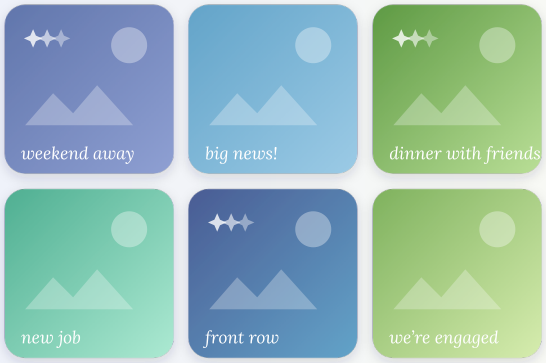
Fear of Missing Out

FOMO · COMPARISON · BELONGING

When it seems everyone else is having a better time

Fear of missing out, or FOMO, describes a persistent worry that others may be having rewarding experiences that you are not part of. It often comes with a pull to stay constantly connected to what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). Many people feel it at times. This form looks at what can drive it and how to respond.

WHAT I SEE OF OTHERS
a few chosen highlights



≠ not a fair comparison

WHAT I COMPARE IT WITH
my whole, ordinary day

- commute
- work
- laundry
- a good chat
- tired evening
- a quiet win
- scrolling in bed

Comparing someone else's highlights with your whole life can make your own feel smaller than it is.

01 The checking loop

1. **Check** — open the app, just to see
2. **See** — others' plans, trips and milestones
3. **Feel** — left out, behind or not enough
4. **Check again** — to feel connected, or reassured

Checking can bring brief relief, but often keeps the loop going.

02 The needs underneath

BELONGING
Feeling connected
Wanting to be included and close to others.

CHOICE
Feeling free to choose
Feeling that how you spend your time is your decision.

CAPABILITY
Feeling capable
Feeling effective and that you're growing in ways that matter to you.

Research based on self-determination theory suggests FOMO tends to be higher when these needs feel less met in everyday life (Przybylski et al., 2013).

03 Signs it may be affecting you

- checking apps often, even without a reason
- feeling uneasy when you can't check
- saying yes to plans you don't want, so you're not left out
- comparing your life with others' posts
- feeling flat or envious after scrolling
- finding it hard to enjoy the moment you're in

WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

FOMO is a well-studied construct. Higher FOMO has been linked with lower mood and life satisfaction (Przybylski et al., 2013), and with anxiety, depression and problematic technology use (Elhai et al., 2021). A meta-analysis found robust associations between FOMO, social media use and problematic social media use (Fioravanti et al., 2021). Most of this research is correlational, so it shows links rather than cause and effect.

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04 Noticing FOMO moments

Note a few moments when you felt left out or behind. Rate how strong the feeling was, from 0 to 10.

WHEN	WHAT I SAW OR HEARD	WHAT I TOLD MYSELF	HOW STRONG
			0 2 4 6 8 10
			0 2 4 6 8 10
			0 2 4 6 8 10
			0 2 4 6 8 10

05 Highlights, or the whole picture?

What I saw
the post, plan or moment

What I might not be seeing
the ordinary, hard or unposted parts

06 Meeting the need underneath

Belonging	Someone I could contact, or a plan I could make	
Choice	Something I'll choose to do, or not do, this week	
Capability	Something I could practise, learn or finish	

07 Changing the checking habit

- ☐ **Turn off some notifications** — so checking is a choice rather than a prompt.
- ☐ **Set check-in times** — for social apps, rather than checking throughout the day.
- ☐ **Mute or unfollow** — accounts that often leave you feeling worse.
- ☐ **Plan phone-free moments** — such as meals, walks or the first hour of the day.
- ☐ **Notice the urge** — pause, and ask what you're hoping to find.
- ☐ **Be present on purpose** — give your full attention to what you're doing now.

08 What I value in my own life

Things I value, even if no one sees them

One step I'll take this week

A note of care. If feeling left out or comparing yourself to others is affecting your mood, sleep or daily life, it may help to talk it through with someone you trust or a health professional.

SOURCES

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Przybylski, A. K., Murayama, K., DeHaan, C. R., & Gladwell, V. (2013). Motivational, emotional, and behavioral correlates of fear of missing out. *Computers in Human Behavior, 29*(4), 1841–1848.

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