



## **OWNING OUR EXPECTATIONS**

Another major stumbling block where communication is concerned is expectations. Before entering into a relationship, we each have grown up in different worlds that have conditioned our minds to see things in certain ways, to feel about things in certain ways, and to have different expectations about ourselves, others and the world around us. And yet, when we commit to a relationship, before we know it, we are unconsciously assuming that our partner, in many ways, has the same mind and the same experiences that we have. We expect our partner to see, think, feel, and act the same as we do. In reality, this is rarely the case. Skilful communication requires us to have an awareness of our fundamental differences and accommodate these in the way we approach one another.

One example is when I speak to you about an issue that has been troubling me, I can trip myself up by expecting you to behave in a certain way toward the discussion. One reason is that our ego tends to be controlled by fear, and to protect itself, is trying to pre-empt the future. Another reason is simply a lack of communication awareness and skill. These expectations can be either positive or negative: I may expect you to be agreeable, or I may expect you to be disagreeable. If I expect you to be agreeable, I may set myself up for disappointment if you turn out to be otherwise. If I expect you to be disagreeable I may not be willing to broach the subject with you at all, or I may come into the conversation already defensive and on edge.

Either way, I am not communicating with you with my mind in the moment and my conscious-awareness open. My mind is lost in

my imagination, which then makes it very difficult to be in touch with the reality right in front of me. The result is a lot of projection (overlying past fears and insecurities onto the present situation) and miscommunication, which may then continue to compound itself, making further communication increasingly difficult.

Of course this does not negate common sense. If I am trying to communicate with someone who has a habit of responding with violent verbal abuse for example, I am naturally going to have firm boundaries in place, such as, when the abuse starts, the conversation stops.

Problems arise when we blame the other for our own oversensitivity. In other words, I am not willing to give you the benefit of the doubt due to my own habitual confusions attached to past emotional baggage, not because of your past behaviour.

The present situation may trigger emotional memories of other hurtful situations that go all the way back to my childhood. As a result, I treat you as though you are the people from those situations, and I approach you as the angry child I once was (often as children we were not allowed to be angry and we were not allowed to speak out when we were being mistreated. Now, as an adult, all that anger may be coming out). I am now unconsciously looking for any sign that matches these past situations. Because you are human I am bound to find one, and my fearful wounded inner-child will then fixate on it. As a result, the situation ends up in a tangled mess of illusion and conflict.

In the same vein, I may be overly hopeful because of over-dependency or neediness. This is also caused by fears and insecurities, such as the fear of being alone.

Like any emotional reaction, it is unrealistic to think we can always have total command of our expectations and blind assumptions, or even be aware of them. It is safest to expect to have expectations and then be as open as possible about them. This is once again about the first step of accepting our humanness. The second step is setting a firm intent to avoid setting ourselves up with expectations. We can remind ourselves that we never truly know the motives and thoughts of another, no matter how telepathic we think we are. We need to back off a little and give the other person a chance to speak their truth. This is now, not the past. We then give truth a chance to emerge through real communication, which is often confused at first. We always need to free ourselves of preconceived assumptions and judgements about others because so often our judgements are really coming from our own fears and insecurities and it's not about the other person at all.

## Owning Our Expectations Summary

- ♥ Because of fear, our egos try to pre-empt the future.
- ♥ Due to unrealistic expectations, I may set myself up for disappointment or be over-anxious.
- ♥ Due to past fears and insecurities, my unconscious mind may be overly or naively hopeful or on a fight or flight hair-trigger.
- ♥ Lack of self-awareness can cause me to become lost in past memories that distort my perceptions of the now moment.
- ♥ I must learn to Feel and therefore perceive the difference between past memories and the present situation.
- ♥ It helps to regularly write down my fears, thoughts and Feelings to process them and build self-awareness.
- ♥ I am in charge of my mind. It is essential to compassionately acknowledge my suffering. Having connected in a heart-felt way with my vulnerable human self, I can then rewrite my own memories in an exploration of self-care in accordance to what Feels right.
- ♥ Healthy personal boundaries are created out of positive self-care. This does not rule out respecting others as well, but self-care is an essential first step to achieve balance and harmony and to know what is best for myself overall.