

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

A QUICK GUIDE FOR BECOMING A LITTLE MORE REALISTIC, AND A LOT MORE FLEXIBLE, WITH OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR OTHERS BY LAILA ELISE

Whether we realize it or not, what we expect from other people and situations can certainly have an effect on our own mental state. From intense romantic relationships to picking up an order at the drive-thru, nothing can set us up for a letdown of epic proportions quite like unrealistic expectations. On the other hand, while expecting nothing from others and locking yourself in your basement for the rest of your life may seem attractive (perhaps now more than ever), we must hold our fellow citizens to some type of standard in order to maintain a functioning society – not to mention our sanity. And, as we all know, sometimes it's a very slender line. Here are a couple of tips on how to keep your expectations grounded and balanced in this increasingly tumultuous world.

LEARN TO ACCEPT REALITY

OK, this is a big one. While it isn't always easy, taking small steps toward accepting situations and others for who they are is a great place to start. Focus on embracing gratitude for all of the positive qualities that your loved ones possess, rather than always wanting to try to "fix" them or change their behavior. Renowned published clinical psychologist Dr. Albert Ellis recommends eliminating the words "must" and "should" from our vocabulary as it pertains to others, and instead focus on "preferences" and "desires" when setting expectations within a relationship. In fact, according to his widely practiced Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), our often irrational expectations are responsible for a lot of our own

anger, anxiety, and frustrations. Concentrating your energy on changing your reaction (rather than changing others' actions) can make a huge difference with regards to your own overall happiness.

HAVE EMPATHY FOR EACH UNIQUE SITUATION (AND ADJUST YOUR EXPECTATIONS ACCORDINGLY)

Staying flexible with your desired outcomes, and realizing that nothing in this world is constant, can guide you in setting more realistic expectations for those around you. Obviously if you are the only person in a store or restaurant (which is becoming increasingly more common these days), it's only natural that you might expect more attentive service than if 20 other customers were there with you. The same principle is true with regards to relationships. While it's important to be able to rely on our friends and loved ones, be mindful of what's going on in their lives before asking them for things that might be unreasonable for them to deliver. 2020 has thrown us plenty of curveballs, but it has also inspired higher levels of empathy and understanding among our peers. If your partner or friend just got furloughed, is working from home with children, or is dealing with loss or anxiety, it's important to factor that in when formulating what we expect from their behavior. Your loved ones will certainly appreciate your compassion, and your flexibility will undoubtedly strengthen your connections moving forward. **1**