

If You Loved Me You Would...



It's a new year! Resolutions abound! Promises are made (and some will be kept); goals are set (and some will not be met) and expectations will appear (with disappointments to follow).



One of the core parts of the “relationship experience” is the inevitable disappointment and disillusionment we feel when our partner fails to live up to our expectations of them. Unfortunately, we are often unaware that we even have expectations until we find ourselves feeling hurt, angry, upset or disappointed.



Clever, sneaky little tricksters that they are, our expectations may remain hidden not only from our partners, but also from us. We only discover we had an expectation about a particular situation when it is unmet and then, like a “mine-field,” it creates an explosion if touched.



The level of satisfaction and fulfillment we feel in our partnership is strongly influenced by the intentions and expectations we bring. We expect things of our intimate partners that we would not expect of anyone else. We rarely ask ourselves why we expect more from those we love; if we did, we might be surprised at some of the unfair demands we unconsciously place on our partner. Many of these expectations are based on assumptions that were shaped long before we got together.



Typical areas of assumptions in an intimate relationship:

- Gender conditioning (what it means to be a man or a woman)
- Role assignment (what it means to be a husband or a wife)
- Division of labor (who is supposed to do what—chores, household tasks, money matters)



Identifying hidden expectations is the first step toward warding off misunderstandings and disappointments. Once identified, we can then examine and rearrange them to a more toned-down version that can actually allow us to grow closer to our partner. The following examples illustrate how to make the shift from an “unrealistic” expectation to something that is more “reasonable”.

Unrealistic Expectation

If you loved me you would know what I want and you would give it to me.

Revised Expectation

I cannot assume that you know all of my wants and needs because they change. It is my responsibility to ask for what I want and see if you are able or willing to take care of them in any way.

Unrealistic Expectation

If we don't agree, one of us must be wrong. I must prove that it is you, so that I won't feel like a failure or look stupid.

Revised Expectation

We both need to feel the freedom to have different thoughts, feelings and opinions. We are all unique and our disagreements simply represent our uniqueness.

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Unrealistic Expectation

If you criticize me, I feel inadequate. If you compliment me, you might just be accommodating me by only saying what you think I want to hear.

Revised Expectation

We are all good enough and loveable. We both need to hear things as “information” without personalizing things. We need to ask for clarification when there is confusion and decide for ourselves what we choose to believe.

This year, rather than concentrating on New Year’s resolutions, dedicate some thoughtful time to reviewing your expectations. It will be a time and energy well spent and your relationship would come out as the “winner.”

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