KESTON SCHOOL

MIND & EMOTIONS · FREE SAMPLE

Stop Comparing Yourself

Notice the trigger, change your inputs and measure your own progress

CHAPTER 1 + WORKBOOK SECTION

BEFORE YOU START

How to use this book

By the last page you will know what sets off your comparisons, have a feed and a week that trigger fewer of them, use envy as a clue to what you want, and keep a simple personal scoreboard that measures you against your own past instead of other people's highlights.

1. Read one chapter at a time. Each one gives you a single idea and a single action.
2. Open the Stop Comparing Yourself Workbook and complete the matching section while the chapter is fresh.
3. Do the “Try this” action within seven days. Reading changes what you know; the action changes what you do.
4. Finish with the checklist in chapter 12 and come back to it whenever you slip.

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CHAPTER 1

The Scoreboard in Your Head

Recognize the everyday moments when you measure yourself against others, why you come away feeling behind, and why telling yourself to stop rarely works.

It is a quiet Sunday evening. You are on the couch, mostly content, scrolling for a minute before bed. A college friend has posted photos from a new house with a big kitchen and a yard. A former coworker announces a new job title. Someone you barely know is running a marathon. You put the phone down, and the evening feels different. Nothing in your own life changed in those five minutes, yet you now feel a little smaller, a little late, a little behind.

If that sounds familiar, this book is for you.

The scoreboard nobody asked for

Most of us carry a scoreboard in our heads. It tracks where we stand on money, career, looks, relationships, fitness, parenting, travel, even how organized our kitchen is. The scoreboard updates itself all day. A friend's engagement, a sibling's raise, a neighbor's new car, a teammate who seems to get everything done before lunch. Each one moves the numbers.

The odd thing about this scoreboard is that you never set it up. You did not choose the categories. You did not choose who you are measured against. And the rules keep changing. On Monday you compare your career to a classmate. On Tuesday you compare your body to a stranger. On Wednesday you compare your weekend to a couple you follow online. Whoever looks ahead in the moment becomes the standard.

No wonder it so often ends the same way: with the sense that you are losing.

Three everyday moments

Comparison rarely announces itself. It tends to show up in three kinds of moments.

The scroll. You open an app for a quick break and leave with a heavier mood. Other people's best moments arrive one after another, and your ordinary Tuesday looks dull next to them.

The room. At work, at a party or at the gym, you quietly rank yourself. Who is more confident in the meeting, who earns more, who looks better, who has the more interesting story. You may not say a word, but your attention is busy keeping score.

The milestone. A friend gets engaged, buys a home, has a baby, starts a business or gets promoted. You are genuinely happy for them, and at the same time something tightens in your chest. Then you feel guilty for feeling that, which makes it worse.

> **Key idea:** Comparison is not a character flaw. It is a habit of attention, and habits of attention can be changed.

Why "just stop" does not work

When people notice how much they compare, they usually try one of three fixes.

The first is willpower: "I will just stop comparing myself." This rarely lasts, because comparison happens in a fraction of a second, before any decision is made. You cannot simply refuse a thought you did not choose to have.

The second is forced gratitude: "I should be grateful for what I have." Gratitude is valuable, but used as a scolding it adds a second layer of bad feeling. Now you feel behind and ungrateful.

The third is withdrawal: deleting every app, skipping the reunion, avoiding the friend who seems to be doing better. This can bring short relief, but it shrinks your life, and comparison quietly follows you into the places that remain. You will still meet coworkers, neighbors and family.

What these fixes have in common is that they treat comparison as something to defeat by force. This book takes a different approach. You will learn to notice when comparison starts, change the inputs that set it off and build a scoreboard that is actually yours.

What this book can and cannot do

This is a practical book about an everyday habit. It offers tools you can use this week, at home, at work and online. It does not offer therapy, and it cannot treat anxiety, depression or any other mental health condition.

If comparison comes with a low mood that lasts for weeks, trouble sleeping or eating, or thoughts of not being good enough that feel overwhelming, please talk to a doctor or a licensed mental health professional. That is not a failure. It is the right tool for a bigger problem. Chapter 9 returns to this.

For most readers, though, comparison is an ordinary habit that costs more than it should. It can be reshaped with small, steady steps.

How to use this book

Each chapter covers one idea and ends with one action you can take within seven days. The workbook gives you space to do each action on paper, with your real life rather than in theory. You will get the most out of it if you read one chapter, do the action, then move on.

You do not need to change everything at once. You do not need to become someone who never feels envy. The goal is simpler: comparison should become something you notice and handle, not something that quietly runs your evenings.

Try this

Over the next three days, pay attention to one question: when did I feel behind today?

Each evening, take five minutes and write down up to three moments. For each one, note where you were (scrolling, at work, with friends, with family) and who you were comparing yourself to. Do not try to change anything yet, and do not judge yourself for what you find. You are simply looking at the scoreboard for the first time.

At the end of the three days, circle the one moment that stung the most. You will use it later in the book.

In the next chapter, we look at why your mind keeps score in the first place, and why the scoreboard is so often wrong.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Comparison usually runs in the background, quickly and without your permission.
- The feeling of being behind comes from a scoreboard you never chose.
- You cannot switch comparison off, but you can change how it runs.

→ Workbook, section 1

01 The Scoreboard in Your Head

Look at the scoreboard you never chose, three evenings in a row.

FILL IN

When did I feel behind today?

Day	Where I was	Who I compared myself to	What it was about

CHECKLIST

Where my comparisons show up most

- [ ] The scroll - apps and feeds
- [ ] The room - work, parties, the gym
- [ ] The milestone - other people's big news

CHECKLIST

Fixes I have tried before

- [ ] Willpower - telling myself to stop
- [ ] Forced gratitude - scolding myself
- [ ] Withdrawal - deleting, skipping, avoiding

The one moment that stung the most (circle it, you will use it later):

YOUR NEXT STEP

Want the whole book?

You just read chapter 1 of Stop Comparing Yourself and tried the first workbook section. The full e-book has 12 chapters, a complete workbook and a final checklist. Here is everything inside:

01 The Scoreboard in Your Head

02 Why We Measure Ourselves

03 What Comparing Costs

04 Your Own Measuring Stick

05 Catch the Comparison

06 Change Your Inputs

07 Track Your Own Progress

08 Four Places It Shows Up

09 When Envy Hits Hard

10 A Steadier Daily Default

11 Running Your Own Race

12 Mistakes & Checklist

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