

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

Self-Expectations

What are some core expectations you have for yourself? Are they realistic, achievable, and helpful? Consider whether you consistently meet them, sometimes fall short, or never achieve them.

Oftentimes, the expectations we hold for ourselves are not manageable or achievable, leading to feelings of failure and self-doubt. Unreasonable expectations can also prevent us from asking for help when we need it most, as we may fear appearing incompetent or weak.

EXAMPLES OF UNREALISTIC SELF-EXPECTATIONS & THEIR UNDERLYING BELIEFS:

- **Perfectionism:** "I must be flawless and never make mistakes." *If I make mistakes, people will know I'm not worthy of their love or attention.*
- **Happiness:** "I must feel happy, optimistic, or content at all times." *Otherwise, it means I'm doing something wrong.*
- **Learning:** "I should be able to learn new things quickly and easily." *Struggling means I'm not smart or capable.*
- **Wealth:** "Financial success is the ultimate measure of my worth and value." *If I don't accumulate wealth, I'm a failure and unworthy of respect.*

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Identifying Unreasonable Self-Expectations

Identify 3 core self-expectations that might be overly demanding or unrealistic. They could be related to your education, career, relationships, health, appearance, or other areas of your life.

Consider the underlying rationale:

- Why do you hold these expectations?
- What beliefs or values are they based on?

Remember, be honest with yourself!

EXPECTATION 1:

RATIONALE 1:

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Identifying Unreasonable Self-Expectations

EXPECTATION 2:

RATIONALE 2:

EXPECTATION 3:

RATIONALE 3:

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Challenging Unreasonable Self-Expectations

For each core expectation, ask yourself, “Is this self-expectation reasonable for someone in my situation?” Then, rate the likelihood of achieving each expectation on a scale from 1-100.

EXPECTATION 1:

Is this expectation reasonable for someone in my situation?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Why or why not?

How achievable is this expectation (for *you*)? Mark an “X” on the scale (or indicate a range).

0=No (0%) chance of achieving, not at any point in my life

100=Completely (100%) achievable for me, all of the time, anytime



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Challenging Unreasonable Self-Expectations

EXPECTATION 2:

Is this expectation reasonable for someone in my situation?

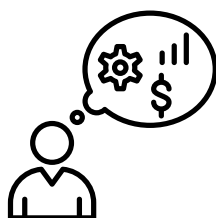
☐ YES ☐ NO

Why or why not?

How achievable is this expectation (for *you*)? Mark an "X" on the scale (or indicate a range).

0=No (0%) chance of achieving, not at any point in my life

100=Completely (100%) achievable for me, all of the time, anytime



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EXPECTATION 3:

Is this expectation reasonable for someone in my situation?

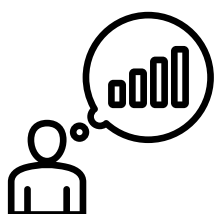
☐ YES ☐ NO

Why or why not?

How achievable is this expectation (for you)? Mark an "X" on the scale (or indicate a range).

0=No (0%) chance of achieving, not at any point in my life

100=Completely (100%) achievable for me, all of the time, anytime



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Challenging Unreasonable Self-Expectations

For each core self-expectation, list the potential negative consequences of not meeting it. Think about how these consequences might impact your emotional well-being, relationships, and overall life satisfaction.

EXAMPLE:

Expectation:

“My partner and I must agree on the important things in life.”

Potential Consequences:

- Unhappiness with partner
- Dissatisfaction in relationship
- Unable to amicably raise children
- Unable to enjoy spending quality time with partner
- Lack of respect
- Constant fighting
- Relationship failure

By understanding the potential consequences, you can better evaluate the reasonableness of your expectations.

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Challenging Unreasonable Self-Expectations

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF NOT MEETING EXPECTATION 1:

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF NOT MEETING EXPECTATION 2:

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF NOT MEETING EXPECTATION 3:

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Beliefs About Self-Expectations

Review the following statements about self-expectations:

- Expectations vary from person to person and are influenced by individual experiences and beliefs.
- Our self-expectations shape how we think, feel, and act.
- Positive (realistic) expectations can motivate us, while negative (unrealistic) expectations can lead to stress and anxiety.
- We can learn to challenge and modify our self-expectations over time.

On a scale from 0 to 100, where 0 is completely unachievable and 100 is always achievable, estimate where a **balanced** self-expectation might fall. (A balanced expectation is one that is challenging but attainable with effort and perseverance.) Mark an “X” on the scale (or indicate a range).

0=0% chance of achieving
100=100% chance of achieving



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Redefining Self-Expectations

For developing more balanced self-expectations, consider the following:

- Acknowledge your strengths and past successes, as well as limitations/weaknesses
- Notice when you're thinking in all-or-nothing terms or making assumptions
- Set expectations that are feasible given your current circumstances
- Create adaptable expectations, as circumstances can always change
- Get input from trusted friends, family, or colleagues to gain different viewpoints
- Avoid self-criticism and treat yourself with understanding
- Consider the potential consequences (from page 8), as these are outcomes you most likely wish to avoid, and use potential consequences as guiding points (while remaining realistic)

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Redefining Self-Expectations

Redefine your 3 core self-expectations below, remaining positive and realistic. (Review the tips on the previous page and keep in mind where “balanced” expectations fall on the scale!)

EXPECTATION 1 REDEFINED:

EXPECTATION 2 REDEFINED:

EXPECTATION 3 REDEFINED:

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Reflecting on Self-Expectations

This worksheet helped you to explore, challenge, and redefine unrealistic self-expectations.

In completing this worksheet, what did you learn about your core self-expectations?

In completing this worksheet, what did you learn about *yourself*?

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"If you align expectations with reality, you will never be disappointed."

-Terrell Owens