



## HEAD GAME



### HEAD GAME WITH LIZ DENGLER

# DEALING WITH FOMO

**F**omo, the fear of missing out, is not new – you may know it as keeping up with the Joneses. It is the idea (or fear) that there may be something (or something better) going on without you.

In recent years Fomo has become a well-studied psychological phenomenon. Those studies show that this mindset leads to higher levels of anxiety and depression across all age groups. Part of the pervasiveness of Fomo is the growth of social media; we can now know *for sure* that we are missing out just by glancing at our phones.

We've all had those days when we are at work but it is perfect for flying and everyone is sending it cross country. Remember that day in June 2019, when everyone top-landed Mont Blanc? I don't even live in Europe, and I was feeling Fomo! It's hard to dismiss.

Dusty Miller is an instructor at my old local site in Boulder, Colorado and is a passionate amateur expert on Fomo. "When I moved back to Boulder the Fomo here was so strong I started joking anytime I'd hear people Fomo-ing, by calling it Fomo-ing at the mouth!" he says.

"It's relatively tough flying here. We're a mile high, we have a low launch, and to get up you have to start your flight with a low save." The site sees a lot of bomb-outs and Fomo.

Dusty thinks Fomo in flying is one consequence of how fickle our sport can be. "In most places you can't just say 'I wanna go fly,' and go fly," he says. "In many places, the weekend warrior folks get off on Friday but then it isn't flyable at all over the weekend. But then Wednesday comes, it's epic, and all those weekend warriors have to watch."

Not only do many of us have to accommodate life and work schedules, but when finding time to fly we have to deal with the complications of weather conditions, and sites. So when you mis-read a forecast or had other plans on what turns into an epic day, it's hard not to let the Fomo get you down. "It's difficult for people to be stoked on other peoples' success in this [American] culture, of 'Be at the top of the stack, be the best, be number one,'" he says.

So what's the best way to deal with it? Dusty's suggestion: Work on changing your mindset. Reframe it as Jomo – the joy of missing out. "I'd call myself an amateur Jomo specialist," he laughs. Instead of letting Fomo foster resentment or jealousy, let it become a training tool. "To me, Jomo is to be stoked that your friend has sent some big flight and learn from it or being able to look at a pilot soaring and be like 'Sweet, it's on!'"

In short, make a missed opportunity a learning experience. Instead of grumbling that you bombed, find the positives of the miss – watch your friend fly away and then take off to retrieve her.

Dusty knows how frustrating Fomo can be and as an instructor regularly sees Fomo firsthand. He is careful to take the time to discuss it with folks when appropriate. "When you have a hard, low-save site, it's challenging to progress as a new pilot because the best way to progress is airtime," he says.

"The pilots that embrace the Jomo part of paragliding have better success here. I try to teach that."

There is no doubt that new pilots are more susceptible to the dangers of Fomo. If they miss a good day, they may take some bigger risks next time (they don't want to miss out again). Unfortunately, this often

results in an uncomfortable and forced margin adjustment. "It's much better," Dusty says, "if you're able to get beyond the Fomo and initially be stoked with sled rides. Take the time to talk with pilots who are having success, study tracklogs, and have the joy of learning how to improve. Study what made that day work."

Sinking into the Fomo prevents progression because, as Miller puts it, "Who wants to be bummed out?" But if you're stoked when you see that someone did something amazing, "You're more likely to study it and figure out what they did that worked. You can learn from it and progress."

Fomo can be a career-long problem. It doesn't just go away – it takes a lot of work to reframe your mind around it. Without the proper mindset for example, competition can lead to an anxious Fomo swirl if you miss out on a big day or bomb out. "There is so much ego involved in paragliding," says Dusty. "For example, I flew to Wyoming this year. It just kind of lined up and was super fun and rewarding. I got congratulated by some pilots, but I also saw that it was really hard for some very good pilots. It bummed them out that I did it, and they didn't."

So how do we evolve beyond Fomo? According to Dusty there are a few Jomo masters out there we can learn from. "There's a local pilot who seems to have mastered it," says Miller. "I'll be in the air, and he'll hit me up like, 'I'm working. You're crushing it. Fly as far as you can, and I'll come to pick you up.' I feel like that is the gold star of Jomo." **✎**

*Liz Dengler is editor of USHPA's Pilot Magazine and is a paraglider pilot and writer based on the road in the USA / #vanlife. She will be contributing to The Head Game throughout 2022.*

“FOMO DOESN'T JUST GO AWAY - IT TAKES WORK TO REFRAME YOUR MIND AROUND IT”



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