

The Fear of Missing Out

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02/27/2014

#FOMO

One of the marvels of the Internet age is the speed at which we can gather the latest information. Whether it's news from around the globe, across the country, or someplace in the community, the ever-expanding platter of news sites, social media sites, and everything in between, offers us a mosaic of everything occurring that's of interest to us—that is, if we so choose to take a look.

Being aware of what else is going on across town or as far as a plane can fly, however, has its detriments. While this fear of missing out is prevalent among Generation Y on social media sites, it is also taking hold among HR and career professionals everywhere.

FOMO Explained

What is the fear of missing out? That haunting feeling that somewhere, someplace, someone is doing something that you ought to know about. Someone is having a party, someone is holding a gathering, someone is having a good time, and maybe, just maybe, you were left out—or at least, you didn't receive the message in time to attend.

The fear of missing out condemns career professionals who otherwise could muster a fair degree of concentration and direct it towards their daily tasks. Instead FOMO has them flitting about the web, forever checking messages, and constantly seeking Twitter and Facebook updates about what might be happening in their world.

Will something else occur at the time you're doing something important? Count on it. Will something else be going on when you're bored, tired, lonely, hungry, or out of sorts? Unquestionably. It will be this way, every day, for the rest of your life.

The Dangers of FOMO

Prior to the age of the Internet, when computers only handled a limited number of functions and certainly weren't connected to one another, the fear of missing out was not a prominent social phenomena. In a world where people primarily contacted one another via a phone call, there was rarely the pervasive feeling that something else was going on and you were the last to know about it.

The danger of succumbing to the fear of missing out is that you'll actually miss your life, which turns out to be something much more substantial to miss. Concern for what else is occurring, while you're doing something you enjoy, is most insidious. Think of it: Here you are engaged in activity that you chose to undertake. You're glad you're doing, and if you had your choice, you would do it again. Yet, if you learn of something else occurring at the same time, would you allow your *joie de vivre* to diminish?

Don't let the fear of missing out put a crimp in your days. Everywhere, everyone at some time or another could be attending or participating in some other activity than what they're actually doing. So what? This is true for everyone on the planet.

Rather than gaze longingly at pictures of friends on Facebook partying with others, and lament that you weren't there, start your own party, and post your own pictures. Or, more simply, be happy for them, tell them so with a "like" or a comment.

Experience Your Life in the Present

Revel in the experience that you're having. Savor the days of your life—the insights, the encounters, the friendships, and all that goes with it. If you're not where you want to be, then step into another world. Join a new group, a new club, or a new team. Sign up to volunteer, to be on a committee, or to support some community effort.

Action is invigorating. You'll immediately feel better about what you're doing, and if you're lucky, the fear of missing out could diminish sufficiently, so that it is not an ever-present dilemma in your life.