The path forward is the same as the path you have been walking: one day at a time.

TODAY'S EXERCISE

Retake the self-assessment from Day 1. Rate each symptom 1–10:

• Intrusive mental images: ____ (Day 1: ____) • Compulsive questioning: ____ (Day 1: ____) • Checking behavior: ____ (Day 1: ____) • Comparing to ex-partners: ____ (Day 1: ____) • Feeling of contamination: ____ (Day 1: ____) • Intimacy interference: ____ (Day 1: ____) • Anger about the past: ____ (Day 1: ____) • Anxiety about their feelings: ____ (Day 1: ____)

Total: ____ / 80 (Day 1: ____ / 80)

Change: ____

Final reflection: Who are you becoming? What will you carry forward?

YOUR REFLECTION

GO DEEPER: [Complete RJ Guide on atticuspoet.com](#)

RECOMMENDED READING

These books will deepen your understanding and support your recovery. You do not need all of them — start with one that speaks to where you are right now.

The Jealousy Cure by Robert L. Leahy

The most comprehensive clinical guide to understanding and overcoming jealousy. Leahy is a leading CBT researcher and his approach is evidence-based and compassionate.

[Find on Amazon](#)

Attached by Amir Levine & Rachel Heller

The definitive introduction to attachment theory in adult relationships. Essential for understanding the anxious patterns that drive retroactive jealousy.

[Find on Amazon](#)

Overcoming Retroactive Jealousy by Zachary Stockill

The only book dedicated specifically to retroactive jealousy. Practical, focused, and written by someone who recovered from it.

[Find on Amazon](#)

The Wisdom of Insecurity by Alan Watts

A philosophical masterpiece on the futility of seeking certainty in an uncertain world. Directly addresses the anxiety that fuels obsessive jealousy.

[Find on Amazon](#)

Meditations by Marcus Aurelius

The emperor's private journal. The foundational text of Stoic practice and a powerful guide to mastering your own mind.

[Find on Amazon](#)

Letters from a Stoic by Seneca

124 letters of practical wisdom on anxiety, anger, grief, and the shortness of life. Seneca's insight that "we suffer more in imagination than reality" is the core insight of RJ recovery.

[Find on Amazon](#)

The Happiness Trap by Russ Harris

The best introduction to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). Teaches defusion, acceptance, and values-based living in plain language.

[Find on Amazon](#)

Brain Lock by Jeffrey M. Schwartz

A neuroscientist's guide to overcoming OCD using mindfulness and neuroplasticity. The four-step method applies directly to retroactive jealousy.

[Find on Amazon](#)

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

You are not alone. These resources can provide additional support on your journey.

■ **[International OCD Foundation](#)**

Directory of OCD-specialized therapists. Filter by ERP training.

■ **[Psychology Today Therapist Finder](#)**

Search by location, specialization, and insurance.

■ **[NOCD](#)**

Telehealth ERP therapy specifically for OCD. Many therapists experienced with retroactive jealousy.

■ **[988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)**

Call or text 988. Available 24/7.

■ **[Crisis Text Line](#)**

Text HOME to 741741. Available 24/7.

■ **[r/retroactivejealousy](#)**

Peer support community. You are not alone.

CONTINUE YOUR JOURNEY

Visit atticuspoe.com for more resources:

- [Complete RJ Guide](#) — The definitive guide to understanding and overcoming retroactive jealousy
 - [RJ & OCD](#) — Understanding the OCD mechanics behind your intrusive thoughts
 - [Treatment Guide](#) — Evidence-based approaches: CBT, ERP, ACT, and more
 - [Stoicism & RJ](#) — Ancient wisdom for modern obsession
- [Book Finder Quiz](#) — Discover your next great read based on what you need right now
- [Free Weekly Newsletter](#) — One idea, one book, one practice — every Thursday

Forward this to someone who needs it. You know who they are.

— Atticus Poet