FEAR OF MISSING OUT

Social media is ingrained in our culture and in our lives. Most American adults are on social media 2+ hours each day. That’s a lot of time viewing the highlights of other people’s vacations, parties, amazing trips, etc. If you believe that what you see on social media is an accurate reflection of what’s really going on in people’s lives, you might feel like everyone else is doing amazing things and you’re missing out. This “fear of missing out” (FOMO) is so pervasive, it become a word all on its own. The Oxford English Dictionary defines FOMO as “anxiety that an exciting or interesting event may currently be happening elsewhere, often aroused by posts seen on social media.”

There are probably enough legitimate sources of anxiety in your life, so you don’t want to add more by generating feelings of FOMO! To reduce your FOMO this summer, keep the following in mind while scrolling through your social media feed:

- **Remember that people are sharing their highlight reel.** People do not accurately represent their lives on social media. Instead, they carefully curate photos and posts that put their lives in the best possible light. They’re showing you the highs, not the lows. Remember that everyone struggles, everyone has challenges, no one’s life is perfect. Don’t compare your life to the image presented by others on social media.

- **Practice gratitude and remember the grass is greener where you water it.** Rather than comparing your life to others and wishing you were somewhere else this summer, take a moment to be grateful for what you have rather than focusing on what you don’t. Gratitude is also a well-documented mood booster. So ask yourself “what am I grateful right now?”

- **Use your pangs of FOMO to propel positive change.** Use your feelings of FOMO to inspire you to get out there and make your life what you want it to be. Pick up the phone and schedule a date with a friend. Sign up for a class. Go for a walk in the woods. Make “social media worthy” events happen, rather than waiting for life to come to you.

- **Follow accounts that make you feel good.** There are a lot of inspirational, spiritual and just plain funny accounts on social media. Follow a few of those so you get a jolt of positivity and humor in the midst of your social media feed. What’s better than a funny dog or cat video?

- **Limit your time on social media.** If social media is making you feel bad regardless of your efforts to focus on the positive, it might be time for a digital detox. Set goals for limiting social media use, or take a break for days or weeks. Here’s some ideas to help you cut back:
  - **Turn off notifications.** App developers are getting more and more aggressive with notifications to lure users to interrupt whatever they’re doing to engage constantly with their phones. Don’t let them!
  - **Set time limits.** Utilize the “Screen Time” app on iPhone or some of the many other available apps designed (ironically) to limit screen time.
  - **Leave your phone at home.** When you’re out in the world interacting with real life people, be with them rather than with your phone.
  - **Make an announcement** on your social media accounts that you will be taking some time off! Encourage others to do the same and connect with them face to face.

If you or an immediate family member has a real problem with social media use, please call the Family Services EAP for free, confidential counseling for you and member of your household and immediate family. **We are here to support you.** Contact: 978-327-6666, info@FamilyServicesEAP.org, or submit an online inquiry today.