You *aren't* behind in Life.
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Human beings have always made upward social comparisons. On the other side, the grass was greener long before social media websites showed you so. This conscious, intellectual activity- of contrast, is beneficial under a stable and controlled environment because it facilitates improvement and adaptation. We are wired to compare ourselves to others, especially those we regularly interact with within our close group. However, it becomes problematic in an artificially manufactured environment, as social media does. What that means is, our frame of reference of comparison has shifted from a selected group of individuals, whose struggles we are well aware of, to people whom we know nothing about- except what they *choose* to show us.

Even though it is indisputable that the internet has made life much more convenient, there is a rise in what we can be termed as 'social media-induced jealousy.' Human emotions are very poorly understood. In evolutionary terms, 'emotions are adaptive responses to the environment that increase chances of survival.' But unlike simple adaptations – emotions are much more complex. Kristjánsson, in "*A philosophical critique of psychological studies of emotion: the example of jealousy,"* argued that envy is considered to be a distinct emotion that relates to an individual's desire to attain an object of attention that is deemed to be absent from their life.

Envy is a strong emotion, and it is also a personality trait that can become dominant over time. Amongst many others, it is one such trait influencing factors of depression. Social comparison theory states that people generally compare themselves with others close to their abilities and opinions. When we expose ourselves to these drastic social comparisons at an enormous scale, a number which would rarely be encountered in everyday life, we might develop higher levels of envy. As a result, the differences between them and us become more salient, and we face more negative emotions. Moreover, some empirical studies have indicated a positive correlation between envy and depression.

Regular exposure to depressing news, constant interaction with posts of hyper-successful overworked individuals, a well-orchestrated display of 'milestones,' and digitally manipulated pictures can produce unrealistic expectations of oneself. This could potentially lead to a defeatist and depressing view of your own life and is treated as a threat by your brain- deeming yourself inadequate or not fit for survival. However, most of the threats we feel due to online exchange are *imagined (and constructed*), but our cognitive and physiological reactions to it are strikingly similar.

Your conscience and your 'reality' might be a figment of your brain's imagination and your success or failure, an interpretation of it. Hence, the reality is just an illusion. As the famous saying goes, life is how you see it. Multiple centers of consciousness communicate to create a vision of life and what it should be. A study on how the structure of online social networks mirrors those in the offline world has found that apart from the fine-scale differences, our brains process the online and offline social networks in surprisingly similar ways.
Social media regularly bends the rules of how humans view society- often at the expense of the users. Success in the real world is usually open to interpretation, so is a failure. Providing metrics in the form of 'views,' 'likes,' 'comments' (or the absence of these), etc., makes the users dependent on the transient

validatory and substantive nature of this 'marketing' scheme. Quantifying life's actual quality according to the likes of others, if not impossible, is, in fact, extremely difficult and dangerous. The result is often deceiving and incorrect.

Therefore, defining *your idea of success* becomes extremely important. Much like the word success, the word *ordinary* is also subjective. Recently, however, it has come to connote a value system where deviance from the standard is somehow intolerable. The *standard* is an 'Instagram perfect' life. If teaching makes one happy, then comparing your life to an online gamer and youtube personality is not justice to yourself. Our lives are usually guided by a goal, working towards it and subsequently accomplishing it. Learning how that goal would make your life meaningful in the long run is how you define success. Usually, these goals are beneficial when they benefit and influence relationships with others and not just ourselves because, evolutionarily, this ensures the survival, growth, and well-being of the community/tribe as a whole.

Social media has redefined the meaning of accomplishment and satisfaction into validation and endorsements. When we focus on vanity, we often compromise on sanity. You have a choice to 'selectively ignore' aspects of social media that do not add active value to your life. Use it for the plethora of information available and its ability to reach out to the strangest corners of the world, but don't become a passive slave to the algorithms of social media networks.