

Family Expectations Worksheet

Fill in these blanks with any thoughts that come to mind.

Families should:

Siblings should:

Now think of a recent issue with a family member or an event/holiday and fill in whatever comes to mind. Feel free to create a longer list with separate people if there are various members of your family who trigger you.

My _____ *should (have):*
family member

Examples:

My mother should not have not commented about my weight.

My brother should have participated with us at Christmas instead of brooding in the corner and leaving early.

My aunt should have called to let us know that she wasn't coming.

My cousin shouldn't have brought his bunch of kids to that event.

Reasonable versus unreasonable expectations

Now here's the clincher. Read each of the statements you've written one by one and ask yourself:

Is this a reasonable expectation?

If your answer is yes, and that person consistently does not act in the manner that you would like, it may be time to reexamine those expectations. Perhaps they are not reasonable with respect to that person or situation. Keep in mind that this person may not have the insights, skills, self-awareness and open-mindedness that you possess. Or they may simply not want to act that way for their own reasons.

If this is the case, then it really is **not** a realistic expectation. Consider shifting your expectation to something more reasonable for that person. To use the example above for the person with the mother commenting on

her weight, it may trigger her every time it happens. She may have asked her mother to stop doing this to no effect. Is this a reasonable expectation? Maybe in some parallel universe it is, but for that particular mother, is simply isn't. The mother may have a deeply ingrained habit of being critical, she may have unconscious issues about her own weight, or perhaps it's her way of thinking that she's helping her daughter.

In any case, it's important to create a more reasonable expectation. Something more along the lines of this: ***it's reasonable to expect that since my mother can't seem to help herself from commenting on my weight, she is going to do so each and every time I see her.***

Now, you might not like that expectation, but the fact is that it is a reasonable one. The question then becomes how **you** are going to manage that reality. This is a completely different issue than hoping for a different experience. If you know that this is what you are facing, you can find tools to assist you to cope with the situation that you know that you will experiences.

Starting to create some reasonable expectations takes practice. It may not be easy or clear, but it is very useful in releasing the frustrating energy of all of our 'shoulds.' See if you can create some reasonable expectations with respect to the issues you noted above.

Reasonable expectations:

Now, make a list of some ways that you may cope with this situation instead of hoping that it will be different. Do you need to limit your visit time? Use EFT before or after seeing the person? Make sure that you've set up a safe space for yourself after a visit or call where you can work through anything that may have come up? Jot down some ideas here:

How I'm going to take care of myself in this situation next time:

This is a great start to working through these unrealistic expectations. It may not be super-fun to acknowledge that people are as they are, but fully acknowledging this begins a process of acceptance and dissolves some of your resistance to healing your internal triggers. The list of unreasonable expectations is a great starting point and focus for using EFT on yourself. I recommend working directly with these statements until you clear them.

If you have any comments or questions, feel free to contact me at meridian.therapy@shaw.ca and/or you can write comments on this blog post.