

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS


Expectations for Others



Expectations for others are the standards or benchmarks we set for the actions and behaviors of others. These expectations can be influenced by personal experiences, cultural/societal norms, and individual values.

Our expectations for others can be helpful or harmful, depending on their realism and flexibility. Expectations can influence our interactions with others, our satisfaction with relationships, and our overall wellbeing.

It's important to examine the expectations we hold for others and assess whether they are reasonable and effective.



In this worksheet, we'll explore expectations and consider how they might be affecting your relationships and wellbeing.

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WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR OTHERS?

We often have expectations for how others should behave, think, or feel. Unrealistic expectations can be harmful when they're too high or too low.

Setting the bar too high may lead to...

- Disappointment and frustration when others fail to meet our expectations
- Resentment towards others for not living up to our standards
- Strained relationships due to conflict and misunderstandings
- Unintentionally setting others up for failure
- Dissatisfaction in relationships

Setting the bar too low may lead to...

- Underestimating others' capabilities and limiting their potential
- Lack of trust in others due to a belief that they can't be relied upon
- Missed opportunities for growth and connection
- Being taken advantage of by others who may exploit our low expectations
- Feeling undervalued and unappreciated

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Other potential consequences of unrealistic expectations for others include:

- **Self-criticism:** Blaming ourselves for others' shortcomings or failures
- **Anxiety and stress:** Worrying about whether others will meet our expectations
- **Isolation:** Pulling away from relationships due to fear of disappointment
- **Lack of empathy:** Failing to understand others' perspectives and feelings
- **Negative self-talk:** Criticizing ourselves for not meeting our own expectations

Can you identify any additional consequences of having unrealistic expectations for others?

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Examining Expectations for Various Roles

Consider the following roles others play in your life. For each role, check off what you consider to be a realistic and achievable expectation.

ROMANTIC PARTNER:

- ☐ Loyal
- ☐ Always thoughtful
- ☐ Never argue with me
- ☐ Strong
- ☐ Kind

FRIEND:

- ☐ Dependable
- ☐ Never judge me
- ☐ Won't let me down
- ☐ Good listener
- ☐ Gives good advice

TEACHER:

- ☐ Knowledgeable
- ☐ Gives me good grades
- ☐ Always does the right thing
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Understanding

BOSS:

- ☐ Caring
- ☐ Professional
- ☐ Punctual
- ☐ Clear explanations
- ☐ Inspiring

What additional expectations do you have for the above roles?

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Managing Expectations for Various Roles

Let's delve deeper into your expectations for different roles in your life.

ROMANTIC PARTNER

- **Core expectations:** Loyalty, kindness, respect, and open communication.
- **Realistic expectations:** Understand that your partner may have flaws or limitations. Be willing to compromise and support each other.

TEACHER

- **Core expectations:** Knowledge, patience, and fairness.
- **Realistic expectations:** Recognize that teachers are human and may make mistakes. Be open to seeking additional help if needed.

FRIEND

- **Core expectations:** Loyalty, support, and understanding.
- **Realistic expectations:** Friendships require effort from both sides. Be willing to compromise and support your friends.

BOSS

- **Core expectations:** Fairness, respect, and clear communication.
- **Realistic expectations:** Understand that your boss may have challenges or priorities that differ from your own.

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Managing Expectations for Others

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING EXPECTATIONS:

- **Avoid absolutes:** Instead of using words like "always" or "never," focus on specific behaviors or actions.
- **Remain flexible:** Allow for unexpected challenges and changes in circumstances.
- **Avoid comparing:** Don't compare to others or expect perfection.
- **Recognize your limitations:** Acknowledge that you don't have complete control over situations.
- **Avoid taking advantage:** Don't expect others to be available at your beck and call.
- **Anticipate setbacks:** Understand that things may not always go as planned.
- **Avoid blaming:** Take responsibility for your own actions and avoid blaming others for challenges.
- **Adjust your expectations:** Depending on the relationship and situation, you may need to lower your expectations to protect your wellbeing.

By managing your expectations for others, you can develop healthier and more fulfilling relationships.

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Reasonable Expectations



In general, reasonable expectations for others are characterized by the following:

1. **Realistic:** Based on the capabilities (and limitations) of the individual or group.
2. **Flexible:** Allow for unforeseen circumstances or changes.
3. **Avoidance of control:** Respect others' autonomy.
4. **Empathetic:** Consider the unique perspectives and feelings of others.
5. **Positive:** Focus on what others can do, rather than dwelling on their shortcomings.
6. **Communicated clearly:** Expressed and understood by all parties involved.
7. **Negotiable:** Open to discussion and adjustment, based on mutual agreement.
8. **Respectful:** Treat others with dignity and consideration.

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Unreasonable Expectations



Meanwhile, *unreasonable* expectations for others are characterized by the following:

1. **Perfectionism:** Expecting others to be flawless or always meet ideal standards.
2. **Mindreading:** Assuming what others are thinking or feeling without clear communication.
3. **Rigid rules:** Insisting on strict adherence to rules, even when circumstances change.
4. **Lack of empathy:** Failing to consider others' perspectives, feelings, or limitations.
5. **Unrealistic timeframes:** Expecting others to meet unreasonable timeframes.
6. **Lack of communication:** Not clearly communicating.
7. **Control issues:** Attempting to control others' behavior or decisions.
8. **Comparison:** Comparing others to unrealistic standards or ideals.

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How Reasonable Are My Expectations?



Are there any relationships in your life that are causing you stress or frustration? Consider your expectations; are your expectations for these relationships realistic and achievable?

List three relationships in your life that are currently strained or causing you distress:

RELATIONSHIP 1:

RELATIONSHIP 2:

RELATIONSHIP 3:

On the next page, you'll explore your expectations for each relationship and assess whether they are realistic and achievable.

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How Reasonable Are My Expectations?

For each relationship listed, identify some of the most basic expectations you have for that person. Consider whether these expectations are being met or not. Then, assess the reasonableness of each expectation.

RELATIONSHIP 1:

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

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How Reasonable Are My Expectations?

RELATIONSHIP 2:

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain



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How Reasonable Are My Expectations?

RELATIONSHIP 3:

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

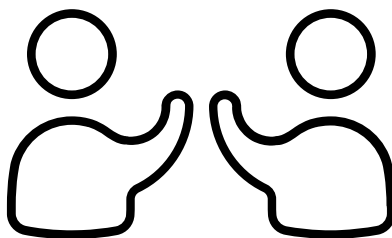
☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain

Expectation: _____

☐ Met ☐ Unmet

Is this expectation reasonable? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain



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Managing My Unreasonable Expectations

Review the expectations you listed on the previous pages.
Star or highlight any expectations that are unmet *and* unreasonable.

For each unmet, unreasonable expectation, write a more manageable expectation or coping statement.

EXAMPLE:

Unmet expectation: My partner should always be available to talk to me, no matter what they're doing.

More manageable expectation: I appreciate quality time with my partner but understand that they have other commitments.

Coping statement: I can remind myself that it's important to respect my partner's boundaries and find other ways to cope with my feelings.

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Managing My Unreasonable Expectations

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

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Managing My Unreasonable Expectations

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

Unreasonable Expectation: _____

More Manageable Expectation: _____

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Conclusion



This worksheet has examined your expectations for others and helped you to understand how they can impact your relationships and quality of life.

You've learned:

- **The importance of realistic expectations:** Unrealistic expectations can lead to disappointment, frustration, and strained relationships.
- **The power of communication:** Open and honest communication is essential for managing expectations.
- **The value of empathy and mutual respect:** Understanding others' perspectives can help you set reasonable expectations.

Remember, it's important to maintain a balance between setting expectations and remaining flexible to improve your relationships and create a more positive and fulfilling life.

Continue to reflect on your expectations and make adjustments as needed.