



Assumptions and Expectations

Love Deeply Tool



Assumptions and Expectations

The ninth commandment says that you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Exodus 20: 16). Checking out assumptions is a very simple, but powerful tool that eliminates untold numbers of conflicts in relationships. It enables me to check out whether what I'm thinking or feeling about you is true. It enables me to clarify potential misunderstandings.

Every time I make an assumption about someone who has hurt or disappointed me without confirming it, I believe a lie about this person in my head. This assumption is a misrepresentation of reality. Because I have not checked it out with the other person, it is very possible I am believing something untrue. It is also likely I will pass that false assumption around to others.

When we leave reality for a mental creation of our own doing (hidden assumptions), we create a counterfeit world. When we do this, it can properly be said that we exclude God from our lives because God does not exist outside of reality and truth. In doing so, we wreck relationships by creating endless confusion and conflict. The Bible has much to say about not taking on the role of the judge to others (see Matthew 7: 1-5).



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Following are some important steps in using this tool with another person:

- Reflect on something you suspect the other person thinks or feels but hasn't told you.
- Ask: "Do I have your permission to check out an assumption I am making?" (If he or she grants it, then you can proceed.)
- Say: "I think you think ..." or "I assume you are thinking ..." (fill in the blank). When you finish, ask them: "Is this correct?"
- Give the other person an opportunity to respond. You can use this with employees, employers, spouses, friends, roommates, coworkers, parents, and children. The list is endless.



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Expectations:

Unmet and unclear expectations create havoc in our places of employment, classrooms, friendships, dating relationships, marriages, sports teams, families, and churches. For example:

- Of course, you're coming to the family event. We're important to you, aren't we?
- I never knew the job involved all that. You never told me.
- My adult son should know I need him to come over and fix things. I shouldn't have to ask.
- I'm so disillusioned. I expected that a good marriage just happened naturally.
- I'm the only one caring for my aging parents. My siblings expect me to do everything.
- If she really cared about me, she would call me.
- In a good church, everyone should be friendly and supportive when someone is hurting.



Assumptions and Expectations

We expect other people to know what we want before we say it (especially if they are invested in the relationship). The problem with most expectations is that they are:

- Unconscious -we have expectations we're not even aware of until someone disappoints us;
- Unrealistic -we may have illusions about others. For example, we think a spouse, a friend, or a pastor will be available at all times to meet our needs;
- Unspoken -we may have never told our spouse, friend, or employee what we expect, yet we are angry when our expectations are not met; and
- Un-agreed upon -we may have had our own thoughts about what was expected, but it was never agreed upon by the other person.

Expectations are only valid when they have been mutually agreed upon. We all know the unpleasant experience of other people having expectations we never agreed to.



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In order for expectations to be established, they must first be C.A.R.S.

- Conscious (I have to become aware of the expectations I have for the other person);
- Realistic (I have to ask myself if my expectations regarding the other person are realistic);
- Spoken (I have to speak my expectations clearly, directly, and respectfully to the other person); and
- Agreed upon (in order for my expectations to be valid, the other person must be aware of and agree to them; otherwise it is simply a hope).

Think of an expectation you have of a spouse, friend, roommate, boss, family member, or coworker. Ask yourself: Am I conscious of what it is? Is it realistic? Has it been spoken? Have they also agreed to this? Initiate a conversation with them and seek to come to a mutually agreed upon expectation. Now think of a person who may have an unconscious, unrealistic, unspoken, and un-agreed upon the expectation of you. Sit down with them and discuss it. Seek to come to a mutually agreed upon expectation.



Thank You!

We hope you found this tool helpful for you and your partner. If you're looking for more helpful resources like this one, check out our website.

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