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## The Relationship Expectations Questionnaire

At the beginning of a relationship, people have high hopes for the future. Even if they are having problems, they believe that love will conquer all. Sometimes one partner might say, "I know he lies, but I think I can change him" or "She spends every cent she earns, but it will be different after the wedding." These people have unrealistic expectations of their partner and the future of their relationship.

This short questionnaire will help you to gauge whether the expectations you had at the beginning of your relationship were realistic, or whether, like Don Quixote, you dreamed an impossible dream. It also shows you how your expectations change through the years. When you are both finished, share your responses with each other.

### RELATIONSHIP EXPECTATIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

Write down the three most important expectations you have now about your relationship:

Expectations of myself	Expectations of my partner
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Write down the three most important expectations you had about your relationship on your wedding day or at the time you began this relationship:

Expectations of myself	Expectations of my partner
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

Are you ready to show this to your partner? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_

I want to show you how one couple, Jill and Marty, completed this questionnaire. Jill had been a regional sales manager for a large hotel chain, and Marty was an architect. This was Marty's second marriage, but he had no children from the first. The couple had two young children, only fifteen months apart. "I was so furious at the second pregnancy," said Jill. "Marty didn't want me to go back to my job after the first baby, which we both wanted. And he made sure I wouldn't go back by having sex with me one night before I had time to insert my diaphragm. I protested, but he said he'd withdraw before he came. I felt betrayed when I conceived the second time," she continued. "Sex has never been the same for me since. My tubes are tied now, but it's like my desire got tied before that." Jill became so apathetic about lovemaking that she feared Marty would take a lover "and bring home herpes or AIDS."

Here are Jill's answers to the Relationship Expectations Questionnaire:

The three most important expectations I have now about our relationship are:

Expectations of myself

1. To go back to work when our youngest is in preschool.
2. To resolve my extreme anger at Marty
3. To get our sex life back on track

Expectations of Marry

1. To accept my wanting to work, not for the money, but for my mind
2. To go through sex therapy with me
3. To think of me as his equal, professionally

The three most important expectations I had about our relationship on our wedding day were:

Expectations of myself

1. To be a good life partner for Marty
2. To have kids
3. To keep on working

Expectations of Marty

1. To be truthful with me
2. To be faithful to me
3. To let me keep on working

Now let's take a look at Marty's answers to this questionnaire.

The three most important expectations I have now about our relationship:

Expectations of myself

1. To support Jill and the kids financially
2. To help Jill get through this bad period
3. To help out with the kids more

Expectations of Jill

1. To be fair with me
2. To work on her anger
3. To "be my wife" again, that is, have sex with me

The three most important expectations I had on our wedding day:

Expectations of myself

1. To do everything I can to make this marriage work
2. Not to let my job get in the way of our time together
3. To be a good lover

## Expectations of Jill

1. To always be a good lover
2. To be my companion and playmate
3. To be a sweet mother

Jill was angry that parenthood had compromised her career, unlike Marty's. She was resentful that Marty, whom she thought of as a good father and excellent provider, was able to continue his profession. Marty protested his innocence. "I truly did not intend to derail your career," he said. "I just wanted to make love to you again. Having Sean (their second child) was... I don't want to call him an accident, but I didn't mean to trick you into having him. He's a wonderful baby, and we both love him."

Jill's early expectation of being a "good life partner" for Marty was well intentioned but vague. She had expected him to be truthful and felt that he had betrayed her trust, but she had not thought to suggest he use a condom. Marty did not force her to get pregnant a second time. She was partly angry at herself for having been so impulsive. Obviously, she hadn't known on her wedding day how important her career was to become (that goal was third on her list) until it had been threatened by the second pregnancy.

Jill could have returned to work, but admitted that she truly enjoyed those early months with their first child. Part of her anger at Marty hid anxiety about her own reluctance to go back into the deadline-heavy business world. When Jill was honest with herself, she said, "It was easier to blame Marty." Her apology to him was the turning point in their relationship. After their youngest child turned one year old, Jill found a nanny and returned to work full time. Her sex drive slowly returned, but fatigue now replaced her anger at Marty as a dampening force on their sex life together.