

My Expectations—My Future

Overview

This lesson continues the theme of knowing oneself. It encourages youth to consider their expectations for relationships and partners, as well as for workplace relationships. Although the focus is on expectations for relationships now, youth will also be asked to begin to consider their expectations for the future regarding family, children, commitment, marriage, and co-parenting. The *Add Health Study* (Wave III) finds young adults strongly value love, fidelity, and lifelong commitment. The vast majority (83%) also say they have high expectations for marriage someday.¹ Note that this curriculum is inclusive of sexual orientation.

The lesson will explore the powerful role expectations play in all relationships. Activities offer practice in communicating about expectations. Also, strategies are presented for reducing conflict and putting expectations to work positively in relationships.

The lesson concludes with some preliminary goal setting for one's future education, employment, and personal life.

Goals

- Gain a better understanding of what an expectation is and the role expectations play in relationships.
- Identify one's own relationship expectations.
- Gain practice in communicating expectations.
- Identify goals for education or training, employment, and personal life.

Lesson at a Glance

3.1 What's Important? (10 minutes)

Activity: Workbook, *What's Important to Me?*

3.2 The Power of Expectations (25 minutes)

Activity: *My Expectations; Reasonable or Unreasonable?*

- 3.3 **Myself—My Future** (10 minutes)
Activity: Workbook, *Myself—My Future*

Trusted Adult Connection



Materials Checklist

Resources:

- 3a. *Expectations* activity cards (class set): (**Locate colored cards in back of manual.**) Cut. Duplicate master can be downloaded at DibbleInstitute.org/LN4.
- 3b. *My Expectations at Work*, optional supplemental worksheet (pg. 61). Duplicate one per person.
- 3c. *Trusted Adult Connection Activity* (pg. 62). One per person.

Materials:

- Lesson 3 PowerPoint slideshow and all duplicate masters for activity cards are digital downloads that come with the curriculum. Easy-to-follow directions are found at DibbleInstitute.org/LN4.

Workbook Applications:

- *What's Important to Me?* (pg. 5)
- *My Expectations* (pgs. 6–9)
- *Myself—My Future* (pg. 10)



Preparation

- ✓ Preview the PowerPoint slideshow as you prepare for the lesson.
- ✓ Locate *Expectations* activity cards (Resource 3a) in the back of the manual and cut. Read the directions for the activity and the instructor discussion tips.
- ✓ Review three workbook applications and the supplemental worksheet. *My Expectations* (pgs. 6–9) is particularly important. Note that *My Expectations* and the supplemental worksheet, *My Expectations at Work* (Resource 3b, pg. 61), can be started in session, but most of it will need to be done outside of session. Review *What's Important to Me?* (pg. 5) and *Myself—My Future* (pg. 10).
- ✓ Duplicate Resource 3c, *Trusted Adult Connection Activity* (pg. 62). Cut in half. One per student.

SECTION 3.1

What's Important?

(PP) In this section participants will fill out the *What's Important to Me?* checklist in the workbook, pg. 5. A discussion on how long it realistically takes to discover if the characteristics are present in a partner will follow. As a final exercise, participants will identify qualities they want a partner or friend to notice and appreciate about them.

Ask participants to turn to pg. 5 in their workbooks and introduce with these points:

- ❖ (PP) *Think about the qualities important to you in a romantic partner or even for a best friend. Use the list in your workbook to check your top ten. Feel free to add other qualities.*
- ❖ *Once you have chosen ten, narrow it further to your top three **must-haves**. When you finish, list three things you **could never accept**.*

Allow 4 minutes to complete. Then, ask what some of the top **must-haves** and **could-never-accepts** are that they have identified. Listen to responses.

Now ask them to look at the final question and to offer their hunches. See if there is any consensus. **Note:** The leader might ask how many people have ever been strongly attracted to someone only to find out later they possessed a characteristic on their **could-never-accept** list. Don't spend too long on this discussion. We'll be coming back to the importance of taking one's time in getting to know someone.

- Workbook: *What's Important to Me?* (pg. 5)

10 minutes



Lesson 3

My Expectations—My Future

What's Important to Me?



- What do you want in a partner?
- How long would it take to know if those qualities are present?
- What qualities do you want a partner to appreciate about you?

End this section with instructions to go back over the list and check the key qualities they personally possess that they would want a partner to notice and appreciate.

Engage a discussion on why this is important. Add these points:

- ❖ *It is really important to feel you can be the real you in a relationship. It is a bad sign if you feel your partner does not recognize and admire your important qualities.*
 - ❖ *If a partner or a friend does not appreciate your key qualities, consider whether the relationship is worth it or not.*
 - ❖ *A final word before we move on: Remember that no one is perfect and even in the best relationships a partner will have things that bother you or not possess everything you'd like, and vice-versa.*
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SECTION 3.2

The Power of Expectations

- Resource 3a: *Expectations* activity cards
- Resource 3b: *My Expectations at Work*, optional supplemental worksheet (pg. 61)
- Workbook: *My Expectations* (pgs. 6–9)

25 minutes

This section begins with a short presentation on the powerful role expectations play in relationships. The level of happiness or disappointment in relationships is linked to how well reality matches up to one's expectations. Insights for how to put expectations to work positively in relationships will be discussed. A series of key questions in the workbook application help clarify expectations. Finally, a group activity will ask participants to determine reasonable versus unreasonable expectations.

Expectations and Relationships

- ❖ *What is an expectation that someone might have? Give me an example.*
- ❖ *Expectations are about how we want things to be or how we think things should be. They are about our desires.*
- ❖ *We all have countless expectations. Some are over little things and others are over bigger things.*

(PP) Ask the group to look at the slide.

- ❖ *Have you thought about your own expectations?*
- ❖ *Most people have never really examined what they expect in relationships or why they want them. The importance of expectations show up in how satisfied or disappointed we are in a relationship.*
 - *Disappointment is a sure sign that an expectation is not being met.*
 - *Unmet expectations can also lead to conflict.*
 - *How a couple handles their different expectations is critical to relationship success.*

Brainstorm: *What kinds of things have you seen couples having different expectations about? Have you seen it causing problems? After listening to their examples, put up slide. (PP)*

Ask this question: *Where do we get expectations? Pause and listen. Add:*

- ❖ *Expectations are deeply embedded in us. They come from our past relationship experiences, growing-up experiences, larger culture, media, and personality styles.*

Relationship Expectations

What kinds of things might partners have different expectations about?

Your Expectations

Have you thought about your expectations?
Have you talked about your relationship expectations with a partner?

Time together/apart
Sex
Faithfulness
Commitment
Education Goals
Dependability
Who pays?
Alcohol/Drugs
Communication
How you treat others
What's romantic?
What we do for him
Marriage & family
How to raise/discipline children

- ❖ *These shape our mental image (often subconsciously) of what we want or how we think things should be.*

Point out the ways expectations cause problems: (PP)

1. **Unaware:** *We are often unaware of our own expectations and the expectations of others. Have you ever been surprised to find your friend, partner, supervisor, teacher, or parent has different expectations than you? It's like being in the fog.*
2. **Unreasonable or Too Low:** *Sometimes expectations are unreasonable. Or, sometimes a person has such low expectations that she/he ends up in a series of unhappy relationships.*
3. **Unspoken:** *You cannot read another person's mind. A person cannot always know what another person expects, and vice versa, if you don't talk about your expectations.*

Expectations – how they cause problems

- **Unaware:** When you haven't thought much about them.
- **Unreasonable or too low**
- **Unspoken:** You haven't talked about them together.



Don't be in the fog!

Point out how people can put expectations to work in a positive way: (PP)

1. **Become aware of your expectations.** *When expectations operate unconsciously, we run into problems—so start to clarify your own expectations.*
2. **Ask yourself** *(and check it out with a trusted adult or friend) if your expectations are reasonable or too low.*
3. **Communicate—Tell others what your expectations are.** *Explain to your partner why they are important to you. Do not expect others to read your mind.*
 - *And, in the workplace (or school), be aware of what is expected and be willing to examine your own behaviors.*
4. *In a healthy relationship, be willing to try to meet each other's most important and reasonable expectations as best as you can. You cannot meet all of each other's expectations. It would be impossible. However, it shows healthy giving to strive to meet each other's most important expectations to the best of your best ability. And expect your partner to do likewise for you.*

Expectations – what to do

- **Be aware** of your expectations.
- **Are they reasonable?**
- **Communicate**—Talk about them.
- **Be willing** to meet each other's most important ones as best you can.



Be in the clear!

- *If your top expectations and your partner's are polar opposites, you may not be a good match for each other.*

Workbook: My Expectations

(PP) Instruct participants to go to the workbook pages on *My Expectations* (pgs. 6–9). State that some of these expectation exercises are relevant in your current relationships while others will ask you to think about your expectations in the far future. It's useful to think about one's expectations for the future. **Instructor note:** This is a very important exercise. The more they put in to it, the more they will get out of it.

Brief Pair/Share: Ask participants to look at the prompts regarding *Time Together/Time Apart* or *Sharing Feelings*. Instruct them to form pairs and tell each other what their expectations are and why they hold them.

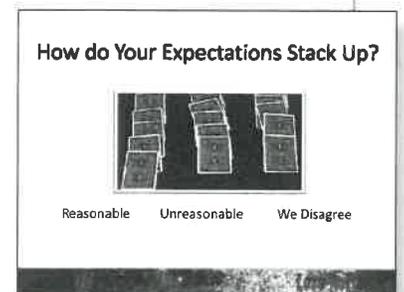
Finally, instruct them to complete the rest of the expectations outside of session. Point out that this exercise will take time, but it is one of the most valuable exercises. Set a due date for workbook check off to ensure completion.

Optional: Pass out the optional supplemental worksheet, *My Expectations at Work* (Resource 3b, pg. 61), that includes additional prompts regarding work expectations.



Activity: Reasonable or Unreasonable?

Locate the *Expectations* activity cards in the back of the manual (Resource 3a). Divide into groups of three. Pass out a few or more cards to each group. Duplicate more if desired. Each trio should read the cards and discuss whether they think it is a reasonable or unreasonable expectation. Sort the cards in three stacks: **reasonable, unreasonable, and we disagree. (PP)**



Allow a few minutes. Then, ask each trio to read a couple of their cards aloud. Start with what they disagreed on. Ask them to explain why they disagreed. Other class members may chime in and the instructor can fill in with suggested commentary below if needed. **Note:** The aim of this activity is to inject some awareness of what is reasonable to expect and offer more practice in talking about expectations.

Some suggested commentary to weave in as needed:

1. I expect my partner to spend all of his/her time with me.

❖ *Good relationships have a healthy mix of time together and time apart. There is an “us” and there are two “me’s” in a healthy relationship. Nurturing relationships with friends and family are important. Just as important is individual responsibility for one’s own growth and continuing development as a person: e.g. pursuing an education, job, and interests.*

2. I expect my partner to respect my desire to pace things more slowly and to respect my sexual boundaries. Last time I went way too fast.

❖ *If a partner does not respect your boundaries, he or she does not respect you (no matter what your gender, identity, or sexual orientation).*

3. I would expect my partner to get tested for STIs.

❖ *Respect and love mean not putting your loved one in harm’s way. Most STIs are hard to recognize or have no symptoms. Testing is critical for anyone who is sexually active.*

4. I cannot expect my partner to be faithful. Hardly anyone is these days.

❖ *How emotionally safe is a relationship with no faithfulness? Can there be trust? Who has the power in this situation? Whose emotional health, physical health, and life may be jeopardized? By accepting it, it will continue.*

5. If I ever got a girl pregnant, I would expect to have a say in what she chooses to do.

❖ *Good question! Should a guy have a say?*

- ❖ *The bottom line is that guys do not have any legal right to have a say with the exception of adoption. He would have to agree to terminate his parental rights.*
 - ❖ *He does not have a say even if he thinks she is not parent material and he is not ready to be a father.*
 - ❖ *These are issues people should really think about and discuss before a decision to have sex.*
6. With the baby, there is no way I can expect to finish my high school equivalency or get my diploma.
- ❖ *Yes, you can. It may take time and be hard, but many young parents have graduated. Graduation is a must for providing a better future and role model for your child.*
7. A person should not expect their partner to use a condom if he doesn't like them.
- ❖ *Birth control and/or STI/HIV prevention is a joint responsibility and should involve caring consideration. And some women may have problems with other forms of birth control.*
8. I expect my partner **never** to find someone else attractive if he or she really loves me.
- ❖ *Even in the most committed relationships and marriages, there are times when one can find someone else attractive. The difference is whether one acts upon it. A person is showing dedication to his or her partner by not pouring effort into imagining how much greener the grass would be on the other side. If you are having real doubts about your partner, it's time to assess and talk.*
9. I expect to wait on having a second child until I am more settled with my education, job, finances, and in a healthy marriage. I expect my partner to respect that.
- ❖ *A young parent who waits on a second child until he or she is more settled with education and employment in a healthy marriage will reduce the chances of the child living in poverty. Preventing a second unplanned pregnancy is important.*

10. I can't expect to tell my baby's father not to go out at night whenever he wants. We're together now as a family.

❖ *If he is a father and going out at night regularly on his own, what does this tell you about his responsibility and faithfulness? How healthy or balanced is a relationship where one goes out often and the other stays at home caring for the child? How would he feel if she went to the club frequently and left the baby with him? How would a child's physical, emotional, and social health be affected if his or her parents put their social life before caring for the child?*

11. I expect the mother of my child (and me, too) to be willing to learn more about child development and effective parenting skills (attend workshops, read books, or access other resources).

❖ *Basic skills can help parents nurture and engage in effective parenting. It helps when both parents are on the same page!*

12. I don't expect any coworker to tell me how to do my job. I can figure things out on my own.

❖ *That is a counterproductive expectation and attitude for today's workplace. Employers value cooperation and teamwork.*

13. I expect not to have sex while I'm in high school.

❖ *60% of high school age teens have made that decision. And many teens who have had sex wish they had waited.*

14. I expect to be on time for work every day and avoid absences to the best of my ability. I want to be seen as steady and dependable.

❖ *Tardiness and absences impact an employer's perception of one's dependability. This is more than a reasonable expectation to have of one's self—it's smart.*

Final Words on Expectations

Point out that people are generally more successful in their relationships when they communicate about their expectations, learn to compromise, and figure out how to handle differences over expectations. Make these points:

- *If you are in a relationship now, it is a great idea to communicate your expectations. Ask your partner to reflect on the expectation questions and share his or her expectations.*
- ***Caution:** Not being able to discuss expectations might be a sign that the relationship is not healthy or safe. Also, discovering your expectations are vastly different from your partner's may be a sign this is not the partner for you.*
- ***Young Parents:** It is really important to think about your relationship and family expectations. When young parents are not together, both need to work hard to cooperate on co-parenting for the sake of the child.*
- *In later sessions, we will learn some useful skills for how to better communicate and handle conflicts.*

Offer an encouragement: Do not be afraid to raise the bar.

- *Sometimes people just settle because they think it's all they deserve or can get. If you set the bar low, most likely that is what you will get.*
- *Sometimes a person steps up only when their partner **raises the bar** for what they expect in terms of behavior. It may be a sign of an unhealthy relationship if you **raise the bar** and your partner does not step up.*
- *Take some time to clarify your own expectations and share them with your partner. Many clergy, and others who perform marriages, actually insist on couples taking a compatibility test before marrying them.*
- *Many couples, as part of marital preparation, take compatibility tests. These reveal what each partner's expectations are in such areas as money, work, values, responsibility, children,*

family beliefs, gender roles, leisure, sex, life style, religious practice/beliefs, communication, and much more. The results of the questionnaire are helpful in telling a couple where they see eye-to-eye and where they are worlds apart on expectations and will have to problem-solve. Some couples—upon seeing how far apart they are—still decide to go forward.

- **(PP)** Among the most widely used inventories are Couple Check Up, FOCCUS, Prepare/Enrich, and Relate. Couple Check Up and Relate can be done online. (**Note:** There are versions for different types of couples and they are inclusive with regards to sexual orientation.)

Couples' Compatibility Assessment

- <http://www.couplecheckup.com/> (online, inclusive)
- www.relate-institute.org (online, inventory for singles too)
- www.prepare-enrich.com inventories for all sorts of couples, inclusive.
- www.foccusinc.com Take home discussion tool.

SECTION 3.3

Myself—My Future

- Resource 3c: *Trusted Adult Connection Activity* (pg. 62)
- Workbook: *Myself—My Future* (pg. 10)

10 minutes

Ask participants to open up their workbook to *Myself—My Future* (pg. 10). **(PP)**

State that expectations also pertain to one's educational and employment future. Point out this is an opportunity to set some goals and then to consider what steps and preparation are necessary to move forward.

As a review for this page, the leader may need to begin by brainstorming possible jobs or careers and discuss the types of training or education needed. If you have access to posters or handouts from a career counseling or job center, use them.

Myself—My Future



Point out there is a question about the future concerning marriage and family. If that is part of one's vision for the future, it is useful to be thinking about the timing and the sequence.

Trusted Adult Connection

(PP) Pass out TAC Resource 3c (pg. 62). *Pick out **two** expectations from the workbook that you hold strong views on or that are important to you. They can be expectations that pertain to your life now or to your life in the future.*

Ask your TA (trusted adult) to pick out two expectations they feel strongly about as well.

Talk together. *Tell each other what your expectations are, why you hold them, what they mean to you, or why they are important. The point is not to agree or disagree but to understand each other's expectations.*

Trusted Adult Connection

- Pick out 2 expectations from your workbook (pages 6-9) that you hold strong feelings about or are important to you. Ask your TA to do likewise.
- Talk together. Tell each other what your expectations are, why you hold them, what they mean to you or why they are important.
- The point is not to agree or disagree, but to just understand each other's expectations.

Notes

- ¹ Child Trends' analysis of Add Health Wave III data. See *Child Trends Research Brief* July 2009, "Young Adult Attitudes about Relationships and Marriage: Times May Have Changed, but Expectations Remain High."

My Expectations at Work

Punctuality

How important is it that I am on time for work everyday? How do I think this might reflect on my employer's view of my dependability?

I expect...

Absences

Regarding absences, how many do I feel are okay or not okay? (monthly, yearly) What do I think are legitimate reasons for being absent? What should I do if I am ever going to be absent?

I expect...

Workplace Etiquette

Should I be concerned with how I dress? How I speak at work (cussing)? How do I feel about coworkers gossiping or bringing their own drama into the workplace? How do I expect to generally conduct myself at work?

I expect...

Being Part of a Team

How do I feel about being part of a team where there is give and take? Can I accept feedback or instructions from others? Am I aware that individuals bring different strengths and talents to the job? Am I able to commit to being a good team member?

I expect...

Handling Conflict on the Job

If you have a conflict with a coworker or supervisor, do you feel it's important to have it out right then and there? Or, do you feel that taking a pause—a time-out—and figuring out how to raise the issue and talk through it later is better?

I expect...

Trusted Adult Connection Activity

Pick out **two** expectations from the workbook that you hold strong views on or that are important to you. They can be expectations that pertain now to your life or to your life in the future.

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TA Signature: _____

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