

Commentary...

The curse of comparison

By Audry Van Houweling, PMHNP
Columnist

It is human nature to compare ourselves against others. There has always been a pressure from generation to generation to “keep up with the Joneses.” Of course, who the “Joneses” are has changed over time. For instance, you have had to replace those lovely harvest gold and avocado appliances once so chic with white or black and then to stainless-steel, and now somehow smart appliances that can order your milk for you.

The way in which we compare has also changed. If we go back a century, our means to compare was based primarily on face-face interactions had with neighbors, co-workers, family members, and people within our immediate communities. As transportation and media progressed, we gained greater exposure to different beliefs and lifestyles that we could then contrast against our own. The means for gossip and comparison continued to expand with the telephone, email, the cell phone, the smart phone, and then of course, social media.

For many of us, logging into our social media accounts has become as habitual and normalized as drinking water or eating and in fact, without this ever-present doorway into each other’s lives, some of us can indeed feel deprived or disconnected. In this two-dimensional world, we are often presented with each other’s best moments — filtered, edited, cropped, and

portraying a social ideal that is in many ways unattainable. As we scroll through our feeds however, it is hard not to judge ourselves against the smiles, highlights, and achievements posted by our peers.

Furthermore, we feel compelled to capture the very “best” of ourselves and then measure our social standing by how many likes or positive comments we can collect.

As a woman, I feel this phenomenon to be particularly pervasive. Women and girls are already expected to achieve unrealistic standards; our tendency to people-please, hide from vulnerability, and cover up our flaws is taken to a new level with social media. Many of us strive to portray perfection in our appearance; perfect family photos; our relationships; motherhood; our impressive exercise routine; and our financial success.

In the end, our need to compare and attempt to keep up with the Joneses comes from a deep need for validation and acknowledgement.

Everyone wants to feel important and noticed from time to time, yet in putting forth an edited and

filtered version of who we are, the acknowledgement we receive can feel shallow and dissatisfying as we continue to trade an idealized image for authenticity. This can ultimately be isolating, especially if the allure of the two-dimensional world supersedes opportunities for three-dimensional, face-face human contact.

Using social media as the platform for self-portrayal can ultimately rob us from the feeling of being truly known for who we really are. Thus, despite our widespread connectivity, many of us continue to feel lonely, misunderstood, and unfulfilled.

Bringing awareness to our social media habits is a crucial first step to making change. A social media hiatus can be very refreshing. Recognizing the fallacy and unrealistic standards portrayed on our social media feed is important. Prioritizing face-face relationships where you can express the totality of who you are is paramount. Appreciate the achievements of others, but embrace your own uniqueness. Be the best version of yourself — not someone else.

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Schedule baseline concussion testing

The Center Foundation will be conducting ImpACT Concussion Baseline testing for children ages 12 through 17 years who have not already received the baseline in the past two years. Group testing will be on Wednesday, January 3, 2018, at 10 a.m. and Monday, January 15, 2018, at 9 a.m.

Baseline tests are held at The Center, 2200 NE Neff Road in Bend.

According to the CDC, concussions are second only to auto accidents as the leading cause of childhood injury. It is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of high school athletes receive a concussion in any given year, and if an athlete returns to play before the brain is fully healed, the child is at risk of second impact concussion syndrome. The Center Foundation is pleased to offer this community service as a means of helping

protect young brains. It is recommended that student athletes have a baseline test every two years. ImpACT Concussion Baseline testing is a computerized “snapshot” of how a child’s healthy brain is functioning; the test takes less than an hour.

The baselines are NOT MRIs or scans.

Baselines are electronically stored for use in the event that the child receives a concussion. Should the child suffer a concussion, he or she will then be able to have the baseline compared to a post-test conducted by a medical professional following the injury. Post-concussion tests and assessment will be handled through parent or guardian self-pay or insurance.

The cost of the baseline is \$15. Registration for the baseline test is required; contact Lauri Bonn at 541-322-2321.

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