JOMO. The Joy of Missing Out

Do you say yes to every networking, leadership or extracurricular opportunity? Do you feel anxious when you’re forced to wait a few minutes before checking your phone’s latest ping? Do you feel more alone than usual when you’re not connected to social media?

If these symptoms sound familiar, you may be suffering from the Fear of Missing Out, commonly known as FOMO. Don’t worry, you’re not alone. A recent mylife.com survey shows 56 percent of social media users experience FOMO.

With the ubiquity of smartphones, FOMO has reached epidemic proportions. Why? Smartphones enable hyper connectivity – the use of multiple means of communication like email, messaging, Facetime, etc. – A few hours away from status updates, tweets and emails can leave you feeling anxious, out of touch and alone.

FOMO isn’t reserved to cyber space. Every time you agree to a networking lunch or industry mixer when you’d rather be doing something more personally enriching, that’s FOMO rearing its ugly head.

In addition to making us feel anxious and stressed, FOMO can rob you of mindfulness. Our society as a whole is not comfortable with space to think and just be if we don’t have something going on, if we’re not connected, we feel lost. Luckily, there is a FOMO attitude. JOMO – the Joy of Missing Out.

JOMO takes saying no to a new level. Not only will I say no to that networking lunch, but I’ll be also feel great about doing whatever I’d rather be doing. Not only will I leave my phone at home, I’ll also feel liberated in doing so.

Tech blogger, Anil Dash, discovered the FOMO cure, JOMO, when he decided to unplug following the birth of his son. After a few weeks, he plugged back in – which for him meant signing into Facebook, checking his email and texts – and he realized he hadn’t missed a beat. Dash’s JOMO struck a chord. The Huffington Post has named 2014 “The Year of JOMO.”

JOMO is catching on because we’re all becoming more aware that the pings, rings and dings are unnecessary distractions that remove us from the present and rob us of productivity and meaningful interaction. The truth is, by “unplugging” and tuning it all out, we don’t miss anything. Instead, we gain freedom and space to think.

Here are three ways to embrace JOMO:

- **Define your personal core purpose.** What are your long-term goals? What legacy do you want to leave behind? Yes, these are big questions, but identifying the answers will grant you the perspective to judge which activities align with you purpose and propel you toward your legacy, and which ones don’t.

If a networking event or social activity doesn’t align with your core purpose, don’t go. If you social media newsfeed is dominating your attention and distracting you from what really matters, log out or delete your account. You can feel good about missing out because if it’s not a core purpose match or it’s not an activity that interests you personally, it’s just wasting your time.

- **Leave your phone at home.** If your phone is controlling your life, take back the control. The fastest way to regain control is to turn your phone off. It may be uncomfortable at first, but after 24 hours, you’ll feel great. If you must check your email, find a computer. If someone needs to get ahold of you, they’ll dial your office number. Trust me, we can live without our smart phones. There was a time in the not so distant past that they didn’t even exist.

- **Celebrate.** When you say no to something, be proud. You’re making room to dedicate your time and full attention to opportunities that truly matter to you. Further, the person you said no to should thank you. Someone who’s more interested and passionate about the opportunity at hand will now have the chance to step up and contribute whole-heartedly.

JOMO allows us all to miss out on those things we don’t truly care about and allows us to participate enthusiastically in events and opportunities that matter to us. JOMO is all about making the world a more productive place by doing less, and I encourage you to give it a chance.