

Cultivate a Healthy Fear of FOMO

Fear of missing out: it's what took me out onto Broadway in Nashville Saturday night, after I knew I should have been going home. It's what almost made me go out tonight instead of finishing a long-term project. It's what has helped me to procrastinate on some important things in my life instead of buckling down.

For me and for other humans, "FOMO" it has motivated more self-sabotaging time mismanagement decisions than most things.

FOMO lives where procrastination and a short-term mindset rules. If your time horizon is short and uncertain, long-term investments of time or effort or self-development become worth less. If long-term investments will impose a large cost, they become less attractive. If fear is gripping you and keeping you from doing something hard and time-intensive, spontaneity can be an easy escape. And spontaneity is great, but it becomes a cruel master when the fear of missing out is involved.

In the short-term mindset, each successive moment becomes more precious. As procrastination sinks in deeper, it becomes ever more important for you to get as much enjoyment as possible out of each moment. Need to finish your Monday work? All the more reason (or so your mind will tell you) to take the kids out for ice cream on Sunday afternoon.

Now I'm not saying you shouldn't take your kids out for ice cream. But if this is where you are, FOMO will eat you alive. Each snatch of time which you could spend facing your fear of your human tasks, you'll find yourself feeling the fear of missing out.

Fortunately, there are ways to break free of the FOMO cycle and develop FOFOMO: fear of fear of missing out.

Visualize how you will be feeling while you are out doing the things FOMO wants you to do. Visualize how you will be aware of your wasted time and your shunned responsibility while living out the few moments of pleasure you might get from your decision.

Get clear on the risks of listening to FOMO. Imagine what you'll miss out on if you let your fear of missing out keep you from important work.

Imagine how you'll regret not buckling down. Compare the marginal, forgettable gains you might get from a spontaneous night of fun against the deeper, more certain, longer-term gains you'll gain from finally doing that thing you said you'd do.

I'd much rather face up to fear of missing out than live in fear of missing out on forward

progress.

Don't get me wrong – it's important to live in the now and be spontaneous, too. But maybe just don't let those decisions come from a place of too much fear. Maybe don't let your short-term joy come with a ticking time bomb. At some point, you have to say no.

Let FOFOMO be your friend.

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