

DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

"I'm supposed to be married with kids by now!"
"Life should be easy, I'm a good person."
"He wasn't supposed to leave me."
"I went to college, I should be making 6 figures."
"She's my sister, we should be close."



Expectations are subjective. They are based on our values, beliefs, ethics, our own patterns of behaviour (positive or negative) and sometimes, our own illusions of reality. They can be healthy when they are based on the idea that none of us is perfect and that we are responsible for satisfying our own needs rather than looking to others to do this for us. We are flexible in our thinking and our behaviour and make changes where necessary. Healthy expectations require empathy and compassion to set us up for a fulfilling life where we value ourselves and accept people and experiences for what and who they are without spending our energy trying to change it.



We all have dreams and ideas of what our lives should look like. It's part of the human experience. But when our expectations don't meet our reality, it can be damaging, setting us and others up for unnecessary failure.

Do you ever find yourself saying things like:

"My boss should recognize how hard I work!"
"My partner should want to share the household responsibilities 50/50."
"We are going to sell our house when our son is 25, well established, and moved out of the house."

When expectations are too high, there is a belief that our life, relationships, and circumstances can be controlled, and that uncertainty and frustrations must be avoided. When actually, healthy emotions like frustration, stress, and sadness drive us to problem solve, to find resolutions in creative and meaningful ways. When these emotions are long lasting, or become intense, it's a clear sign that you have set up an unrealistic expectation, and you are trying to control the uncontrollable. You prevent yourself from enjoying the experience, the relationship, or life - in the moment - just as it is.



DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

Having an unrealistic expectation occurs when we expect something to happen without reason for the expectation. For example: expecting other people to behave in a particular way because it is how we believe they “should” behave. The perfect setup for disappointment and resentment!

SIMPLIFY THROUGH GOAL SETTING

NOUN

expectations (plural noun)
a strong belief that something will happen or be the case in the future

NOUN

goal (plural noun)
the object of a person's ambition or effort; an aim or desired result

We can avoid disappointment by participating in intentional goal setting. Purpose-driven goals are different because we are passionate about them and they are genuine things that we want to achieve in life and will take action steps towards them.



Make it **SIMPLE** through goal setting rather than focusing on random things that just sound good and that you may not achieve. Instead of doing something and expecting a certain result, make that result a reality.

- **S**et an achievable goal
- **I**dentify it with specifics
- **M**ake a timeline to achieve it
- **P**lan your action steps
- **L**ook at your progress in the moment
- **E**valuate as you go

HOW TO DEAL WITH EXPECTATIONS

Does the expectation match my reality? Getting 10 things done on a to-do list may not match the reality of being home with an unpredictable newborn baby. Narrow down a few essentials and if completed, add to your list. Live and assess in the moment.

Does it make me happy? When expectations are unrealistic, it can lead to resentment and disappointment. If you keep doing what you have always done you will keep getting what you have always gotten. Is the cost of pain and turmoil worth holding onto that expectation? Let it go. If you expect little, and get more, the chance for a happy outcome is greater.

Am I being flexible? If you have an expectation you can't let go of, be flexible to accept the best that someone might be capable of. You load the dishwasher a certain way and expect that others will too. Don't use yourself as a point of reference. It will only lead to disappointment.

Why do I expect this? Things happen in the past that create an expectation for the future. Circumstances change. What works for someone else may not be what works for you.

How can I make it work for me? Turn expectations into goals with smaller action steps. If you expect your child to get B's but he/she continues to hold a C average, set small goals for success. Help them yourself, hire a tutor, have a designated daily homework time at home. And if your goals still don't lead up to your expectation, adapt to the reality of where your child is now.

Sources: <http://www.familyresource.com/relationships/building-and-maintaining/unrealistic-expectations-in-relationships>
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/cui-bono/201802/the-psychology-expectations>
<https://www.48days.com/the-difference-between-a-goal-and-an-expectation/>
<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition>