

Joy of Missing Out becomes the new normal among Gen Z

Diya, Prashanth, and Neeraja share insights on embracing JOMO, prioritizing personal joy over societal pressures and trends.

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“I have been steering away from trends, sticking to my colour palette and buying things that I know I will use,” says Diya Padmakumar, 23, a Chennai resident. This isn’t about art, but mastering the art of missing out, prioritising what truly matters, and tuning out the noises of the outside world. “I dislike clutter, and following fleeting trends only pushes me to buy things I don’t need,” adds Diya.

Yet, many are familiar with the refrain, “If you’re not going to experience everything in your 20s, then when?” And this

pressure often drives people to jump on trends simply because their peers are doing so. Prashanth Gurunath reflects on this mindset: “While it’s true that your 20s are about exploration, I don’t believe in spending money just to do everything now. For me, finding happiness in simpler things gives me control over my finances,” he says.

Freeing up your space

G. Neeraja, 23, a qualified psychologist and assistant professor at the Madras School of Social Work, explains, “The fear of missing out is only natural, given the overwhelming number of things happening around us. For instance, the entire Internet was talking about Oppenheimer but I felt like I couldn’t contribute to the discussion because I didn’t see the film, and that’s okay. I chose not to engage because it frees up my space for what I personally like to do with that time. This is just an example, but this runs deeper.”

Prashanth has similar sentiments. “In my office, while some sip on Starbucks lattes, I stick to my beloved local tea stalls. It’s not that I disdain branded

items, but if I only follow what others do, I will forfeit what truly brings me joy at the end of the day. I'd miss out on the cherished spots like 'More (buttermilk) Thatha' of Thiruvanmiyur and beach bhajji if I let consumerism drown out my own personal preferences," he says.

FOMO or JOMO

So, is this truly the only pointers to the listicle: rebellion against FOMO and going all in for the JOMO? Diya explains, "I used to wake up and doom scroll like it's second nature. I watch peers moving abroad, getting married, achieving noteworthy things, and I feel static, as if I was not measuring up. Succumbing to Instagram trends and trying to blend in has taken a lot from me. I'm burnt out."

Living in the state of JOMO doesn't mean you have to completely go offline on social media. "It is all about seeing what is happening IRL," Prashanth chimes in. "I won't lie when I see my friends post on Chennai happenings when I am not in Chennai and missing home, I do feel that bit of FOMO, but I channelise my feelings and not sit with them," he says.

Having hit all the marks, but really, how is this done when there is no set list for JOMO? It isn't just about sidestepping trends or avoiding consumer traps. "It is about an act of letting go," Neeraja remarks. "When FOMO outweighs JOMO, it may signal a lack of clear priorities. There are always a dozen things that I want to do but I will usually look for what is the priority in the list, and let the rest go, simply that."

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