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Part 1. Read the four quotes. Choose the one that resonates most with you – or the one you find yourself questioning. Explain why.

<i>"Comparison is the thief of joy."</i> — attributed to Theodore Roosevelt	<i>"The reason we struggle with insecurity is because we compare our behind-the-scenes with everyone else's highlight reel."</i> — Steven Furtick
<i>"Envy is the art of counting the other fellow's blessings instead of your own."</i> — Harold Coffin	<i>"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment."</i> — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Part 2. Choose one option in each pair and explain your choice.

Comparing yourself to people you know personally	or	comparing yourself to strangers online?
Feeling inspired by someone doing better than you	or	feeling deflated or unsettled?
Comparing your career or achievements	or	comparing your lifestyle or relationships?
Social media making you feel better about your life	or	making you feel worse?
Noticing when you're comparing and catching yourself	or	getting pulled in without realising?
Caring what others think less as you get older	or	finding it hard to shake off regardless of age?

Part 3. Read the statements. Which feel true for you? Which do you resist? Explain.

- There are certain people whose lives I follow online and always feel slightly worse after looking at.
- I sometimes present a version of my life online that is more curated than the reality.
- I find it easier not to compare myself to people in very different circumstances — it's people in similar situations who get to me.
- I know logically that social media is not real life — but that doesn't always stop the feeling.
- There have been moments when someone else's success has genuinely inspired rather than deflated me.
- I sometimes mistake envy for a useful signal — it tells me something I want but haven't admitted to myself.

Part 4. Discuss the following questions.

- When did you last catch yourself comparing your life to someone else's? What triggered it — and how did it feel?
- Who are the people you are most likely to compare yourself to? What does that tell you?
- Is there an area of your life — career, relationships, appearance, lifestyle — where you are particularly prone to comparison?
- Do you think comparison gets easier or harder as people get older? Why?

Part 5. Look at the areas below. For each one, say: do you rarely compare yourself here, sometimes, or often? Then explain one that surprises you.

Career progress	Salary or wealth	Relationships
Appearance	Fitness or health	Social life
Travel experiences	Home or possessions	Intelligence
Parenting	Creativity	Happiness
Productivity	Online presence	How quickly life is moving

Part 6. Match each expression to its meaning. Then use three of these expressions to say something honest about your own relationship with comparison.

A. To measure yourself against someone	1. to judge your own worth, success, or progress in relation to another person
B. A highlight reel	2. the sense of your own value and importance, independent of how you compare to others
C. Upward comparison	3. comparing yourself to people who appear to be doing better, which often triggers envy or inadequacy
D. Downward comparison	4. a carefully selected version of someone's life showing only the best moments, typically on social media
E. To spiral into self-doubt	5. comparing yourself to people who appear to be doing worse, which can temporarily boost self-esteem
F. To keep up with the Joneses	6. fear of missing out – the anxiety that others are having better experiences than you
G. FOMO	7. to fall progressively deeper into insecurity and negative thinking about yourself
H. Self-worth	8. to feel pressure to match the lifestyle, possessions, or status of those around you

Answers: A) 1 B) 4 C) 3 D) 5 E) 7 F) 8 G) 6 H) 2

Part 7. Read the situations. Choose the response closest to how you'd actually feel or behave. Then discuss what your choice reveals.

You see a post from someone you know – a new job, a beautiful holiday, a milestone moment. You feel a familiar twinge.

- You feel genuinely happy for them, with no hint of envy.*
- You feel happy on the surface but there's a flatness underneath you don't quite want to admit.*
- You feel immediately aware of what you don't have – and it lingers.*

4. *You scroll past quickly. You know what looking too long does.*

A friend your age announces something significant — a promotion, a relationship, buying a house. You were already feeling behind.

1. *You celebrate them genuinely and feel OK. Their timing is theirs, yours is yours.*
2. *You celebrate them but the conversation afterwards is harder than you let on.*
3. *You find yourself quietly taking stock of your own life and feeling unsettled.*
4. *You feel a complicated mix of pride for them and something else you can't name.*

You notice you've been on social media for longer than you planned. You put the phone down feeling worse than when you picked it up.

1. *You recognise the pattern and remind yourself to use it differently.*
2. *You know this happens but can't quite change the habit.*
3. *You feel vaguely irritated — at the platform, at yourself, at both.*
4. *You think about deleting the app again, the way you have before*

Part 8. Read the statements. Say whether you agree, disagree, or partly agree.

- Social media is designed to make us compare ourselves, and we have very little power to resist that.
- Envy, if you pay attention to it honestly, can tell you something useful about what you actually want.
- We compare ourselves most to people who are similar to us — not to people who are very different.
- The cure for comparison is gratitude. If you focus on what you have, the comparing stops.
- It is possible to admire someone's life without wanting it for yourself — but most people can't quite separate the two.
- Younger generations are more affected by social comparison than older ones, because they've grown up with it.

Part 9. Before you ask, take a guess at your partner's answers. Then check — how well do you know them?

- Which social media platform, if any, makes them feel most susceptible to comparison?
- Is there one area of life where they are surprisingly unbothered by comparison?

- Do they think they are more or less affected by comparison than most people they know?
- Have they ever unfollowed or muted someone because of how the comparison felt? Would they admit it?
- What is the most useful thing comparison has ever done for them?

Part 10. Read the two viewpoints. Which do you find more intellectually honest? Where do you personally sit?

Viewpoint A

Comparison is a deeply human instinct — we have always measured ourselves against others, and we always will. The problem isn't comparison itself; it's the scale and speed of it that social media has created. The answer is better boundaries with technology, not trying to eliminate a natural human impulse.

Viewpoint B

Comparison is corrosive and mostly unhelpful. We compare our internal experience with other people's external presentation — which is never fair and never accurate. The most content people are those who have genuinely stopped measuring their lives against others, not just managed the exposure.

Part 11. Think of a time when comparison — upward or downward — had a real effect on how you felt or what you did. Tell your partner about it.

Think about:

- What triggered the comparison and who it involved
- Whether it deflated you, motivated you, or something more complicated
- How long the feeling lasted and what eventually shifted it
- What, if anything, you took away from it

Reflection

Complete the sentences in your own words.

1. The area of my life where I compare myself most is...
2. One person or account I follow online that I'd be better off without is... because...
3. When I catch myself comparing, the most useful thing I can do is...
4. Something I genuinely have that I sometimes forget to value is...