



Something to be worried about?

Have you heard of FOMO? FOMO is an acronym that stands for 'fear of missing out'. It's the feeling that you need to know what everyone else is doing at every moment and then worrying that everyone is having much more fun than you are. If you suffer from FOMO you feel the need to check for updates on social media regularly, all through the day and often through the night too. I'm sure you'll agree that this is the downside of living surrounded by technology.

These days FOMO has become a buzzword. There are articles in the press, reports on TV, discussions on chat shows and a growing number of books like Professor Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together*, in which she talks about this growing phenomenon. Turkle interviewed large numbers of teenagers while she was researching her book and her findings are quite worrying.

Turkle argues that being constantly connected actually leads to a new kind of solitude. Let's start with when we're alone at home. We want connection with other people, so we reach for our phone to check social media. But when we see photos and updates of other people having fun, we start feeling left out and we feel sorry for ourselves. We wanted connection but we end up feeling more isolated.

On top of this, even when we're actually enjoying ourselves and present in the photos, we still aren't satisfied. Now we're afraid we're missing out on something else. We even interrupt a face-to-face conversation to check status updates or to chat online. In fact, a large number of people now say they prefer texting to talking because it is easier to control than a real-time conversation. But really this makes it more difficult to develop relationships and feel close to people – another example of how technology makes us think we are connected but actually leaves us feeling unsatisfied.

It seems to me that we need to think carefully about when and how we choose to use social media. Why don't you test yourself to see how long you can go without checking for updates? Go on, give it a go! Take a moment to be on your own and see how it feels. It might help you enjoy life more in the here and now, and worry less about everywhere and everyone else.

Top Tips for writing

1. Think of an interesting title to make readers want to read on.
2. Introduce the subject of the article in the first paragraph.
3. The first sentence in each paragraph should summarise the main idea of the paragraph.
4. Ask questions and talk directly to the reader to get their attention.
5. Use different expressions to introduce and emphasise your points.