



## #Danielle's Buzz FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)

Think back over the past 5 months. Has there been an event or opportunity that you wished you participated in, and what was it?

Maybe you can relate to one of these two examples. *You are watching Keeping Up with the Kardashians and suddenly wished you had a lavish lifestyle just like the reality stars.* Now, you begin to feel terrible about the job you are in and the money that you do not have.

*Or, it is a Saturday evening and you have opted to stay in and wear your new pajamas and binge watch 'Orange is the New Black' instead of going out on the town. You are also scrolling through your Facebook newsfeed and see a picture of a group of your friends who are at dinner and are obviously having the best time.* Now you wished you were with them and you are feeling like you are missing out on a good time.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century we tend to compare our own life choices to those of our family, friends, acquaintances or even strangers. Perhaps you wonder if Ben, the former captain of your high school football team is as successful in his career as you are. You are at a Dave Matthews Band concert and you suddenly see that your coworker Janet was lucky enough to get picked to dance on the stage with Dave himself — and you have to admit that you wish it had been you. These feelings of jealousy, fear, anxiousness, envy, and missing out are all part of a term coined as *FOMO*— Fear of Missing Out — or having a sense that something will happen and we won't be there to be a part of it. People of all ages experience FOMO and it isn't something to be ashamed of. So why do we experience FOMO? Social media and technology can play a large role in our experiences of FOMO. Kristin Luna of *YouBeauty.com* quotes Brooklyn-based psychiatrist Johnny Lops who says, "Having access to *Twitter* and *Facebook* can heighten my insecurities and jealous emotions because I feel like I am not doing as many cool things as you are."

Knowing that you tend to compare yourself and your choices to others, you might begin to wonder why your body is experiencing this uncomfortable feeling. Jenny Giblin psychotherapist in New York explains—the emotion of "fear" is rooted in our ancient survival instincts. Giblin says — "The stress you feel from seeing how much more fun everyone else is having begins in part of the brain called the amygdala, which is the source of emotions and long-term memory." In addition, Giblin explains that the amygdala is kind of like a smoke detector. It signals the brain to activate the flight or fight response when we begin to feel threatened or unsafe, and FOMO arises when we become preoccupied with the feeling that we are not good enough and that we may never be good enough." The unequivocal feeling of *not being good enough* can feel like a stab in the heart. It's a feeling of defeat.

Now that you have admitted (out loud or simply to yourself) that you experience FOMO in one way or another you must be wondering what can be done about this and how you can stay a step ahead of FOMO. Here are 3 steps to follow once you feel FOMO coming on.

- **Acknowledge to yourself** that Betsy's *Facebook* post about Mexico is cool, BUT that it's Betsy's experience, not yours. No two people will have the exact same experience. Sure, you can feel just as excited about your trip to Mexico as Betsy was, but you both experienced the excitement of your travels differently. Betsy was excited because it was her honeymoon. You were excited about Mexico because this trip was your first vacation in five years. An unknown writer describes that "when you see another person having a great time you need to remember that choosing one path means missing out on another, and this triggers FOMO: insecurity in our own choices. When you feel FOMO coming on, do a gut check and ask yourself if this trigger is really something you wish you were doing yourself or if it's a sudden recollection of a time you felt insecure in your own decision."
- **Be willing to not have it all.** Linda Bloom, LCSW and Charlie Bloom, MSW of *Psychology Today* explain that "needs are limited and desires are endless." Prioritize your life and decide what is important to you. Is it more important to go on vacation to Mexico or to see your aunt who is dying? The Blooms question— "Which will be more self-gratifying in the long run? Deciding what to prioritize requires us to cut off other options, but makes it possible to give clearer attention to those who have heart and meaning for us."
- **Ask yourself if this is an accurate representation of reality.** Did you know that even reality shows are scripted? It's true! In order to keep a storyline interesting reality "stars" are often told to exaggerate their excitement, feelings, beliefs, and drama. Next time you compare yourself to Kim Kardashian remind yourself that she is presenting the most flattering view of herself; this isn't how she looks rolling out of bed. Similar to reality stars, our "friends" on social media often write or post pictures in order to boast about themselves. Think about it, do you know anyone who desires to be negatively portrayed on social media? We post about our lives so that we can share the exciting things about ourselves. Brett and Kate McKay, writers and founders of *The Art of Manliness*, say it best—"When other people's updates are putting you in a funk, it's tempting to 'retaliate' by trying to post things from your own life that you think will induce FOMO in them. Engaging in such a practice only magnifies your own feelings of insecurity, deepens your propensity for making comparisons, and perpetuates the cycle. Even if you aren't feeling FOMO, be aware of what you're posting... are you trying to build yourself up in the eyes of your friends or are you legitimately trying to share life's moments with those you care about?"

In closing, it's clear that many of us deal with FOMO each and every day, especially in a world so influenced by social media. Just keep these points in mind, take a deep breath and say "No" to FOMO!

Resources:

<http://www.artofmanliness.com/2013/10/21/fighting-fomo-4-questions-that-will-crush-the-fear-of-missing-out/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/stronger-the-broken-places/201501/10-ways-overcome-fear-missing-out>