

Stop Comparisons on Social Media: A Reflection For Teens

It can happen innocently enough.

One minute you're scrolling through TikTok, admiring the cuteness of your best friend's new puppy. Then, rather unconsciously, you find yourself comparing your cat to the little labradoodle you saw online. You dress your kitty in a fluffy sweater to take a video, but she won't sit still long enough. You start thinking about how stupid you were to ever want a cat because dogs are so much cuter on social.

You've experienced the sting of comparison.

It is expected that the images we see, the conversations we have, and the news we read influences us. But we don't usually see the pitfalls of unproductive comparisons on social media.

If you are entertaining the comparison in order to comfort yourself, instead reflect on all the simple blessings you have in your life. It's not about how much better off you are than your friends. You, like many people, have much to be grateful for.

Name each of the things that made you smile today.

If scrolling on social feels like yet another reminder of all your mistakes, misfortunes, and inadequacies, then pause, breathe, and reflect. Everyone is facing challenges, whether seen or unseen. Realize that you are not the only one who feels less than. Sometimes life is hard.

Remember that you are a perfectly imperfect human being.

Lastly, are you comparing your present to an idealized version of your past, or to an unattainable future? Take a reflective pause before offering yourself some compassion. Does the pressure you put on yourself to achieve the ideal social media presence make you any better of a person?

Reflect on the fact that change is the only constant, and we can't cling to how we used to be.

The Teddy Roosevelt quote, "Comparison is the thief of joy" expresses how we can create unnecessary suffering through unhelpful mental habits. My invitation to you is simple: be open to realizing when comparison happens. Take a moment to pause, put the phone down, breathe, and reflect on whether the stories we are telling ourselves are stealing the joy of the moment.