

A World of Expectations

Children come out of the womb and into this world with clear expectations. Expectations that quickly become a reality for the parent or caregiver to meet. A baby that needs to be fed, cleaned, and/or nurtured will cry as a sign to communicate that a need must be met. As children grow up learning that their expectations are met, it becomes secondary nature for them to continue to expect. While certain expectations are healthy, as children transition into teenagers and adults, they quickly come to realize that not all expectations are realistic or as healthy as once presumed.

Breaking off expectations or mindsets that were taught in infancy can be convoluted and difficult because it requires retraining. A child goes from continually having their needs met, to learning to be patient, having to wait for the right time, or simply not acquiring what they want. A child's behavior must go from selfish to unselfish in order to adapt to this new transition. Teaching children about realistic and unrealistic expectations are necessary for the suitable development of their character.

Expectations placed on children should always be age appropriate and realistic. When specific expectations are placed on children by parents or professionals, it works as an indicator for their developmental growth. For instance, to expect a child to walk at the age of 1 month may not be realistic. However, as a child grows older, and time passes, walking becomes an expectation as it indicates proper growth development. The same could be said about a child's speech. A child is expected to go from babbling one word, to two words, short phrases, and eventually full sentences. A lack or delay in speech can indicate that an area of development needs attention.

As a child grows older, expectations may go from basic, to a bit more complex. In some homes, chores are expectations and not merely suggestions. For some parents, expecting a child to brush their teeth, clean up after themselves, do their homework, take out the trash or do their bed, goes far beyond the task at hand. Implementing these expectations are a foundational way to teach children how to be accountable and responsible adults. Expecting a child to be respectful and honor the rules of the home also aid in teaching them how to respect and honor the rules outside the home.

Children can recognize unhealthy expectations the world places on them when they have prime examples of healthy ones at home. The world is currently forcing children to make adult decisions, without the means to fully assess or discuss with a parent the risk of harm. Teenagers are being inundated on social media with unrealistic body images and lifestyles from social media models and influencers who don't fully depict truth. These false expectations in turn cause teenagers to fall into issues of self-image, low self-esteem, and chase a lifestyle that can be toxic.

Lastly, it is important to teach children that disappointment will follow when putting expectations on other people. Adults have already figured out by now that expecting something from others doesn't always go as planned. If an expectation isn't voiced there is no means of someone fulfilling it. However, even then, after an expectation has been placed, people have the tendency to let other people down, it's human nature. For this reason, it becomes crucial to instill in children that a lack of fulfillment on someone's part, is by no means an indicator of a

child's self-worth. While the world is full of expectations, remember that a healthy balance will require wisdom, dialogue, and agreement in the home. Till next time...

Your Mommy-Friend,

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