



**PARENT SENSE** BY VICKI CURRAN, EDS, LPC

## Handling the fear of missing out

Yes, FOMO — Fear of Missing Out — is real. Recent research describes FOMO as “having general anxiety over the idea that other people might be having fulfilling experiences without you.”

Studies show that 51 percent of kids these days actually experience anxiety over not being sure where their friends are or what they’re doing.

While the fear of missing out is nothing new, social media has greatly affected its impact on children today. Technology allows our kids to be constantly aware of what is happening with

whom at any given moment, which raises the levels of stress and anxiety children and teens experience.

But the disappointment of not being included is something all children need to learn how to navigate.

So how can parents help children cope with their worry that something amazingly interesting and fantastically exciting is happening without them?

### **MINDFULNESS**

Teach your child mindfulness. The point of mindfulness is to practice settling our minds and take some time to be still and quiet in a high-

tech, fast-paced world where it’s pretty easy to become over-stimulated. [By the way, this is good for everyone, adults included.] Introduce children to mindfulness with books like: “Mindful Kids: 50 Activities for Calm, Focus and Peace” by Whitney Stewart, “Sitting Still Like a Frog” by Eline Snel or “Master of Mindfulness” by Laurie Grossman.

Here’s one example: Set a timer and encourage your child to try their best to sit still with eyes closed until it goes off — three to five minutes can be a reasonable beginner goal. Have them focus

on their breathing and how their chest rises and falls. Begin to encourage long, deep, slow breaths. To help them breathe “correctly” have them hold their hands out in front of them as if they were holding a plate of freshly baked cookies. Tell them to inhale and imagine the delicious smell. Then, have them blow on the cookies to cool them off. Repeat until the timer ends.

### **HAVE TIME OFFLINE**

Limit internet times and allocate “phone free times.” If a tree falls in the forest and no one uploads a picture of it

onto Instagram, did it still fall down? Help children know that they don’t have to record every experience to prove that it happened. Teach kids to be in the moment and not worrying about recording the moment. In addition, practice turning off screens to create a habit of being unplugged. Have a charging area for all phones in the kitchen or another common area. Enforce a “no phones” rule at meal times and after 9 p.m. Have your child hand the phone in for charging overnight. When they whine about needing it as an alarm, buy an old-fashioned alarm clock. Have them let friends know that calls and texts will not be answered after 9 pm.

### **BE A ROLE MODEL**

Model healthy social media behavior for your children. Don’t text and drive. Charge your phone with theirs. Talk

about “Facebook envy” that occurs when we compare our “mundane life events” to the highlights posted by others. Explain to kids that technology creates a carefully edited, picture-perfect existence where things are edited and arranged until they’re just right. Explain how that is different from real life. Create opportunities to talk about the feelings of being left out. Work with your child to make in-person plans with their friends.

If you can choose one thing from the above list and attempt to implement it, it may help your child go from FOMO to JOMO — Joy of Missing Out. Not only is it good for the soul, it’s a great life lesson!

For more information or a list of local licensed professionals, contact Coastal Community Counseling Resources at 732-612-3148.