

Managing Unmet Expectations in Relationships



Are unmet expectations causing conflict in your relationship? Read on for four tips to manage this problem and strengthen your relationship.

Expectations are beliefs about the way things will or should

be. They come from the family we grew up in, the relationships we have had, and the culture that surrounds us (i.e., family traditions, religious or ethnic backgrounds, media, etc.). While we all have expectations, unmet expectations can lead to conflict, frustration, and relationship dissatisfaction. On the other hand, learning to manage expectations is one of the keys to healthy relationships. Consider these four tips to managing unmet expectations.

1. Identify your expectations as well as those of your loved one.

Unspoken expectations and expectations that you may not even be conscious of are often at the root of conflict. Take a step back to examine what expectations might exist that you may not have considered before. Consider the common topics of conflict.

2. Be reasonable.

Step back and look at your expectations from another perspective. Is it reasonable for the current situation? Just because you would prefer it or it may have “always been done that way” doesn’t mean that it is the best and most realistic solution for current circumstances.

3. Be clear.

Express your preferences using “I” messages and take time to listen to other’s desires. We may not always agree with their expectations, but validating each other’s perspective can set a positive tone for finding a realistic compromise that is acceptable for everyone.

4. Seek for a win-win solution.

Remember, if the solution is not win-win everyone loses. If a win-win solution does not seem possible, then find a way to

equally compromise or take turns compromising. Be sure to get back together after an agreed upon time to evaluate, discuss and make adjustments, if needed.

While unmet expectations create frustration and conflict, following these four tips will provide opportunities to grow closer and build happier and healthier relationships.

Learn more great tips to strengthen your relationships at www.relationships.usu.edu.



This article was written by Naomi Brower. Naomi is an Extension Associate Professor in Weber County specializing in helping others improve the quality of their lives through creating and strengthening their relationships. She earned her master's degree in Family and Human Development from Utah State University and she is a Certified Family Life Educator. She enjoys hiking, traveling (especially anywhere green) and playing with her husband and adorable little boy. Contact Naomi at naomi.brower@usu.edu or check out videos and other content at relationships.usu.edu.

Find more contributor bios here.

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