

Hab Barton

From: Barton Advisory Services, LLC <hab@bartonllc.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 11, 2025 10:03 AM
To: Hab Barton
Subject: Acknowledge, Move On



This Isn't New

“Comparison is the thief of joy.”

- Oh, okay. I'll just never compare myself to anyone again.

“Sugar is bad for you.”

- Great. I'll just avoid all of the tastiest foods forever.

“You need 8 hours of sleep every night.”

- Super. I'll get 9 hours a night for the rest of my life just to be safe. I'm sure my family won't mind or interrupt.

There are many things we know. We know these things innately, and then research comes along and confirms our knowledge. Many times, knowing has almost zero impact on what we actually do. Knowing is the easy part. Action is the hard part.

Comparing yourself to others has been around since people started talking. Studies have confirmed its ill effects 100 times over. A recent bit of research that fascinated me comes from the book *A Wealth of Well-Being* by Meir Statman

- “An increase in neighbors' income reduces a person's well-being by as much as an equal reduction in that person's own income.”

So, if my neighbor gets a \$10K raise it might feel like my income dropped \$10K just because they got a raise?! I can't picture discussing finances that openly with a neighbor, but what if they get a brand-new car? Then all of a sudden my 2013 Camry might not feel so sleek.

The need to avoid comparison is evident. I can't prove it, but I bet we flush away more money on comparisons than on anything else.

But *how* do you stop comparing?

Comparing is ingrained in our human nature. I don't think we can stop comparing, short of becoming a hermit. Actually, even then you won't stop. Go read about Christopher Knight, the guy that lived in the Maine woods alone for 27 years. He is not a people person, but even he took issue when compared to other notable recluses. He wanted his isolation to be seen as purer or whatever. Point being, even the most hermitic amongst us still fall into the comparison trap.

We won't stop comparing, BUT I do think there is a chance to minimize and mitigate the damage. Like most things, the answer to our puzzle comes from tennis. In an interview with 60 Minutes, Novak Djokovic said he's gotten nervous and tight in every match he's ever played. Possibly the greatest to ever play still deals with doubts while playing. Here is the key, Djokovic said he doesn't try to stop the doubt, *he just tries to acknowledge it and move on*.

I think that is the first, and possibly only step, when we find ourselves comparing and being envious. It's going to happen. Whether it's financial, family, health, status, or some other category, we will compare. As soon as you catch yourself comparing, acknowledge it and do not judge yourself. Move on.

You can also take comfort in the fact that you are likely comparing to entirety of your life to a highlight from someone else's.

My guess is acknowledgement, acceptance, and moving on can go a long way towards dealing with comparison in a more positive way. If you stop there, I think you are winning.

One more step could be filtering in your own personal life values, assuming you know what those are. When I catch myself comparing and envying, I can remind myself that the person is pursuing something important for them but not for me. I've spent a good deal of time crafting a set of values to live by, but that's likely a topic for another day.

Car Comparisons

Here is a thought on cars, which often come up in the Comparison conversation. Nerdy accountants and planners like myself generally can't wait to tell you what a waste of money luxury automobiles are. Drive it off the car lot and the value plummets, depreciation hits, blah blah blah. That's all technically correct, but in some cases there is more to it.

My cousin recently told me about a lifetime goal he's had about owning a Porsche similar to the one his dad once drove. His dad passed away when we were kids. This car has been on his mind ever since, and he is now in a spot where he can buy one. If you've dreamed of owning a certain car your whole life, if it makes you feel connected with a family member you've lost, then could there be a *better* use of money?

Plus, my cousin offered to let me drive the car one day. So, if you see a Porsche going 17MPH down Johnston Street, please refrain from flipping me off. I've never driven a sports car before.

If it's your dream purchase, then pursue it. I'm all for it and then some. Just be sure it's your dream and not one the Comparison Fiend snuck into your life.

Side note: how about listening just a little bit more? As I said, some people jump out of their seat to say what a foolish purchase a car can be. Had I not been working on listening skills for over a

decade now, I might have missed a really good story and a really good reason for buying that car.

Video of the Month: Grapes compared with Cucumbers

This video shows us the effects of comparison in real time, albeit with monkeys. Both monkeys perform the same task, but one is rewarded with cucumbers while the other is rewarded with tastier grapes. The monkey receiving cucumbers is not at all pleased.

The video is short but skip ahead to 1:33 if you want to see the highlight.

- [Two Monkeys Paid Unequally](#)
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Tariff Concerns & Implications

What are tariffs and what impacts will they have on me? There are many different ways to answer that. An important thing to keep in mind is that markets are forward focused. The expected impact of tariffs is already reflected in market pricing.

I didn't know until very recently how badly I want to type two "Rs" in tariffs.

- [Tariff Trepidation](#)
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Snow Days

I would do (most) anything for my girls. That includes allowing them to doll me up with their makeup kit. It helped that this was a moment of quiet while we were indoors during the snowstorm.

You might have guessed that this makeup kit is an extremely messy toy. You would be absolutely correct.

You may have also guessed this toy is a gift from grandparents that don't have to deal with said mess. And again, you'd be correct.





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