

# AGES AND STAGES

## DON'T EXPECT. ACCEPT.

**“When you stop expecting people to be perfect, you can like them for who they are.”**

Donald Miller, *A Million Miles in a Thousand Years: What I Learned While Editing My life*



Overcoming our expectations and accepting the reality of family life, and the members within it, can be challenging. Though we may not have a choice in the family that we are born into, we can choose who we are going to be within the family and as an individual. Each person should be allowed to express his/her unique identity and individuality and be accepted rather than expected to be something else.

Unrealistic expectations can be a setup for disappointment, resentment, and a breakdown of relationships. Being aware of any expectations that we might have for family members to think like us or behave like us, and replacing them with unconditional love and acceptance is the platform for peace and success in family and the world.

### WHAT WE MIGHT EXPECT

“I will be married and have children by age 25.”

“I read all the books! We will settle into a new life with our baby, and it should be an easy transition with positive bonding and special moments.”

“I have set my kids up for a great education through their high school years. We already have our eye on the university of their dreams.”

“I can't wait for retirement! I will sleep in and have the freedom to do whatever I want, everyday!”



### HOW WE CAN ACCEPT

➔ “I am single and I have built a career that I love.”

➔ “I am not sure what to expect, but I have prepared as best I can. I know I have plenty of support.”

➔ “I have hope that my kids will have a successful educational career, but I understand that they may want something different for themselves.”

➔ “I'm having trouble adjusting to this new life. I am not sure who I am anymore, but I am excited to discover it!”



Expectations can come from many things: a fear of the unknown, personal experience, or maybe a repeated pattern. Acceptance is about acknowledging where you are. When you are faced with a statement of expectation in your own life, consider what is happening at the moment. Approach it from a place of patience and love, and recognize that life is ever-changing and that challenges are teachable moments.

**Don't blame other people for disappointing you when you might be expecting something different from them.**

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### THE FAMILY WE CHOOSE

Not only can you define who you are within your family, but you can also define who your family members are and what “family” really means. Consider what each person is capable of giving and how they interact with you, and accept each for who they are rather than who you think they “should” be. For example, if you expect your mother to be empathetic because you believe that is what a mother “should” be, and your mother isn’t able to show you empathy, accept that as a limitation rather than resenting her. In accepting family members for who they are, you may find that your needs are not being met within the family. The good news is that you can decide what you want in a family relationship and you may consider inviting others into your inner circle who can provide what is lacking. Perhaps there is a friend in your life who is always there for you in tough times to offer a hug or a listening ear. Isn’t she family? Connect with people who can offer you what you need.

### 3 STEPS TO MOVE FROM EXPECT TO ACCEPT



**WEAR ROSE COLOURED GLASSES.** You can’t be positive about your family all the time. It’s ok to have negative moments and to “feel the feels.” If you catch yourself developing a negative mindset, where the negatives of family life outweigh the positive, it may be a sign that you are setting too many expectations. Rather than feel guilty about not swooning over your family (or certain members), be aware of the way you are feeling and recognize an opportunity to grow the relationship. Let go of the expectation that things should be different and you will live a more peaceful life.

**ACCEPT THE THINGS YOU CANNOT CHANGE.** Acceptance doesn’t have to be passive. Anger and resentment are feelings, but letting go of these emotions is an action made by choice. While you may not be able to completely change the situation, there may be something you can do about it. Accept, but have an action plan. That may mean having an honest conversation with your sister about not feeling supported by her or limiting the time you spend with your

critical brother to protect the relationship. Don’t point fingers or criticize. See acceptance as learning a new way to deal with a problem or crisis.

**EXPERIENCE IS A HARD TEACHER.** We don’t always have to understand why something happened. The true expression of acceptance is believing that everything happens for a reason. We can be upset that our father never says “I love you,” or be thankful that we have become the parent who does. We can be disappointed that our husband isn’t handy, or learn to accept that people have strengths and weaknesses and appreciate his musical talent that brings the family joy. Authenticity, resiliency, flexibility, and empathy are some of the lessons we learn during the simplest challenge or the greatest tragedy.

Sources: <https://tinybuddha.com/blog/dealing-with-disappointing-relationships-change-your-expectations/>  
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