



The Comparison Trap

A fifteen-minute pause in a noisy world – with Paul Cleworth

THE BIG IDEA

Theodore Roosevelt called comparison the thief of joy. In the age of the highlights reel, the thief never sleeps. The most expensive thing on your phone is not the data plan – it is the running scoreboard you never agreed to keep.

“I’ll have what she’s having.”

– When Harry Met Sally, 1989

A whole industry of wanting-what-they-have, summed up in a single deli line. Comparison, in seven words.

EPISODE OVERVIEW

The Hook	When Harry Met Sally – the deli line that explains the internet.
The Problem	Comparison is the thief of joy. Amadeus – Salieri, envy taken to its tragic end.
The Modern Twist	The material world, Material Girl, FOMO. Status is a costume – now digital.
The Antidote	Build your own scoreboard. Catch the comparison. Come back to what matters.
The Stoic Answer	Cato the Younger trained himself not to care. Run your own race.
Who It’s For	Anyone who feels worse after picking up their phone.

WHY ‘YOUR OWN RACE’?

In investing – the best portfolio is the one you’ll actually stick with, not the one your neighbour brags about.

In family – their highlights are not your daily. Stop comparing your behind-the-scenes to their cover shot.

In business – niche down. Compete on the one thing you do brilliantly, not on everything.

In life – contentment lives in the absence of comparison.

“Whose race am I actually running?”

– and who decided that the prize was worth winning?

STOIC & OTHER WISDOM

“Comparison is the thief of joy.”

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

“It never ceases to amaze me: we all love ourselves more than other people – but we care more about their opinion than our own.”

MARCUS AURELIUS · MEDITATIONS

“Don’t waste your time on jealousy. Sometimes you’re ahead, sometimes you’re behind. The race is long – and in the end, it’s only with yourself.”

BAZ LUHRMANN · ‘SUNSCREEN’, 1999

REFERENCES THIS EPISODE

FILM

When Harry Met Sally (1989) · Amadeus (1984) · Monty Python’s Life of Brian (1979)

MUSIC

Madonna – Material Girl (1985) · Baz Luhrmann – Everybody’s Free / ‘Sunscreen’ (1999)

BOOKS & THINKERS

The Chimp Paradox – Steve Peters

PHILOSOPHY

Cato the Younger · Marcus Aurelius – Meditations · Theodore Roosevelt

THE STEADY PATH PRINCIPLE

Your race. Your pace.

THIS EPISODE’S REFLECTION QUESTION

“Whose highlight reel have I been measuring my Tuesday against?”

Your Tuesday is real. Their post is curated. The comparison is unfair to you, every single time, and you are the one running it.

COMING UP – EPISODE 05

The Myth of Urgency

“Whose urgency am I actually responding to?”

Sit with the question before the next episode.

TAKE THIS WITH YOU There is no race. There is only your life. Run it.

Slow down. Think clearly. Keep walking your steady path.

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