

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Joy of Missing Out (JOMO): two important constructs

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Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

The fear of missing out, or FOMO, refers to the feeling or perception that others are having more fun, living better lives, or experiencing better things than you are. It involves a deep sense of envy and affects self-esteem. It's not just the sense that there might be better things that you could be doing at this moment, but it is the feeling that you are missing out on something fundamentally important that others are experiencing right now. It is becoming increasingly common, in part thanks to social media and can cause significant stress in your life. It can affect just about anyone, but some people are at greater risk of FOMO. Social media creates a platform for bragging; it is where things, events, and even happiness itself seems to be in competition at times. People are comparing their best, picture-perfect experiences, which may lead you to wonder what you are lacking [1-2].

There are some terms that are related to FOMO and include the following –

FOBO (Fear of Better Options): This refers to fearing that you are missing out on potentially better alternatives.

MOMO (Mystery of Missing Out): This refers to fearing that you are missing out but not having any clues about what you're missing out on.

ROMO: (Reality of Missing Out): This refers to knowing that you aren't missing out on anything.

FOJI (Fear of Joining In): The fear of sharing things on social media but not garnering any response.

The FOMO can lead to a number of mental health related problems like anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and anger that others are doing better than the self. This is more common in teenagers and adolescents who very often compare their lives with others on social media. It is often said in a humorous vein, that we wish others saying, “May your life be as beautiful as it is seen on Facebook and Instagram”. Social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter personify FOMO, fear of missing out. We scroll through our news feeds and are inundated with status updates, memes, political puns, photos, and the latest breaking news. Social media is addicting and everything on social media is amazing.

We wield the power of a “like”, which stimulates the firing of dopamine in our brains and soon we become addicted to the knowing, the likes, the instant gratification, the attention and the busyness, so we keep going back for more. Minutes can turn into hours while we scroll through news feeds and posts for fear that we will miss out on something.

Causes of FOMO

1. **Social media:** FOMO is particularly linked to comparing ourselves to others on social media and feeling that we are missing out.
2. **Loneliness:** There is a difference between choosing to spend time alone and feeling lonely. When we feel lonely, we are more likely to compare ourselves less favourably to others.
3. **Lack of internal happiness:** when we have low levels of self-esteem, experience anxiety or seek happiness externally, then we can feel that other people are happier and have their lives more figured out. This also leads to FOMO.

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) is the anxiety that others are experiencing enjoyable or rewarding events while one is absent. It is driven by the desire to stay socially connected and the fear of being left behind. In today's hyperconnected world, where social media showcases curated highlights of people's lives, FOMO has become increasingly prevalent. At its core, FOMO is fuelled by comparison. Seeing friends attend

concerts, travel, or engage in exciting activities can make individuals feel as though their own lives are lacking. This can lead to dissatisfaction, impulsive decision-making, and even anxiety or depression. Social media intensifies FOMO by creating the illusion that others are constantly enjoying superior experiences. What is shared online is often a highlight reel rather than an accurate representation of daily life.

FOMO can impact various aspects of life, from social interactions to career choices and financial decisions. People may overcommit to events or purchases out of fear of missing an opportunity. This can result in burnout, stress, or regret when expectations fail to meet reality. In extreme cases, FOMO can contribute to unhealthy behaviours, such as compulsive checking of notifications or the inability to be present in the moment. Overcoming FOMO requires mindfulness and perspective. Practicing gratitude for one's own experiences, limiting social media consumption, and focusing on personal fulfilment rather than comparison can help reduce its effects. Understanding that missing out on some events does not equate to a diminished life can lead to greater contentment. Embracing JOMO—the “Joy of Missing Out”—can help individuals appreciate solitude, self-care, and the freedom to choose what truly matters to them.

Ultimately, FOMO is a modern challenge, but with awareness and balance, it can be managed effectively.

Joy of Missing Out (JOMO)

JOMO is the emotionally intelligent antidote to FOMO and is essentially about being present and being content with where you are at in life. You do not need to compare your life to others but instead, practice tuning out the background noise of the should and wants and learn to let go of worrying whether you are doing something wrong.

JOMO allows us to live life in the slow lane, to appreciate human connections, to be intentional with our time, to practice saying no, to give ourselves tech-free breaks, and to give us permission to acknowledge where we are and to feel emotions, whether they are positive or negative. JOMO allows us to be who we are in the present moment, which is the secret to finding happiness [4].

Advantages of JOMO

1. **Proper use of one's time:** One must schedule things that are important, whether it is working out, meeting a friend for coffee, writing that book or completing a work project. Make your time your priority instead of wasting time worrying about what other individuals are doing or thinking.
2. **Live in Today and The Present:** If you are having a bad day, be easy on yourself and treat yourself to a relaxing evening. If you just received good news, then take a moment to embrace it and celebrate. Do not compete with any of your contacts on social media.
3. **Digital Free Hours:** Unsubscribe from social media accounts and un-follow individuals who trigger your FOMO or cause you any type of negativity. Set daily limits to how long you can spend on social media or delete certain social media apps from your phone so you can only status scroll when you are at home on your computer. Plan some digital free hours so that you have time to reflect on life.
4. **Learn to Say No:** You do not always have to go to that event or take that phone call. Sometimes saying no is the best kind of self-love. Even if you want to help someone but feel it will have a negative impact on yourself, say no in order to protect yourself. Self-care and self-love start by saying No.
5. **Live a Real Life:** JOMO allows you to have more free time by eliminating wasted time spent scrolling social media feeds. Instead of spending your free moments by the drama of social media, email and text messages; what if you chose to disconnect and do the things that you enjoy such as cooking, spending time outdoors, and spending time with your family.
6. **Slow the pace and enjoy life more:** Take time to think before you speak, embrace the quiet, use time driving in traffic or waiting in lines to sit with your thoughts or listen to a book. Slowing down can increase our creativity, which we can invest into other productive avenues and projects in our life.
7. **Reflection:** Reflect on your thoughts and emotions and reconnect with yourself and with people in your life who truly matter. Plant that bush or learn a new recipe, write in a journal, and get to know your neighbour instead of worrying about your social calendar on Facebook or what you are missing in cyberspace.

The Joy of Missing Out (JOMO) is the refreshing antidote to Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Instead of feeling anxious about not participating in events, JOMO embraces contentment, self-awareness, and the ability to enjoy the present moment without comparison. It's about prioritizing personal well-being over the pressure to constantly stay connected or involved. In a world dominated by social media, where people showcase their best moments, FOMO can create stress and dissatisfaction. JOMO, on the other hand,

allows individuals to step back, disconnect, and focus on what genuinely brings them happiness. It shifts the perspective from “What am I missing?” to “What do I truly need?” Whether it’s choosing a quiet night at home over a social gathering or embracing solitude without guilt, JOMO fosters peace and intentional living.

JOMO is not about isolation but about making conscious choices that align with personal values. It encourages people to say no to activities that don’t serve their well-being and yes to meaningful experiences, whether that means deep conversations, creative pursuits, or simply resting. This mindset helps reduce stress, improve mental health, and enhance overall life satisfaction.

To cultivate JOMO, one can practice mindfulness, limit social media consumption, and focus on personal fulfilment rather than external validation. By embracing JOMO, people can break free from the pressure to constantly keep up and instead enjoy a life that feels authentic and fulfilling. In the end, JOMO is about quality over quantity—choosing experiences that nourish the soul rather than chasing the illusion of missing out. It is a reminder that true happiness comes not from doing everything, but from doing what truly matters

Instead of having FOMO over silly experiences on social media, we should be wary about having FOMO over missing moments with loved ones, watching sunsets, laughing at jokes, traveling, walking barefoot through the grass, hearing the ocean, and enjoying good food with family and friends.

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