

Fruit Expectations

It can be really frustrating when other people do things we don't agree with and we can find ourselves wishing they would just 'get with the program' and do as we expect them to. It's way too easy to fall into the trap of blaming the other person in moments like that, but staying in a place of blame doesn't get rid of frustrations and can hurt relationships when resentment creeps in. Clients often ask me for dating advice about how to change their partners and, believe it or not, I often tell them to look at changing their own beliefs and expectations first. Your expectations of the people you love might be the thing contributing most to your own frustrations.



I often explain this using the example of fruit. When you go to eat a piece of fruit, you pretty much know what to expect because of past experiences with other pieces of that same type of fruit. Your history guides your expectations of the future and sets the stage for what you believe will happen each time you peel a banana or bite into an apple. Your satisfaction, your pleasure, even your sense of comfort is directly related to how good the fit is between your expectation of what will happen and whatever actually does happen. We feel reassured and good when there's a good match and dissatisfied or cautious when there isn't.

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The same can be said about relationships. I often see clients

setting expectations for the other people in their lives based on what the clients think makes the most sense – that is, basically, what a person thinks someone else ‘should’ do in a given moment. Not surprisingly, when those others behave differently, clients tell me they feel frustrated, disappointed and often hurt. Its at moments like that when couples are most likely to argue. As a result, I regularly hear clients wishing that their partner would change, and saying that all the problems between them would just be gone if only the other person behaved differently. While that would be nice, it’s probably not realistic. We have very little ability to control what other people do. We get way more traction by changing ourselves and the expectations we have of others. While it’s true that your unreliable friend might continue to be unreliable, you might suffer less (and contribute to fewer arguments) by expecting that instead of setting yourself up for continued disappointment by hoping that person will suddenly be different.

This doesn’t mean that we should give in or give up on expecting those people in our lives to ever change or evolve. Change does happen, it just happens over time, and when we wait for and allow that gradual evolution to occur, we (and our important people) can feel happier together in the meantime. Interestingly enough, people tend to feel most ready to change themselves when they feel good enough exactly as they are! Returning to the example of fruit, my expectation of what apples should taste like now is different from what I knew apples to taste like years ago. As the flavours changed over the years, my expectations changed with them – I allowed that mutual evolution to occur by saying “Yep, that’s a bit different from the last one I ate, but that’s still an apple”. So, a piece of advice I can offer on how to improve your relationships is to work at accepting those important people in your life **exactly as they are right now**, even when they do things that differ from what you want. When your loved ones feel like they’re good enough in your eyes, they’ll be most

likely to volunteer to change themselves to make you even happier!



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