

Great Expectations



Content on this side is intended for the educator's reference. The information on the back can be photocopied and shared with clients.

Objective: Clients will learn about setting clear and reasonable expectations and the importance of communicating them to one's partner.

Audience: This tool is applicable with clients at various stages in their relationship. It will help new couples learn to communicate needs and expectations clearly. It will also help remind couples who have been together longer to be mindful of and attentive to each other's needs and expectations.

Estimated Time: 15-30 minutes

Educator Instructions: Before reviewing the instructions printed on the tool, begin with the Discussion Starter provided below or something similar. Explain the directions on the tool and encourage them to fill out the table. After they have time to come up with examples, take a moment to talk about their responses. If both partners are present, you could have them work independently and compare their lists or you could have them work together. If they work independently, have them compare responses. Are there any surprises? How can they communicate their needs more clearly? If some seem unreasonable, talk about how they could be modified to be more achievable.

Discussion Starter: Each person enters a relationship with unique expectations. Although some things will be similar, there will also be many differences in beliefs about how partners should interact, who should do what, the "right" or "wrong" way of doing things, and so on. Some expectations are minor (like leaving the toilet seat up or down); some are pretty common (including money, housework, in-laws, sex, free time); and others are deeper, sometimes hidden issues (such as how decisions are made, how caring is shown, how children are disciplined). No matter how big or small the issue, we shouldn't assume our partner will "just know" what we expect. Expectations need to be shared, and they need to be reasonable; otherwise we risk setting our partners up for failure.

Follow-up: During your next visit, ask how well they are communicating their expectations. Are their expectations clear and reasonable? Are they communicating them clearly?



HEALTHY
RELATIONSHIP
& MARRIAGE
EDUCATION
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Expectations play a crucial role in how happy a couple relationship will be. When expectations are unstated, unreasonable, or unmet, this can become a source of significant conflict in the relationship. Take a moment to think about what you expect in your relationship. Mark the appropriate box indicating who is responsible for each item – you, your partner, or is it something you think you should work on together?

Expectations I have for my relationship

**Me Partner Both
of Us**

Expectations I have for my relationship	Me	Partner	Both of Us
Example: <i>We will talk first before buying things that cost more than \$50.</i>			X

Are all of your expectations realistic? If not, can some be adjusted so your partner is more likely to meet your expectations?

Is your partner aware of the needs and expectations you listed? If not, how can you let your partner know?

Things to Remember:

- Communicate your expectations – do not expect your partner to just “know.”
- Be sure your expectations are reasonable.
- Expectations will change over time. Plan time to regularly share and discuss your expectations, why you have them, and how you can work together to achieve them.
- Healthy relationships require some give and take. Just as you want your partner to do things a certain way, he or she has similar wishes.

Being aware of and agreeing about expectations reduces the chances for arguments and increases the chances for understanding each other.