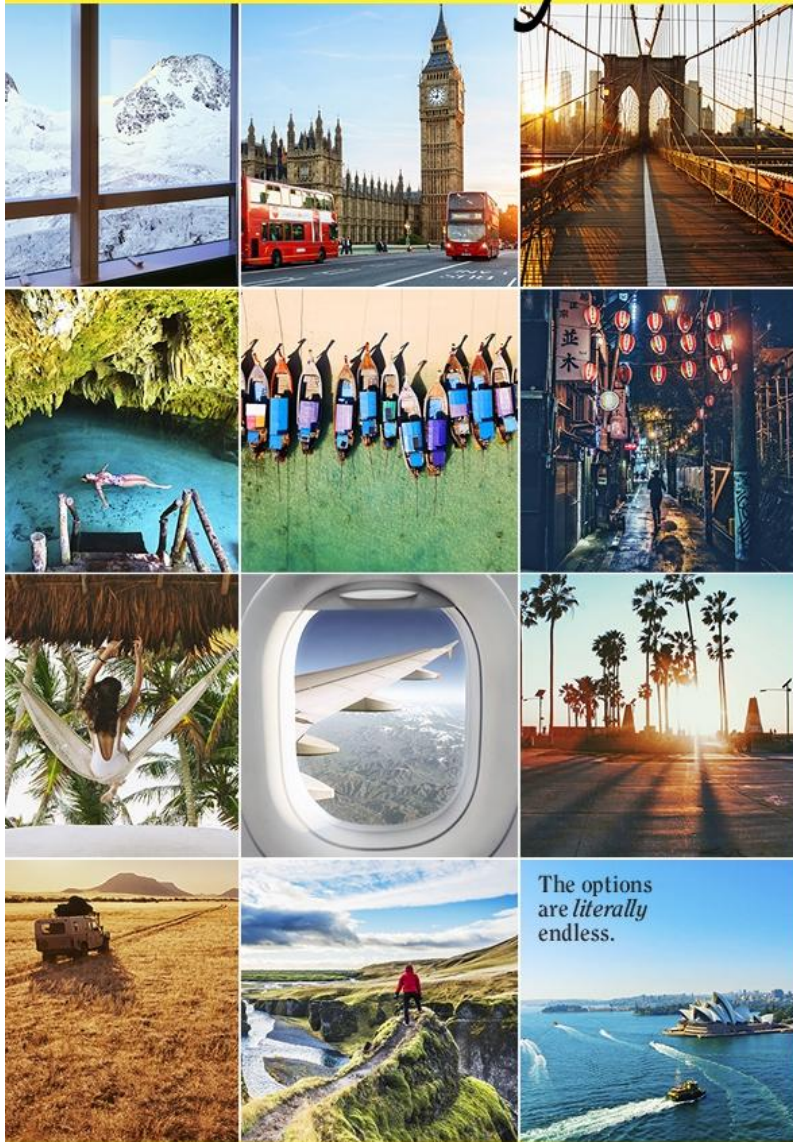


Just. Decide. Already.



The options are *literally* endless.

You know the drill: You spend countless minutes (hours?) browsing movie titles—or restaurants or shoe sales or travel destinations or hotels—only to feel paralyzed by the idea that if you stop, you might overlook a totally fab, can't-miss gem. So you do just one more search... and then another...and....

You may have tackled your FOMO (fear of missing out). But you could still be suffering from its cousin, FOBO—the fear of better options. “It’s a psychological phenomenon when you’re always looking for something better, making it difficult to commit to anything,” says venture capitalist Patrick McGinnis, who coined the term when he was a student at Harvard Business School in 2004.

Since then, FOBO has reached epidemic levels, thanks largely to the option-filled apps and sophisticated web-search databases that feed the indecision beast, says researcher Abigail Scholer, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Waterloo. “The ease of accessing information makes it harder for some people to make choices,” she explains.

Just consider a challenge like picking a new pair of jeans among a dizzying number of brands, online reviews, and price points, all while wondering if a better deal is out there. Social media only aggravates FOBO, adds McGinnis: “Seeing what others have gives us higher aspirations and makes us pickier.”

Besides being a time suck, the behavior behind FOBO (called maximizing, in science-speak) has been linked to feelings of regret and depression, says Scholer. One 2018 study found that maximizers had poorer well-being than people who made decisions without exhaustive searching. Here’s how to avoid FOBO and choose wisely the first (or, okay, second) time around.

1

Focus On One Thing

No single venue for, say, a party will check every box, so save time and energy by deciding what’s most important (cheap drinks!) and let that dictate your choice, says McGinnis.

2

Make Reviews Do the Work

For stuff like takeout food, use crowd-sourced ratings to help. If a pick has five stars (and if you’re cost-conscious, two dollar signs), your decision is made.

3

Ask Someone Decisive

Still can’t commit? Narrow down your choices to two or three, then outsource the final call to a pal or your mate.

4

Set a Deadline

For big spends that require research, such as buying a car or signing a new lease, give yourself a time limit. “Once you make your choice, stick to that decision,” says Scholer.