

Expectations That Can Injure a Marriage

Is your marriage struggling?

I do not at all mean to oversimplify your problems. There is always more to it than what is immediately visible, but sometimes, in my experience, there may be a problem with expectations.

Expectations are critical for the success of any good relationship—especially in a marriage.

If you have false expectations, you will have trouble in your marriage, and in every relationship of your life.

Here are four expectations that can injure a marriage:

1. Unspoken expectations. When the couple never lays out their expectations in the marriage, one spouse or the other will be disappointed at some point. A lot of couples assume they are on the same page until a problem arises and they find out otherwise.

I have found this especially true with upcoming life ventures. Parenting is an example. Couples naturally assume they will discipline the same way. They don't.

The more you can communicate your expectations the better prepared you will be to face life as it comes to you—or as you are living it.

2. Unclear expectations. When the couple thinks they've communicated expectations, but they didn't use language the other one could understand, there will be problems in the relationship. Everyone communicates differently. Expectations must be clear. And many times they have to be tested before we understand them.

I have sat with couples who thought they made things clear, or thought the other spouse surely “read their mind.” It’s important to ask questions, such as, “What I hear you saying is _____. Did I understand correctly?”

3. Unmet expectations. When the couple had clear expectations, everyone understood them and they’ve even been tested, but one spouse isn’t holding up their end of the deal, there will be trouble in what was once paradise.

I borrowed from a cliché, because marriage isn’t necessarily always paradise. However, it certainly should be a relationship where trust is unquestioned. Commitments made in a marriage should be kept at the highest level possible.

4. Unrealistic expectations. Some couples have expectations that are impossible for the other spouse to meet. Our spouse is not our savior. They are not perfect. They can’t read our minds. They will make mistakes.

Great marriages major in grace and forgiveness, because we all need lots of it.

How are you doing with setting and keeping expectations in your marriage?

By the way, these four are true in other relationships also.

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