



Is the grass really greener?

The next time you have an attack of the green-eyed monster, try to remember that others may well envy your own patch of grass

Everyone feels a stab of envy from time to time. Maybe one of your friends has a new laptop which makes homework easier, someone in your class is showing off the coolest brand of trainers, or you have a pal whose parents give them a later curfew, or expect them to do fewer chores around the house. Whether it's possessions, friendships, family dynamics, hobbies or even the size of your bedroom, there's always going to be someone out there who seems to get a better deal. It's easy to fall into thinking that things would be better if only you had that latest phone, new top, more lenient parents, an older sibling or a life that matches that of an influencer you follow online. But is the grass really greener on the other side?

Understanding the cycle

Often when you're feeling jealous, you start fantasising about an alternate reality where things are unrealistically perfect. It's important to remember that when the initial excitement of a new possession or experience wears off,

it soon becomes the new normal, and you might then be looking for something else to bring you happiness. Psychologists call this the 'hedonistic treadmill'.

For example, you might move house and get a super new bedroom that is bigger and brighter than your old one. You choose how to decorate it, invite friends round for sleepovers and life seems perfect. But a few weeks later, you realise you can hear noises from the boiler downstairs, or the toilet flushing next door, and your window looks out onto a streetlight. All of a sudden it doesn't seem quite so perfect.

Anna Mathur is a psychologist and author of parenting books. She explains: 'New things can seem sparkly and exciting, but they soon become part of your normal. The fantasy is always different when you add in real life.'

Who do you envy?

You might find yourself feeling jealous of your friends, classmates or others in your peer group, whose lives or possessions seem better than your own. People you follow





on YouTube and social media can be another source of envy. The internet means the whole world is at your fingertips, so there will always be someone out there who looks like they have more than you.

Joanne Callan is a wellbeing coach with Relax Kids. She says: 'It's important to recognise that what you're seeing is a highlight reel, through the lens of a filter, and you don't often see the more mundane side of people's lives.' That girl in class might have a new rucksack, for example, but it could have been a gift from a family member she rarely gets to see. Or a friend might have a later curfew, but he might also be keen to get out of the house because his parents are concentrating on a new baby.

If you feel envious of someone, try flipping that feeling around. Ask yourself what you have to be grateful for, and what they might envy of yours. While you're secretly feeling jealous of a friend's new kitten, she might be privately fantasising about having a big sister just like you have. Or as you're admiring a classmate's new hoodie, they might wish they had your good grades.

It's not fair!

William Shakespeare once wrote: 'Comparison is the thief of joy.' In other words, if you're always looking at what other people have, it stops you appreciating the things you have in your own life. Life doesn't have to be perfect for you to feel grateful for it.

Anna says: 'It's about recognising that sometimes life isn't fair. People's circumstances are all different, which can be really hard and sad. There will be things in your life that you enjoy, and times that are difficult, and uncertainty is part of life.'

Joanne says that the problem with comparison is that it can make you feel like who you are, or what you have, is not good enough. She suggests replacing those feelings with a simple affirmation, such as: 'I'm the best me that I can be.'

She adds: 'When you start comparing yourself to someone, think about what life for that person is like. Sometimes appearances and possessions are just layers.' Remember – life isn't always fair, but it can still be fun and fulfilling, just the way it is right now.

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HOW TO LOVE YOUR LIFE RIGHT NOW



Write a 'thank you list'

Try writing down three things you're grateful for every morning when you wake up, and every night before you go to bed.

Try mindful breathing

Rather than dwelling on how good things used to be, or might be in the future, take a breath and notice what you have in this moment.

Be realistic

If you have a strong desire for something, ask yourself how you will feel a week, a month or a year after you acquire it and it becomes your new normal.

Avoid online comparisons

Remember that influencers are showing you a snapshot of their lives and you have no idea what's going on behind the scenes.



For more information, visit: annamathur.com or relaxkids.com